ROBERT B. ASPREY

WAR in the Shadows

THE GUERRILLA IN HISTORY

VOLUME ONE

WAR IN THE SHADOWS

The Guerrilla in History

By Robert B. Asprey

Volume I

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This book is dedicated to Arthur Wittenstein—
loyal friend, wise and patient counselor

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. . . There are fearful excitements on any side.
Any side can accuse the other
And feel virtuous without the hardships of virtue.
When pride of race has been pent up
In a tyrannous disregard, and valued liberties
Have been lost for long enough, what comes in the way
Of dignity's free and natural flowing
Is nothing but rocks to be blasted. I envy them
Their certainty. Each private man
Has a public cause to elucidate him,
And a reasonable sense of having been wronged.
If you like you can call this man your enemy;
It's what he expects.

CHRISTOPHER FRY
The Dark Is Light Enough

Apologia

PERHAPS UNFORTUNATELY, the modern writer has slipped away from the habit of justifying a work of non-fiction to the reader. While some books require none, others do and this is one.

War in the Shadows is an attempt to explain the Vietnam conflict in the historical terms of guerrilla warfare. It is not a history of guerrilla war—that would be a multivolume effort. It is an attempt to place the role of guerrilla warfare in history in order to give the interested reader a perspective heretofore denied him, and one I believe essential to an understanding of the conflict that has so confused, embittered, and divided intelligent people not only in America, but throughout the world.

What is guerrilla warfare?

It is a type of warfare characterized by irregular forces fighting small-scale, limited actions, generally in conjunction with a larger political-military strategy, against orthodox military forces. The word *guerrilla* means little war, and its use stems from the duke of Wellington's Iberian campaigns (1809–13), when Spanish-Portuguese irregulars, or *guerrilleros* (also referred to at the time as partisans and insurgents), helped drive the French from the peninsula.

In its simplest form, it is primitive people dressed in skins and armed with sticks and stones fighting in defense of home and country. It is traditionally a method of protest employed to rectify real or imagined wrongs levied on a people either by a foreign invader or a ruler. Most of the great conquests of history included guerrilla actions; many were in large part pacification campaigns. Darius, Alexander, and Hannibal all fought guerrilla warfare. This was both rude, as against the Scythians, and sophisticated, as when Hannibal unsuccessfully tried to bring the Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus to battle—thus the birth of Fabian tactics. The Romans fought guerrilla warfare for over two hundred years in Spain before the birth of Christ (a crisis in this campaign is the reason our calendar year commences on the first of January). Norman crusaders came up against quasi-guerrilla opposition from the Seljuk Turks in Syria; Edward I fought what were essentially pacification campaigns in Wales and Scotland.

In time, guerrilla warfare became a useful adjunct to a larger, political-military strategy—a role in which it complemented orthodox military operations, real or intended, either inside enemy territory or in areas seized and occupied by an enemy. Early classic examples of this role occurred in the Silesian wars (1741–45); in the American revolution, in which southern irregulars (relying heavily on terrorist tactics) helped drive Cornwallis from

the Carolinas to defeat at Yorktown; and in Spain and Russia, where guerrillas helped to defeat Napoleon's armies.

But guerrilla and quasi-guerrilla tactics have also been used traditionally in a third role, an aggressive role, as witness such predatory barbarians as the Goths and Huns, who began the destruction of the Western Roman Empire; or the later Magyars, who conquered Hungary; or the Vikings, who overran Ireland, England, and France; or the Mongols, who won China and terrified central Europe.

While certain details of these various campaigns are lacking, ancient chroniclers have described barbarian organization and tactics and, most important, the development of countertactics. Byzantine writings, in particular, show a firm grasp of the subject, including political implications.

The ancient record is valuable on three counts. First, it is interesting in its own right as establishing the thread of guerrilla and quasi-guerrilla tactics and even strategy in the history of warfare. Second, the tactical record suggests that orthodox generals who adapted conventional tactics to meet the guerrilla challenge usually prospered while those who failed to do so suffered defeat. From Darius onward, we find commanders cursed with an arrogance of ignorance often compounded by arrogance of power—terms we shall use again—and we find their soldiers and peoples paying a heavy cost in consequence.

Third, the political record suggests that even the most valid counterguerrilla tactics provided transitory victory that gained meaning only when exploited politically by the ruler's putting his own house in order. Here again we find plentiful examples of an arrogance of ignorance compounded by arrogance of power, with resulting misery and frequently loss of kingdom and even empire.

The reader will be surprised, I believe, to learn the historical progression of guerrilla warfare in more recent times to its exalted state as the major instrument in today's revolutionary wars. Tactically, the record is as impressive as it is tragic, and generally repeats the trend set in ancient campaigns despite the earnest writings of a few to educate the many.

The political element is even more important. Ancient campaigns never entirely lacked a political consideration (except on the part of barbarians, who were generally more interested in booty than conquest), but only in the nineteenth century did it become intrusive and only in the twentieth century predominant over military action. Primitive peoples, and some not so primitive such as the Boers, still fought guerrilla wars for traditional reasons. But, slowly, guerrilla warfare evolved into an instrument to achieve specific, usually revolutionary political goals, as witness the Mexican revolution. Lenin clearly recognized guerrilla warfare as a military means to a political end, and Mao Tse-tung further defined its role in an agrarian context. Ho Chi Minh successfully synthesized this thinking to fit his particular situation, and he was fortunate enough to have a military genius, Vo Nguyen Giap, translate desire to deed. Yet it would be wrong to grant Communists a monopoly on guerrilla warfare. Kenya Mau Maus, Greek Cypriotes, and Algerians were free of Communist connections, yet all used revolutionary war to gain political ends.

For a very long time Western statesmen and military leaders have overlooked the significance of this predominant political element. The late Bernard Fall, an expert on Southeast Asia who was killed in Vietnam, aptly wrote in a preface to Roger Trinquier's frightening book on revolutionary warfare[1]:

> American readers—particularly those who are concerned with today's operations in South Vietnam—will find to their surprise that their various seemingly "new" counter-insurgency gambits, from strategic hamlets to large-scale pacification, are mere rehashes of old tactics to which helicopters, weed killers, and rapid-firing rifles merely add a new dimension of speed and bloodiness without basically changing the character of the struggle—nor its outcome, if the same *political* errors that the French have made are repeated.

Dr. Fall failed to add that the final French effort in Vietnam repeated not only many of the tactical "gambits" of history, but also many of its *political* errors.

A historical sampling of guerrilla warfare, then, should claim more than academic interest, for within the context of our day a knowledge of this history, even if sharply abridged, is vital to the understanding and further study of a disturbing fact: For a number of reasons, guerrilla warfare has evolved into an ideal instrument for the realization of social-political-economic aspirations of underprivileged peoples. This is so patently true as to allow one to suggest that we may be witnessing a transition to a new era in warfare, an era as radically different as those which followed the writings of Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Clausewitz, and Mahan.

This particular development, however, is more difficult to grasp, partly because of the dichotomy in political thought nurtured by a vast economic gulf between have and have-not countries, and partly because of incredible technological advances which have resulted in such sophisticated and awesome weapons as the H-bomb—thus creating the military paradox of destructive impotence.

A part of the total impact of today's "people's war" or "wars of national liberation" may be explained by the frustration of rich and powerful nations possessing highly scientific weapons systems which either cannot be employed because of moral-political considerations or are technically unsuitable for fighting in a particular environment. So long as conventional commanders fail to adapt organization, techniques, and tactics to meet the guerrilla challenge instead of trying to convert it to orthodox challenge, these revolutionary campaigns will prosper. Even when properly challenged, however, they do not lend themselves to an exclusive military "solution," which at best is ephemeral. The words "winning" and "victory" diminish in meaning as we face the awesome political-economic challenge that, to date, many of our leaders, particularly military commanders, seem unable to comprehend—despite manifold lessons of history.

I hope this book will bring home those lessons and will help the readers to grasp more fully the ramifications of a complex subject, and thus enable him to question more intelligently the qualifications and attitudes of his future elected representatives. The pages that follow emphasize the cost to any coun-

1. Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare—A French View of Counter-Insurgency* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

try when its civil and military leaders fail to consider yesterday while dealing with tomorrow. In this sense, the book is also a warning: America can afford one Vietnam, but not another.

Apology is sometimes part of justification, and I want to apologize on several counts. The reader will not find a study of recent Middle East or African guerrilla campaigns or the present Ulster insurgency—none of these influenced the Vietnam war.

I also regret the amount of blood splashed on the following narrative. In writing these chapters, I sometimes thought of Julia A. Moore, "The Sweet Singer of Michigan," whose tragedy-ridden ballads caused Mark Twain to remark that, in each, she killed more people than a Gatling gun. I will ask the sensitive reader to keep in mind Henry James's reply to John Buchan, who expressed nausea over some lust-ridden Byronic correspondence: "Nauseating, perhaps, but how quite inexpressibly significant."

If I seem harsh on the subject of British and French (and other) colonialism and the subsequent insurgencies caused thereby, it is not a condemnation of peoples, but rather a regret of a social-historical-economic condition that allowed shortsighted and greedy persons and governments an exploitive hand against peoples lacking but slight recourse. My British and French friends know my pride in our friendship and my respect for the noble institutions bequeathed to civilization by their countries. My criticism centers on those tragic colonizing periods when civilization was momentarily suppressed—and I have been as hard on my own country's record in Vietnam despite its different motivations.

I must briefly mention sources and treatment. I have quoted from a good many works, not from laziness but from unwillingness to deprive either the reader or myself of the added enjoyment of an apt phrase or description contemporary to the period, or to deprive the author of a measure of appreciation for a well-expressed thought often derived from a lifetime of specialized study. I have listed my sources in case the reader wishes to pursue further one or more of the highly abridged accounts of guerrilla campaigns. I would like the reader to remember that my spelling of place names is arbitrary—he will frequently find variations, particularly in Arabic and oriental areas; I have tried to use the most convenient version. Similarly, the sketch maps are intended primarily for orientation purposes. I should stress that the selection of sources is curtailed—most of the standard works, however, contain pertinent bibliographies and detailed maps.

Contemporary sources, particularly those concerning Vietnam, are limited. Dangers await any writer who attempts at this early date to analyze America's role in this area. Vietnam is not an isolated phenomenon, and American interest in Asia did not suddenly develop in 1965 or 1958 or 1950. Some readers will be surprised to learn that the national interest dates from 1833, when America first signed a trade agreement with the kingdom of Siam, and that it demonstrably grew when we acquired the Philippines and thus a stake in the region. Fundamental to any understanding of America's role in Vietnam is her relationship with China and the trauma that followed Chiang

Kai-shek's fall—I have tried to explain this, albeit from the standpoint of guerrilla warfare.

But definitive historical appreciation, particularly from 1950 to the present, will depend in part on documents not likely to become available for a long time. On the other hand, the divisive nature of this war has caused a number of concerned principals to speak out on some important aspects, and the publication of the Pentagon Papers has also yielded valuable if somewhat lopsided historical evidence. In certain instances, particularly those concerning secret high-level official debates, these sources permit educated guessing—at all times identified as such.

The final point is more personal. Certain of my conclusions conflict with stated professional opinions of some old and valued friends, including diplomats, military analysts, and senior military commanders. Such is the emotional reaction evoked by the expensive failure of American arms in Vietnam —a reaction really of fear—that a critical writer, no matter his objectivity, will reap "establishment" opprobrium comparable to that delivered by an ancient and celebrated Legalist: Han Fei-tzu righteously denounced the criticism of empire offered by double-faced scholars who dwelt in caves, ". . . pursued private studies . . . engaged in intrigues, and elaborated unorthodox views."[2] Excepting the cave and "intrigues," I am guilty; while I regret this conflict of opinion, I think that the issues are sufficiently important to justify a strain on friendship.

I am equally concerned about the feelings of Vietnam veterans—of the wounded, of those who have survived the dead, of all the men and women who did their best when called to their country's service. Those of us who fought in World War II and who shared the Korean experience know something of postwar disillusionment, and it is an obscene feeling. To many of us, the later shattering of some toes, if not both feet, of our idol Mars made us question the worth of sacrifice. That does not negate the *fact* of sacrifice, and the individual rightly can carry this knowledge proudly to his grave. Yet I remain entirely too aware that some of my conclusions will offend today's veterans. While regretting this enormously, I must again plead the overriding importance of the issues to the future of America and the civilized world.

Many knowledgeable people have given generously of talent and time in reading portions of this book or in discussing its various aspects. They have repaired my work a thousandfold, and I am grateful. The faults remain the author's burden.

In England, I wish particularly to thank: Professor M. R. D. Foot, Professor Hugh Thomas, C. M. Woodhouse, Julian Amery, Colonel F. W. Deakin, Professor Maung Htin Aung, the late Colonel F. Spencer-Chapman, Brigadier Sir Bernard Fergusson, Mrs. Joan Saunders, Airey Neave, Eric Christiansen, Major General Richard Clutterbuck, Robert Stephens, Philip Ziegler, Brigadier Frank Kitson, Dr. George Boyce, Arthur Koestler, A. R. Burn, Professor A. Andrewes, Sir Nicolas Cheetham, Adam Roberts, Robin Lane Fox, and Sir Sidney Ridley. In America, Brigadier General Samuel B.

2. S. B. Griffith, *Sun Tzu—The Art of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

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ROBERT B. ASPREY

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PART ONE

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No dictatorship of the proletariat is to be thought of without terror and violence.

LENIN

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ANCIENT CHRONICLES offer countless examples of guerrilla actions, usually of an independent type undertaken in self-defense by nomads and peasant bands, and normally resulting in little more than temporary embarrassment to the incumbent ruler or temporary harassment to the invader.

A splendid exception is related by the Greek historian Herodotus. In 512 B.C., the Persian warrior-king, Darius, wanted to secure his northern flank before reducing Thrace and Macedonia. Marching almost due north through today's Bulgaria, his army accepted tribal submissions, bridged the Danube, and crossed to the land of what were then called the Scythians.[1]

1. J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece—To the Death of Alexander the Great* (London: Macmillan, 1959), rev. R. Meiggs. The identity of these tribes is obscure. Professor Bury noted: ". . . North of the Danube, in the lands which are now called Walachia and Moldavia [today's Romania] (between the Danube, the Car-

Here was a bloodthirsty race of altogether unpleasant barbarians for whom Herodotus held little brief except

> . . . in one respect . . . the contrivance whereby they make it impossible for the enemy who invades them to escape destruction, while they themselves are entirely out of his reach, unless it please them to engage with him. Having neither cities nor forts, and carrying their dwellings with them wherever they go; accustomed, moreover, one and all of them, to shoot from horseback; and living not by husbandry but on their cattle, their wagons the only houses that they possess, how can they fail of being unconquerable, and unassailable even?[2]

This was a reasonable if rhetorical question, and it may explain why Darius chose to invade their lands, although the gold mines of Dacia possibly attracted him more than the thought of enhancing his already formidable reputation. At this time, Darius ruled the largest empire and commanded the best army in the world. Yet, for all its panoply on the march, for all the efficiency of splendidly organized divisions—a tactical advance considered by Professor Breasted to be ". . . one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of the ancient Orient, if not the world"—the Persians did not subdue the Scythians.[3]

Historians differ as to what happened. Herodotus claimed that the numerically inferior and technically impoverished barbarian army used guerrilla tactics including a scorched-earth policy to force the mighty Darius into retreat: ". . . and as he did so they attacked his rearguard and captured his baggage train." J. B. Bury, on the other hand, judged Darius' adventure a success and pointed out that it led to the eventual submission of Thrace and token submission of Macedonia.[4] A. R. Burn, however, holds that Darius narrowly missed total disaster and at the very least suffered ". . . some temporary loss of prestige."[5] We also know that Darius withdrew across the Bosporus and did not again contest the Scythians.

A few decades later, in northern Greece, some Phocian bands who had escaped the invading Persians found refuge on Mount Parnassus

---

pathians, and the Pruth), lived tribes which were allied in many respects to the tribes south of the river. The Greeks included these tribes under the general name of Scythian, which they applied to the whole series of peoples who dwelled between the Carpathians and the Caucasus. While the most easterly of that series approximated in language to the Persian, the most westerly approximated to the Thracian"; see also A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks* (London: Edward Arnold, 1962).

2. Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus* (London: John Murray, 1897). Vol. 1 (Book IV) of 2 vols. Ed. A. J. Grant, tr. George Rawlinson. Although Herodotus must be read with caution, he can still be read with extreme enjoyment.

3. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Decisive Battles of the Western World* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956). Vol. 1 of 3 vols.

4. Bury, op. cit.

5. Burn, op. cit.

and, as Herodotus reported, ". . . made expeditions from thence, whereby they distressed Mardonius . . . and so did good service to the Grecian cause."[6]

In 426 B.C., Demosthenes lost a large number of soldiers in attempting to subdue the ill-armed but very mobile Aetolians, who, Thucydides tells us, ". . . attacked the Athenians and their allies, running down from the hills on every side and showering javelins upon them, then retreating whenever the Athenian army advanced and advancing whenever they retreated." The Athenians soon grew tired, then disorganized:

> . . . The Aetolians kept plying their javelins, and being swift of foot and lightly equipped, following at their heels they caught many there in the rout and slew them; but the greater number missed the roads and got into the forest, from which there were no paths out, and the Aetolians brought fire and set the woods ablaze around them. Then every manner of flight was essayed and every manner of destruction befell the army of the Athenians.[7]

Demosthenes himself profited from the experience and later used similar tactics in fighting the Lacedaemonians.

Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) encountered serious guerrilla opposition when he campaigned against Bessus, the assassin of Darius III, prior to invading India. This two-year campaign in the Persian satrapies of Bactria and Sogdiana (roughly Afghan Turkestan and Bokhara) tested Alexander to the hilt. In J. F. C. Fuller's words:

> . . . In this theater the whole mode of fighting was to differ from what it had been. No great battles awaited Alexander; he was to be faced by a people's war, a war of mounted guerrillas who, when he advanced would suddenly appear in his rear, who entrenched themselves on inaccessible crags, and when pursued vanished into the Turkoman steppes. To overrun such a theater of war and subdue such an enemy demanded generalship of the highest order, much higher than needed against an organized army on the plains. . . .
>
> Unfortunately Arrian and other historians tell us little about the tactical changes Alexander introduced although we may assume that there was a considerable expansion of light troops, both foot and horse; yet all we hear is the introduction of mounted javelin-men and that Alexander lightened the equipment of part of the phalanx. Whatever the changes, one thing is certain, they were based on mobility and flexibility, coupled with the use of a large number of military posts and military colonies that restricted his enemy's mobility while they added to his own.[8]

6. Herodotus, op. cit. (Book IX).
7. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953). Vol. 2 of 4 vols. Tr. Charles F. Smith.
8. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958). Hereafter cited as Fuller (*Alexander*).

In the spring of 329 B.C., Alexander crossed the Hindu Kush in pursuit of the Persian leader Bessus. Hoping to halt the pursuer, Bessus had ravaged the countryside, but Alexander led his army despite severe cold and hunger to the Oxus river. Lacking sufficient timber to bridge the fast-flowing river, he ". . . collected the hides the troops used for tent covers and ordered them to be filled with the driest possible chaff, and then to be tied down and stitched neatly together so as to be watertight. When they were filled and stitched together they were efficient enough to take the army across in five days."[9]

Although Bessus was captured, the Sogdians soon rebelled under Spitamenes. North of the Oxus, where Alexander was building a garrisoned city (today's Chodjend) on the Jaxartes River, he launched a punitive campaign during which he systematically destroyed seven major encampments, summarily executing tribesmen and enslaving women and children.[10]

Alexander still had to reckon with the Massagetae, or "Asiatic Scythians," who lived north of the Jaxartes and harassed the Macedonians from the other side of the river. Alexander mounted catapults on the bank, and with the aid of this protective fire crossed the river, his men again using skins stuffed with straw. Landing archers and slingers first, he then brought over the infantry and cavalry. Once his army gained the other bank, he sent a force of spearmen and heavy cavalry against the enemy. Arrian tells us,

> . . . the Scythians, who were in strong force, awaited them, and then rode round the smaller party of the enemy, which kept shooting at them, while they themselves easily managed to escape by flight.[11]

While small, Alexander's army was flexibly organized and mobile. Seeing the problem, Alexander massed archers, light infantry, and cavalry and moved against the Scythians. Apparently taken by surprise and definitely outgunned—the foot archer's range due to the size of his bow is greater than the horse archer—the Scythians lost the initiative. Arrian continued:

> . . . When they were quite close, he ordered three regiments of the Companions [his elite units] and all the mounted javelin-men to charge them;

9. Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri* (London: William Heinemann, 1929). Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Tr. E. I. Robson.

10. Ibid; see also A. R. Burn, *Alexander the Great* (New York: Collier, 1947). Hereafter cited as Burn (*Alexander*); Bury, op. cit.; Fuller (*Alexander*), *supra;* W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1948), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.; U. Wilcken, *Alexander the Great* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932). Tr. G. C. Richards; Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

11. Ibid.

and he himself brought up the rest of the cavalry at full speed and charged with his squadrons in column. . . .[12]

This attack disrupted the enemy's wheeling tactics; when his formations broke, Alexander exploited the disorder by sending forward infantry and light cavalry, which killed about a thousand and captured one hundred fifty of the Scythians. Although he ordered his cavalry in pursuit, he did not regain contact, and a bad case of diarrhea, caused by foul water, prevented him from going farther. The battle was nonetheless notable,

. . . for it shows Alexander, who had never seen desert or "Parthian" tactics before, meeting them with complete confidence and certainty.[13]

The revolt meanwhile had spread to Bactria, where a group of horse archers of the Massagetae, some six hundred men under Spitamenes, laid siege to Maracanda (today's Samarkand). Sent to relieve the garrison, a force under one of Alexander's interpreters, Pharnuches, was teased to pursue into the desert. Suddenly the nomads struck from all sides. Although Pharnuches formed his troops into a square and fought a successful rearguard action back to a river, his troops broke formation in their rush to cross to safety and were virtually annihilated—". . . the bloodiest, and the only serious, defeat ever suffered by one of Alexander's columns."[14]

Upon learning of the disaster, Alexander marched a mixed force of infantry, archers, and cavalry 135 miles in seventy-two hours to fall on the besiegers of Maracanda, who immediately disappeared in the desert waste. Alexander pursued as far as the desert but made no contact. After burying his dead, he ravaged the villages that had supported Spitamenes and then laid waste the valley to deprive him of future food supply.[15]

Alexander was not yet finished, however. After quartering at Zariaspa for the winter, he split his force, leaving a large portion of it in Bactria.[16] With the remainder, he formed five columns, which made a "sweep" against the guerrillas before rejoining at Maracanda. He next sent two of the columns ". . . to raid the independent nomads, among whom Spitamenes was reported, and Hephaistion to unite the villages of Sogdiana into walled towns—i.e., to concentrate the population, so that they could not easily help the guerrillas."[17] Although Alexander

12. Ibid.
13. Fuller (*Alexander*), *supra.*
14. Burn (*Alexander*), *supra.*
15. Arrian, op. cit.; see also Tarn, op. cit.
16. Historians disagree on identity and location of Zariaspa (Balkh), which some maintain was also Bactra. Our map derives in part from those in Professor Bury's excellent work cited above.
17. Burn (*Alexander*), *supra.*

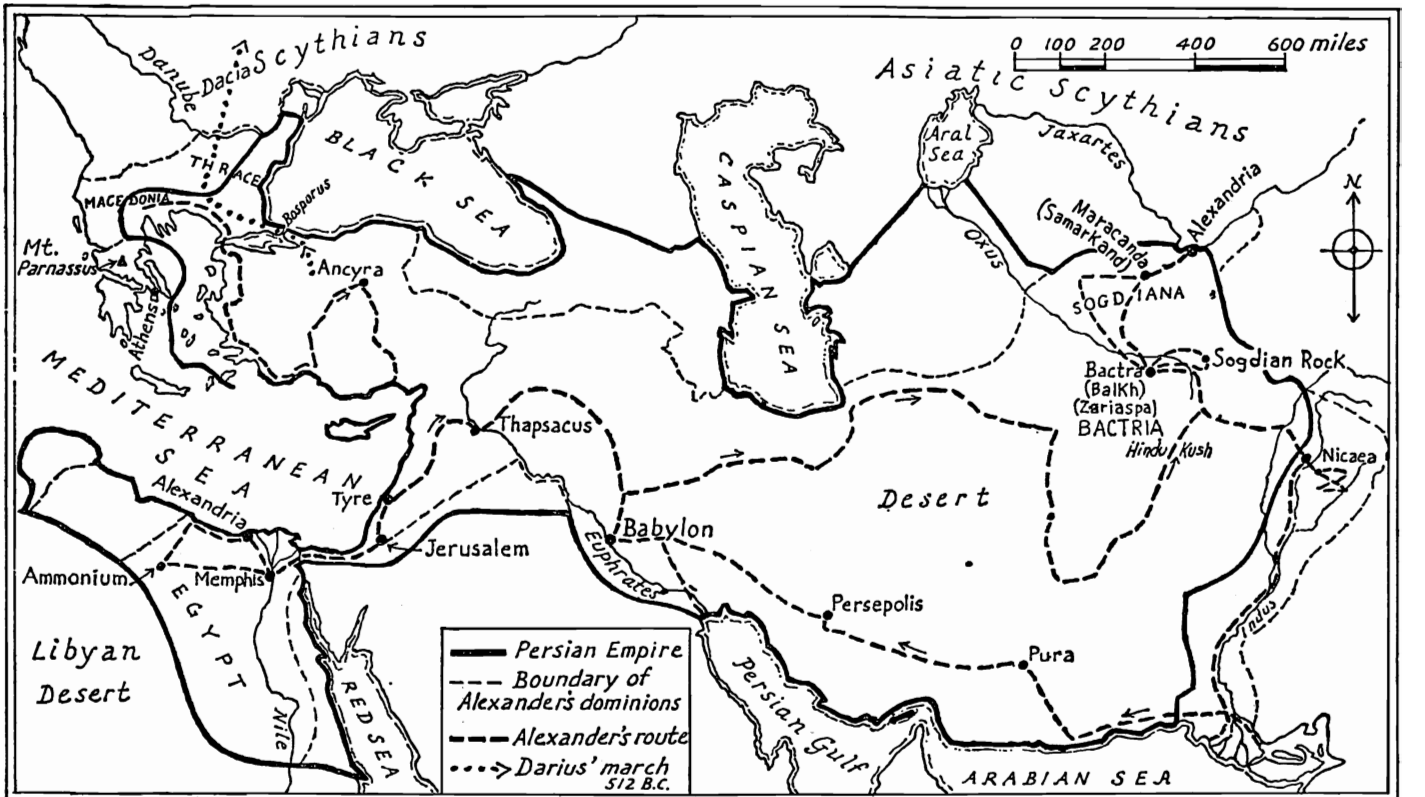
captured a number of enemy strongholds, he could not capture Spitamenes, who was raiding behind his lines.

To get Spitamenes, Alexander relied on a strong force which he left to winter in Sogdiana. As he hoped, Spitamenes turned up. But now the guerrilla force, numbering some three thousand horse, found the countryside bare, the food guarded in Hephaistion's walled cities. Forced into a conventional attack, Spitamenes suffered eight hundred killed against only a few Macedonian dead, a disaster that caused him to retreat. Losing some of his savage hordes by desertion, he yielded control of the rest. Upon hearing that Alexander was going to pursue, they turned on Spitamenes, cut off his head, and sent it to the Macedonian king as a token of full submission.[18]

Alexander faced a final challenge from Oxyartes, a Bactrian baron who with a small band had holed up in a mountain fortress, the Sogdian Rock. Oxyartes' envoys refused Alexander's demand to surrender: ". . . they with barbaric laughter bade Alexander find winged soldiers to capture the height for him, since they cared for [that is, feared] no other kind of man."[19] They reckoned without Alexander's tactical adaptability: by offering special rewards to volunteers with mountain-climbing experience, he recruited three hundred men who made a night ascent of a peak ". . . which was most sheer, and so unguarded." Thirty men fell to their death, but the survivors had gained the drop on the enemy camp by dawn. A herald now informed Oxyartes that he must surrender, for Alexander ". . . had found sure enough the winged men."[20]

But Alexander did more than adapt his tactics to counter unorthodox tactics. After subduing the various tribes, he invariably tried to win them to his side, a move explained, according to Tarn, by an innate belief in the unity of mankind—the concept of *Homonoia*—but more likely by shrewd political sense.[21] When a nomad chieftain at Chodjend blamed resistance on undisciplined youth, Alexander overlooked contrary evidence and said he believed him, a face-saving move that brought peace and gained him numerous skillful recruits. After capturing Oxyartes, he

18. Arrian, op. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Fuller (*Alexander*), *supra:* ". . . It was this aspiration which he expressed in his prayer at Opis, and, according to Tarn, it had little to do with his so-called policy of fusion which was 'a material thing,' but with an idea, 'an immaterial thing.' It was firstly, that all men are brothers; and secondly, that he had 'a divine mission to be the harmonizer and reconciler of the world, to bring it to pass that all men, being brothers, should live together in Homonoia, in unity of heart and mind. . . . It was and was to remain a dream, but a dream greater than all his conquests"; see also W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); E. Badian, "Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind," *Historia* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1952), Vol. 7, pp. 425–44. Most scholars accept this as refuting Tarn's thesis.


0 100 200 400 600 miles
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Scythians
Danube
Dacia
Asiatic Scythians
Aral Sea
Jaxartes
Alexandria
Maracanda (Samarkand)
Oxus
SOGDIANA
Sogdian Rock
Bactra (Balkh) (Zariaspa)
BACTRIA
Hindu Kush
Nicaea
Indus
BLACK SEA
CASPIAN SEA
THRACE
MACEDONIA
Bosporus
Mt. Parnassus
Athens
Ancyra
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Thapsacus
Tyre
Alexandria
Jerusalem
Babylon
Euphrates
Desert
Persepolis
Pura
Persian Gulf
ARABIAN SEA
Ammonium
Memphis
EGYPT
Nile
Libyan Desert
RED SEA
Persian Empire
Boundary of Alexander's dominions
Alexander's route
Darius' march 512 B.C.

M.E.P.

not only recruited him into his army but married his daughter, the beautiful Roxane.

These are not isolated examples. Much later, in 324 B.C., the year before he died, he attacked the Cossean tribe; once he had subdued them, he and his chief lieutenant, Ptolemy, ". . . taught them how to cultivate their land and build villages instead of robbing travelers on the road."[22]

Guerrillas plagued another great commander, Hannibal, during his epic march from Spain into northern Italy, in 218 B.C. For this invasion, which one authority, Gavin de Beer, has called ". . . one of the boldest strategic strokes of all time" (not least because the Romans never deemed it possible), Hannibal gathered an enormous force, recorded by Polybius as ninety thousand infantry, twelve thousand cavalry, and thirty-eight war elephants—but probably less than half this size.[23]

After crossing the Pyrenees and traversing the Rhône country, Hannibal outmaneuvered a Roman army under Publius Cornelius Scipio. Although only thirty years old, Hannibal was a proven leader who used his formidable army of veteran campaigners well. He seems to have encountered little trouble with various tribes of southern Gaul, who in any event held no love for the Romans. One authority, Colonel Dodge, noted that he ". . . had a way of propitiating the native tribes which made his march safe and expeditious. Where honeyed words had no effect, gold was used. . . ."[24]

Armed with much needed supply and invaluable guides familiar with the Alpine passes, he now embarked on his famous fifteen-day march. Almost at once, he came up against a warlike branch of the Allobroges, who were guarding an essential pass, but from his Gallic guides Hannibal learned that in accordance with local custom they guarded it only during daylight, since operations at night ". . . were looked on as impossible."[25] Hannibal ostentatiously made camp and lighted numerous fires, then took a hand-picked force and in the darkness occupied the pass without casualties. On the following day, the Gauls attacked and were defeated.

Hannibal next encountered the Ceutrones, who were friendly enough

22. Burn (*Alexander*), *supra.*

23. Polybius, *The Histories* (London: William Heinemann, 1922). Tr. W. R. Paton. Vol. 2 of 6 vols.; see also Gavin de Beer, *Alps and Elephants—Hannibal's March* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955). Hereafter cited as De Beer (*Alps*); Gavin de Beer, *The Struggle for Power in the Mediterranean* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969); F. E. Adcock, *The Roman Art of War Under the Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940); T. A. Dodge, *Hannibal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891), Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Most contemporary authorities believe these figures in excess: De Beer, for example, suggests 38,000 foot soldiers and 8,000 horsemen.

24. Dodge, op. cit.

25. Ibid.

but whom he didn't trust. Pretending to ally with them, he accepted some as guides and continued his march, his route probably leading to the Traversette pass.[26]

Fearful of an ambush in the rugged terrain, Hannibal reversed the order of march, placing ". . . the baggage, elephants and cavalry in front, while with the heavy-armed troops he held the rear."[27] Just what prompted this change is uncertain—it may have been his desire to put his cavalry, which he knew would prove essential in Italy, in the least vulnerable place; perhaps, however, he thought his cavalry could react more effectively to an attack, or perhaps his Gallic guides recommended the formation.

Whatever the case, he seems to have chosen correctly. He was struck by an attack in force as his vanguard was moving through a particularly close ravine. The barbarians, ". . . assembled together in great numbers," lined the heights, from where they rolled down boulders and stones on the surprised column. Although causing losses, they erred in delivering the main attack against Hannibal's rear, precisely where he was strongest. Noting where the enemy's weight lay, Hannibal took up an effective defensive position at the mouth of the defile, sent out flanking forces, and held the enemy until his main force completed its night march through the ravine. This limited the enemy to isolated attacks on his vanguard forces the following day. At the summit of the pass, Hannibal chose another good defensive position and camped for two days while recovering a large number of stragglers and pack animals.

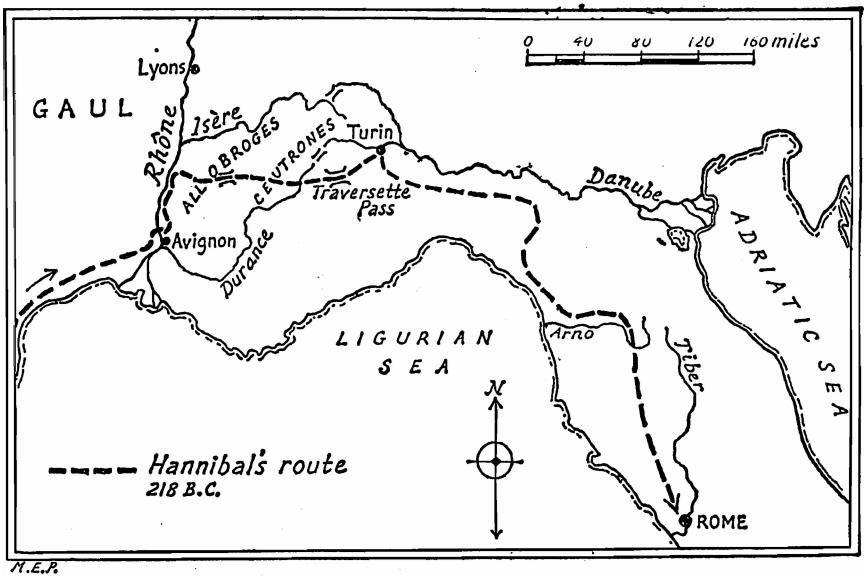
No one can say with certainty how many men Hannibal lost. Whatever his strength upon debouching from the Alps, his army, combined with his brilliant generalship and Roman-army confusions and weaknesses, proved sufficient to put him at the gates of Rome.

Rome followed her victory over the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War with a period of territorial expansion that forced her legions to fight numerous and costly campaigns against such conventionally armed foes as the Macedonians, Sicilians, and Carthaginians, but also against a variety of irregular forces that frequently employed guerrilla tactics.

In colonizing northern Italy, she provoked a general uprising of the Celtic tribes, a campaign lasting over twenty years. To subdue this area, she built strong points such as the burgess colony at Luna (Spezia) and later at Aquileia, which was ". . . brought into being to command the eastern passes and serve as a control point for the northern Adri-

26. Dodge and other older authorities suggest the Little St. Bernard pass, but recent scholarship points to the Traversette. De Beer (*Alps*), *supra*, writes on this in detail.

27. Polybius, op. cit.



N.E.P.

atic."[28] These proved only partially successful against continued incursions by the Celts, the Istrians, and the Dalmatians, who were not subdued until 156 B.C.

Sicily also proved a hotbed of insurrection. In 139 B.C., the slaves there rebelled:

> . . . with a few rags of skins about their nakedness, armed with reap hooks, spits, and stakes pointed and hardened in the fire, they swarmed through the streets, bursting into the houses and massacring all who came in their way, without regard to age or sex. More and more slaves from the surrounding estates crowded in to join Eunus and his earlier followers, and every man's foes were those of his own household. This led to an island-wide insurrection and in 135 B.C. the beginning of a three years' campaign which finally crushed the insurrection.[29]

Another major Sicilian outbreak occurred in 109 B.C. under "Salvius the Soothsayer," whose followers, by using guerrilla tactics, held out for nearly five years. The French historian Mirabeau later wrote of this insurrection: ". . . The misery caused in Sicily by this long war, which ended in 100 B.C., may be estimated by the fact that, whereas Sicily usually supplied Rome with corn, it was now desolated by famine, and its towns had to be supplied with grain from Rome."[30]

28. Reginald Hargreaves, *Beyond the Rubicon* (New York: New American Library, 1966).
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

In Italy proper, Rome faced a serious uprising of gladiators led by a Thracian, Spartacus, who used guerrilla tactics while forming an army. The war of Spartacus lasted for two years and cost thousands of Roman lives. Spartacus was finally killed in regular battle by the armies of Crassus and Pompey.[31]

In the east, Rome also had to deal with numerous insurrections and guerrilla raids: ". . . in the Balkan peninsula it demanded all the energies of M. Lucullus to contain the raids of the barbarian tribes, who were not finally brought to interim submission until 73 B.C."[32]

Guerrilla warfare even spread to the sea. Plutarch tells us, probably with exaggeration, that Mediterranean corsairs, the Cilicians, virtually controlled the Mediterranean with a fleet of a thousand galleys based on four hundred cities.

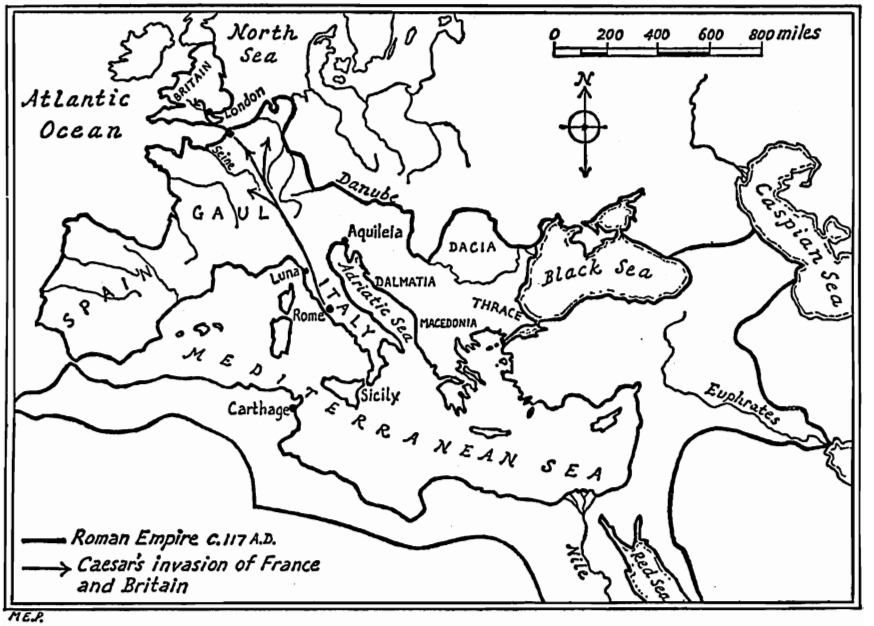
> . . . They had in various places arsenals, ports, and watchtowers, all strongly fortified. Their fleets were not only extremely well manned, supplied with skillful pilots, and fitted for their business by their lightness and celerity, but there was a parade of vanity about them more mortifying than their strength, with gilded sterns, purple canopies, and plated oars, as if they took pride and triumphed in their villainy. . . . They not only insulted the Romans at sea, but infested the great roads and plundered the villas near the coast.[33]

After several ineffectual attempts against these seagoing freebooters, the Roman Senate called Pompey to the military command and granted him emergency powers. In two major campaigns, Pompey destroyed 120 bases, killed 10,000 and captured 20,000 of the enemy, sunk 1,300 galleys, and captured 400 more—a welcome victory.[34]

Although evidence is scant, the Roman legions undoubtedly encountered guerrilla tactics in the conquest of central Europe and Britain, as is suggested by the frequent use of the word *latrocinium*—brigandage or banditry. Julius Caesar described the ambush of one of his legions shortly after he landed in Britain. Sent to fetch corn, the soldiers discovered that the fields had been gleaned except in one place:

> . . . The enemy, anticipating that the Romans would come here, had lain in wait in the woods during the night; then, when the troops had laid aside their weapons and were dispersed and busy reaping, they had suddenly fallen upon them. A few were killed; the rest, whose ranks were not properly formed, were thrown into confusion; and the enemy's horse and war chariots had at the same time encompassed them.[35]

31. Plutarch, *Lives* (London: Macmillan, 1902), Vol. 3 of 5 vols. Tr. A. H. Clough.
32. Hargreaves, op. cit.
33. Plutarch, op. cit., Vol. 4.
34. Ibid.
35. Julius Caesar, *Commentaries on the Gallic War* (London: Macmillan, 1908), Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Tr. T. Rice Holmes.



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The enemy fought in a way unfamiliar to the Romans. Chariots came onto the field,

> . . . the warriors hurling missiles; and generally they throw the enemy's ranks into confusion by the mere terror inspired by their horses and the clatter of the wheels. As soon as they have penetrated between the troops of cavalry [their own], the warriors jump off the chariots and fight on foot. The drivers meanwhile gradually withdraw from the action, and range the cars in such a position that, if the warriors are hard pressed by the enemy's numbers, they may easily get back to them. Thus they exhibit in action the mobility of cavalry combined with the steadiness of infantry; and they become so efficient from constant practice and training that they will drive their horses at full gallop, keeping them well in hand, down a steep incline, check and turn them in an instant, run along the pole, stand on the yoke, and step backwards again to the cars with the greatest nimbleness.
>
> Our men were unnerved by these movements, because the tactics were new to them. . . .[36]

Fortunately for the beleaguered legion, Caesar led a relief force to their aid and executed a fighting withdrawal. The initial success of the Britons made them overconfident, and when they attacked Caesar's camp shortly after, they were defeated.

36. Ibid.

Upon Caesar's return to Britain a year later, his legions encountered the same tactics employed by a number of tribes that had united under a local leader, Cassivellaunus. By judicious use of cavalry and infantry, Caesar advanced successfully against the Britons until he reached the river Thames. Here he found the enemy deployed in force on the opposite bank:

> . . . The bank was fenced by sharp stakes planted along its edge; and similar stakes were fixed under water and concealed by the river.

When Caesar discovered this from prisoners and successfully crossed the river, Cassivellaunus, abandoning "regular" warfare,

> . . . disbanded the greater part of his force, retaining only about four thousand charioteers; watched our line of march; and, moving a little away from the track, concealed himself in impenetrable wooded spots, and removed the cattle and inhabitants from the open country into the woods in those districts through which he had learned that we intended to march. Whenever our cavalry made a bold dash into the country to plunder and devastate, he sent his charioteers out of the woods (for he was familiar with every track and path), engaged the cavalry to their great peril, and by the fear which he thus inspired prevented them from moving far afield. Caesar had now no choice but to forbid them to move out of touch with the column of infantry, and, by ravaging the country and burning villages, to injure the enemy as far as the legionaries' power of endurance would allow.[37]

A lack of unity among enemy tribes soon ended resistance. Disloyal chiefs told Caesar the location of Cassivellaunus' headquarters, which he attacked and captured. Shortly thereafter, he forced Cassivellaunus into submission.

37. Ibid.

Chapter 2

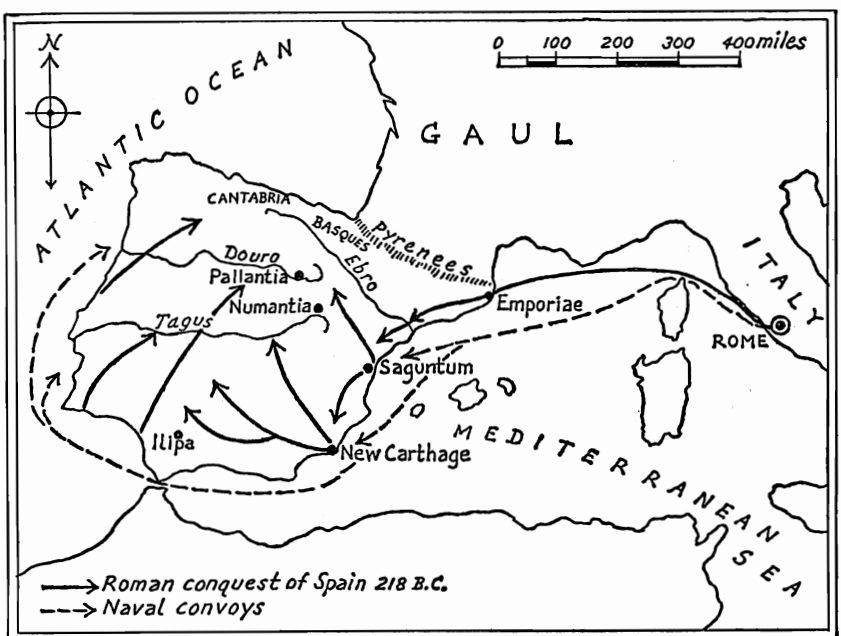
The Roman pacification of Spain • Reasons for the Roman presence • Scipio's campaign • The first uprisings • Cato's reply to the guerrillas • Guerrilla strength and weakness • Roman atrocities • The Roman investment • Rome's continued political and military failures • The reforms of Gracchus and Marcellus • The shame of Lucullus and Galba • The rise and fall of brave Viriathus • Scipio Aemilianus' reforms • The extraordinary rebellion of Quintus Sertorius • Final Roman "victory" • The campaign analyzed

ROME'S PROBLEMS in pacifying her northern, eastern, and southern ramparts seem slight when compared to the almost two hundred years of guerrilla warfare she encountered in winning control of Spain.

At one time occupied by numerous tribes, some indigenous and some of African stock, Spain had been overrun in the early Iron Age by Celtic tribes from Gaul. Bypassing the ferocious Basques in the Northwest, the Celts slowly melded with the original Iberians to produce a Celtiberian race of hardy and warlike peoples. Such tribes as the Cantabrians and Asturians in the north and west, the Galicians and Lusitanians in the south, and the Carpetanians, Vettones, and Numantians in the center remained virtually untouched by the coastal colonizing efforts of Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans, who impressed themselves on the more sophisticated and generally peaceful coastal tribes.[1]

1. E. S. Bouchier, *Spain Under the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1914).

Roman control of Spain stemmed from the Second Punic War, when the Romans landed an army in Spain in order to deprive Hannibal of support from this Carthaginian stronghold. The effort did not at first prosper. Gnaeus Scipio, who landed with two legions in 218 B.C. at Emporiae (Ampurias) and was joined a year later by his brother, Publius, fought Hasdrubal and the Carthaginians for several years. By 212 B.C., they had pushed well south of the Ebro to occupy an advanced base at Saguntum, from where they had won submission of many of the local tribes. But now disaster struck. Splitting his forces, Publius was attacked by a Celtiberian force under the guerrilla leader Indibilis, who destroyed the Roman army and killed its commander. Gnaeus was betrayed by local tribes, and he and his army were also destroyed.



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About nine thousand Roman survivors managed to hold the line of the Ebro until late in 211 B.C., when Claudius Nero arrived with reinforcements. The following year, Publius Cornelius Scipio, the twenty-seven-year-old son of the unfortunate Publius, arrived with ten thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry and relieved Claudius Nero. Scipio soon commenced a campaign south of the Ebro that would end Carthaginian rule of this land. Brilliant victories followed one after the other: Cartagena, Baecula, Ilipa—in all, young Scipio defeated four gen-

erals in a brilliant campaign well described by, among others, H. H. Scullard in his new book, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician.*[2]

By 206–205 B.C., Rome had replaced Carthage as the overlord of "civilized" or Nearer Spain, consisting of the coastal areas of Andalusia, Murcia, and Valencia. Her holdings consisted of little more than a series of ports or coastal enclaves with "finger salients" pushing inland, an area occupied both by friendly and by enemy tribes and also subject to raids by the fierce inlanders.

The Romans ran into trouble almost at once. The major reason was their attitude, which was purely exploitive in the worst sense. The praetors and their legionaries arrived as "civilized" conquerors of "barbarian" peoples. Roman arms had theretofore proved victorious over barbarian rabble and the Roman senate saw no reason why this would not prove the case in Spain.

Arrogance was not the least of Roman problems. As C. H. V. Sutherland has pointed out, the Roman army was virtually devoid of experience in administering colonial provinces when it took over the coastal regions of the Iberian Peninsula. The efficacy of ensuing military governments waxed and waned in proportion to the individual talents of the praetors, or governors-general, thenceforth sent with bewildering rapidity from Rome.[3]

The first Roman commander, Publius Cornelius Scipio, was an excellent general despite his youth. In pacifying and forging treaties with the local tribes, many of whom had been allied with the Carthaginians, he blended force with common sense.

His achievement, however, in no way disguised the brutal nature of the military operations or the rapacious quality of the occupation. Scipio frequently slaughtered or sold recalcitrant tribes into slavery and forced others to pay heavy war indemnities. "Scipio sailed for Rome," the historian Appian noted, "with a large fleet magnificently arrayed, and loaded down with captives, money, arms, and all kinds of booty. The city gave him a glorious reception, bestowing noble and unprecedented honors upon him on account of his youth and the rapidity and greatness of his exploits."[4]

Following Scipio's recommendations, the Romans attempted to rule the two provinces, Further and Nearer Spain, by a dual command system (communications being extremely difficult). Unfortunately the ad-

2. H. H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1970); see also H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman Legions* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), for the origin and development of the Roman army; Adcock, op. cit.

3. C. H. V. Sutherland, *The Romans in Spain* (London: Methuen, 1939).

4. Appian, *Appian's Roman History* (London: William Heinemann, 1964), Vol. 1 of 4 vols. Tr. Horace White; see also Scullard, op. cit.: Upon Scipio's return to Rome, ". . . he deposited in the Treasury 14,324 lbs. of silver (over a million *denarii*) in addition to coined silver."

ministration proved at once corrupt and oppressive, the praetors possessing all of Scipio's personal cupidity but none of his political acumen. Tribal levies continued with the introduction of the hated *stipendium,* a dual tax paid in money and in bodies for service in the Roman army. The praetors were soon systematically plundering the provinces, rich in metals and wheat, olives and wine. "As early as 203 B.C. great quantities of corn were exported to Rome. . . . In the years 206–197 B.C. alone the quantities of bullion [that were exported to Rome] amounted to 130,000 pounds of silver and 4,000 pounds of gold."[5]

The upshot of the Roman policy was that coastal tribes that had been friendly to Phoenicians, Greeks, and Carthaginians now rebelled. In 197 B.C., the Romans faced a general insurrection in both provinces. In Further Spain this was led by Indibilis, who had defeated Scipio's father and who was finally slain. Appian tells us that ". . . those who were guilty of inciting the revolt were brought to trial, and sentenced to death, and their property was confiscated. The tribes that took sides with Indibilis were fined, deprived of their arms, required to give hostages, and placed under stronger garrisons." But fighting continued in Nearer Spain. By 195 B.C., the Roman army controlled only two interior strongholds and the port of Emporiae. A relief army under M. Porcius Cato enticed the insurgents into formal battle and defeated them to win formal submission of the province.

So dissatisfied were the tribes, however, that rumor of Cato's departure prompted them to a new revolt. Cato answered this insurrection promptly and rigorously: After reducing the dissident communities and selling the people *en masse* into slavery, he ordered every town in the province to tear down its walls (and thus make itself defenseless against his arms).[6] Following his return to Rome in 194 B.C., however, there was ". . . no cessation of guerrilla warfare . . . with its constant drain upon Roman troops: Livy can write that a new governor lost nearly a half of his army in this manner during his years of office."[7]

Thus began a pattern: a revolt put down, "justice" done, treaties signed, exploitation continued, another revolt. Under subsequent praetors, the original *stipendium* gave way to a dual tax on property and persons. Later, provincial quaestors, or financial advisers, fixed grain prices to tribal disadvantage while the army frequently levied extraordinary requisitions of grain with inadequate or no compensation. On occasion, certain excesses proved even too much for Rome: in 171 B.C., the Roman senate's investigation of wholesale graft resulted in the exile of two former governors and some long overdue administrative re-

5. A. Schulten, "The Romans in Spain." In *The Cambridge Ancient History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1930), Chapter 10 of Vol. 8.
6. Appian, op. cit.
7. Sutherland, op. cit.

forms.[8] By and large, however, the bloodsucking policy continued through the decades and even centuries. In New Carthage (today's Cartagena) Polybius discovered forty thousand slaves, probably Iberian, working in the silver mines, which offered a daily yield of twenty-five thousand *denarii*.[9] A latter-day historian, A. Schulten concluded that ". . . the Iberians were treated little better than cattle."

Wholesale exploitation, unjust taxes and conscriptive levies continued as a matter of course, the Roman senate either not realizing that such a policy could only bring formerly dissident tribes together in mutual indignation—or they realized it, and did not care. The ancient historian Livy later pointed out that, because of the general policy, the Spaniards were for the first time fighting a purely personal war.

The Romans must have realized that the Spanish would fight. Many of the tribes had gained considerable military experience in the Second Punic War, and evidence of military skill and cunning was at hand. As early as 229 B.C., they rid themselves of one Carthaginian menace in the form of Hamilcar: "Taking a number of wagons loaded with wood, they yoked oxen to them, and themselves followed in arms. When the Africans [Carthaginians] saw this they fell to laughing, not perceiving the stratagem. But when they came to close quarters the Spaniards set fire to the wagons, with the oxen still yoked to them, and drove them against the enemy. The fire, being carried in every direction by the fleeing oxen, threw the Africans into confusion. Their ranks being thus broken the Spaniards dashed among them and killed Hamilcar himself and a great many others who came to his aid."[10]

Nor did Iberian tribes lack spirit. A sample of their personal courage and stoicism is found in an incident occurring shortly before Scipio left the country in 205 B.C. One of his generals, Marcius, had surrounded the town of Astapa, which had remained loyal to the Carthaginians. Only too well aware of their fate should they surrender—wholesale reduction to slavery—

They brought all their valuables into the market-place, piled wood around them, and put their wives and children on the heap. They made fifty of their principal men take an oath that whenever they should see that the city must fall, they would kill the women and children, set fire to the pile, and slay themselves thereon. Then calling the gods to witness what they had done, they sallied out against Marcius, who did not anticipate anything of the kind. For this reason, they easily repulsed his light-armed troops and cavalry. When they became engaged with the legionaries, they still had the best of it, because they fought with desperation. But the Romans eventually overpowered them by sheer numbers, for the Astapians certainly were not in-

8. Ibid.
9. Schulten, op. cit.
10. Appian, op. cit.

ferior to them in bravery. When they had all fallen, the fifty who remained behind slew the women and children, kindled the fire, and flung themselves on it, thus leaving the enemy a barren victory. Marcius, in admiration of the bravery of the Astapians, refrained from wantonly injuring their houses.[11]

Such delicacy was rare. The two decades necessary for Romans to gain control of coastal areas were marked by guerrilla wars involving heavy casualties and what today would be called atrocities. A favorite Roman punishment, for example, short of massacring an entire tribe or selling a tribe into slavery or burning tribal crops for miles around or demolishing all tribal villages, was to cut off the hands of the warriors. The insurgents invariably replied *quid pro quo,* usually by torturing or beheading Roman captives, and then fighting all the harder. Not only did dissident tribes willingly fight for their independence, or even for reasonable survival, but they fought exceptionally well. So long as they avoided set-piece battles in favor of the sudden attack or the ambush, they usually claimed the upper hand, although inevitably their guerrillas tired, tribes fell out with one another, and in the long run Roman force of arms told.

But at a tremendous cost to the conquerors, a cost that significantly contributed to the rise of the standing Roman army, to civil strife at home, to civil war, to dictatorship, and finally the monarchy.

From the beginning, the Spanish experience heavily taxed Roman resources. By 205 B.C., ". . . casualties [in the Punic Wars] had wiped out nearly a fourth of the burgess population, the traditional source of the Legions' very best recruits, and suitable replacements to fill the yawning gaps in the ranks were hard to find."[12] Nonetheless, early losses in Spain were extraordinarily heavy. From 206 to 179 B.C. over seventy thousand legionaries and eighty thousand Latin *socii,* or allies, were drafted to the provinces; the two crises of 195 and 187 B.C. account for a proportionately large share of these, ". . . but each province appears to have received fairly regular reinforcements varying from a half-legion, as happened frequently, up to eight or ten thousand men, this incessant drain being caused by the ever-widening area of warfare and partly by the peculiarly wearing and expensive character of guerrilla tactics."[13]

At a time when the Roman army was already spreading thin, the occupation and further conquest of Spain called for four strong legions. This commitment was the more serious, and indeed marks a very significant change in Roman policy, because, as the able historian Mommsen points out, ". . . the old Roman custom of sending troops only where the exigencies of war at the moment required them, and

11. Ibid.
12. Hargreaves, op. cit.
13. Sutherland, op. cit.

of not keeping the man called to serve, except in very serious and important wars, under arms for more than a year, was found incompatible with the retention of the turbulent and remote Spanish provinces beyond the sea; it was absolutely impossible to withdraw the troops from these, and very dangerous even to relieve them extensively. The Roman burgesses began to perceive that dominion over a foreign people is an annoyance not only to the vanquished but the victor, and began to murmur loudly regarding the odious war-service of Spain."[14]

The troops were also murmuring. By the time provincial riches filtered through praetors, quaestors, and other satraps, both military and civil, precious little remained for the ordinary legionnaire, who found himself in a strange and generally hostile land, his day devoted either to tiresome garrison routine or to extended campaigns "up-country." Such campaigns called for hard physical labor expended either in hewing elaborately fortified camps out of unfriendly soil or in chasing elusive guerrillas. Conventionally minded commanders insisted on using "mass" tactics that, inappropriate to the terrain, frequently resulted in dreaded and costly ambush by the lurking enemy. Moreover, the ordinary soldier's pay was frequently delayed; so was his relief. Casualties were high and, even worse, the numerous campaigns seemed never-ending in this land ". . . where large armies starved and small armies got beaten."[15]

These difficulties scarcely deterred either the Roman senate or its praetors in Spain from pursuing an expansionist policy designed to win control of the interior of the country. Before the coastal regions were even pacified, expeditionary forces began probing inland to launch a war that would last, with interruptions, for nearly 150 years—a war marked by all the errors of the earlier fighting.

The most striking characteristic of the Roman conquest is not Spanish successes, but rather Roman political and military failures—the seeming inability to adjust sufficiently to meet what in time must have become an obvious challenge. The lessons of the earlier insurrectionary crises must have struck even the most obtuse governor or dim-witted military commander; yet, with the passing of each crisis, the lessons seemingly vanished into the prevailing morass compounded of imperialistic arrogance, personal greed, and professional ineptness. Although records are somewhat scanty, one reads more often than not of severe setbacks such as that in 191 B.C., when the Lusitanians forced a Roman army, ". . . after heavy loss, to abandon its camp, and to return by forced marches into the more tranquil districts."[16] Time and again, commanders led their bulky columns into costly, often disastrous ambushes. The few successful commanders showed much more respect for the adver-

14. Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome* (London: J. S. Dent & Sons, 1911), Vol. 3. Tr. W. P. Dickson.
15. Sutherland, op. cit.
16. Hargreaves, op. cit.

sary, and more than once employed guerrilla tactics in order to gain victory.

But an enlightened commander appeared only occasionally. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus was one such. After putting down a severe insurrection in Further Spain in 179 B.C. (with the usual harsh methods), he attempted to exploit his victory by extending Roman friendship to various Celtiberian tribes in the form of equitable treaties: in return for annual tribute, he offered tribes certain economic and administrative advantages. Gracchus followed his conquest of Cantabria, for example, by forming the poor ". . . into a part of the community, making them a grant of land, and with all the tribesmen of this district he made clearly defined treaties, by which they were to be friends of Rome; and he exchanged oaths with them to this effect, for which they often yearned in the subsequent wars."[17]

Another moderate and farsighted ruler, Claudius Marcellus, echoed Gracchus' reforms. Marcellus even persuaded major tribes of the interior to send a peace embassy to Rome—an excellent plan voided by the catastrophic refusal of the Roman senate to receive the barbarians.

The progressive reforms of these two rulers soon fell victim to reaction. A series of particularly rapacious praetors abrogated the treaties to start new wars. Seriously alarmed, Rome now took the unusual step of sending out a consul, Lucius Lucullus,[18] but, by the time he arrived, peace had been declared. Unwilling to forsake either fame or booty, Lucullus distinguished himself by attacking and slaughtering some twenty thousand members of a friendly Celtiberian tribe; he followed this with a highlands campaign but, plagued by Pallantian guerrillas, soon retreated south to join forces with the praetor Servius Galba. Soon thereafter, Galba further extended Roman honor by inviting three Lusitanian tribes to the treaty table, then loosing general tribal massacres.[19]

The effect of such perfidy can well be imagined. As is invariably the case, it wrought far more harm than good to the perpetrators: a few years later, in 148 B.C., the wheel of Roman treachery turned full circle. A new governor, Gaius Vetilius, had surrounded a force of some ten thousand Lusitanian rebels. These were about ready to surrender when Viriathus, a minor guerrilla leader who had escaped the earlier Galba

17. Appian, op. cit.

18. To hasten Lucullus' arrival, the senate shifted the normal date of his taking office from March 15 to January 1, which thenceforth marked the beginning of the new calendar year.

19. Mommsen (op. cit.) concluded: ". . . War has hardly ever been waged with so much perfidy, cruelty, and avarice as by these two generals; yet by means of their criminally acquired treasures the one escaped condemnation and the other escaped even impeachment. The veteran Cato, in his eighty-fifth year, a few months before his death, attempted to bring Galba to account before the burgesses; but the weeping children of the general, and the gold which he had brought home with him, demonstrated to the Roman people his innocence."

massacre, rose in assembly to remind the Lusitanians of Roman promises and Roman deeds—and then persuade them to an escape attempt.

Appian has left us a detailed account of this experience. Viriathus

> . . . drew them all up in line of battle as though he intended to fight, but gave them orders that when he should mount his horse they should scatter in every direction and make their way as best they could by different routes to the city of Tribola and there wait for him. He chose one thousand only whom he commanded to stay with him. These arrangements having been made, they all fled as soon as Viriathus mounted his horse. Vetilius was afraid to pursue those who had scattered in so many different directions but turning towards Viriathus who was standing there and apparently waiting a chance to attack, joined battle with him. Viriathus, having very swift horses, harassed the Romans by attacking, then retreating, again standing still and again attacking, and thus consumed the whole of that day and the next dashing around on the same field. As soon as he conjectured that the others had made good their escape, he hastened away in the night by devious paths and arrived at Tribola with his nimble steeds, the Romans not being able to follow him at an equal pace by reason of the weight of their armor, their ignorance of the roads, and the inferiority of their horses. Thus did Viriathus, in an unexpected way, rescue his army from a desperate situation.

During his retreat, Viriathus set up an ambush in a dense thicket. When these irregulars fell on the pursuing Romans, Viriathus doubled his main force back to the attack: "Vetilius himself was taken prisoner; and the man who captured him not knowing who he was, but seeing that he was old and fat, and considering him worthless, killed him. Of the 10,000 Romans, 6,000 with difficulty made their way to the city of Carpessus on the seashore. . . ."[20] Although casualty figures offered by the ancients are always suspect, there seems little doubt that Viriathus and his guerrillas accounted for thousands of Roman lives in the following virulent decade. During these years of what Viriathus called "fiery war," ". . . legion after legion vanished in the defiles of the mountains, whose heights were crowned with captured trophies of Roman arms."[21]

In desperation, Rome sent her best generals, but although these inflicted an occasional setback on Viriathus, he continued to give far more than he received. In 140 B.C., he surrounded a Roman army and possibly could have ended Roman hegemony in Further Spain by destroying it. Instead, probably because of the fatigue of his own forces, he agreed to a treaty ratified by the Roman senate. But as Sutherland points out, ". . . in neither province was the sanctity of treaties much more, by now, than a diplomatic method for extricating Roman soldiers from

20. Appian, op. cit.
21. Hargreaves, op. cit.

a strategic impasse." With the knowledge of the Roman senate, a local commander soon abrogated the treaty and renewed the war. Adding to perfidy, the Romans now arranged to have Viriathus stabbed to death while he slept. His death severely weakened the insurrection and led to uneasy peace in 137 B.C.

Once again the Romans had won a Pyrrhic victory: ". . . it would be wrong to suppose that . . . [subsequent Roman campaigns] enjoyed any permanence, or that they hastened the pacification of these backward and warlike [Celtiberian] tribes, which still awaited subjection over a century later. . . ."[22]

Nor was there peace in the north, where for twelve years guerrilla bands had held two strongholds and on one occasion had forced the surrender of an entire Roman army. Furious in humiliation, the Roman senate turned to P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor, famed conqueror of Carthage, who reached Spain in 134 B.C.

The incessant wars had left their mark on the Roman army, both in Spain and elsewhere. The military reforms of Gaius Gracchus were not altogether lost and had inspired further reforms by Marius, who attempted to increase the mobility and efficiency of the army. One authority tells us that at the time of Marius ". . . the Roman legionary carried a saw, a basket, a spade, an axe, a leather thong, a sickle, a chain, and three days' rations, not to mention some kit." Marius lightened this load and also is said to have devised a method by which the soldier removed ". . . his pack without interfering with his armor."[23]

In Spain, however, the individual soldier's lot had deteriorated through the decades. Appian has given us a graphic description of one of Lucullus' field camps:

> . . . Their soldiers were sick from watching [the enemy] and want of sleep, and because of the unaccustomed food which the country afforded. They had no wine, no salt, no vinegar, no oil, but lived on wheat and barley, and quantities of venison and rabbit's flesh boiled without salt, which caused dysentery, from which many died.[24]

Rear-area duty was as unattractive in a different way, the cities being hotbeds of drunken and licentious behavior. According to Mommsen, by 137 B.C. the army was a shocking mixture of "dissoluteness, insubordination and cowardice," and it was this state of affairs that Scipio Aemilianus tried to put right.

Scipio immediately ". . . expelled all traders and harlots; also the soothsayers and diviners, whom the soldiers were continually consulting because they were demoralized by defeat. . . ." After this breath of

22. Sutherland, op. cit.
23. Parker, op. cit.; see also Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969).
24. Appian, op. cit.

fresh air, he ". . . ordered all wagons and their superfluous contents to be sold, and all pack animals, except such as he himself permitted to remain. For cooking utensils it was only permitted to have a spit, a brass kettle, and one cup. Their food was limited to plain boiled and roasted meats. They were forbidden to have beds, and Scipio was the first to sleep on straw. He forbade them to ride on mules when on the march; 'for what can you expect in a war,' said he, 'from a man who is not even able to walk?' They had to bathe and anoint themselves without assistance, Scipio saying sarcastically that only mules, having no hands, needed others to rub them. Thus in a short time he brought them back to good order."[25] He then went on to "win" a war against the Numantians, his final "victory" significantly enough involving sixty thousand troops (including forty thousand native auxiliaries) against four thousand enemy.[26] Nonetheless, Scipio ended a black era and in conjunction with a senatorial commission from Rome brought a better day to the peninsula. These reforms helped open the Castiles to the conquerors, who colonized as far north as the Douro River and as far west as the Tagus.

A relatively quiet period now ensued, but was broken by civil strife at home which led to a rebellion by one Quintus Sertorius. A remarkable man, Sertorius. Veteran of Cimbrian, Spanish, and Italian campaigns (he had lost an eye), he had become a democratic revolutionary, a supporter of Marius and Lepidus. Banished to Spain by Sulla, he soon won a considerable following of dissident officers and soldiers, but was now forced to go to Africa, where, according to Mommsen, he led ". . . a restless life of adventure along the Spanish and African coasts, sometimes in league, sometimes at war, with the Cilician pirates who haunted these seas, and with the chieftains of the roving tribes of Libya."

In 81 B.C., the Lusitanians persuaded him to lead them in a revolt against Roman rule, and he returned to Spain, where he commanded a small legion of Romans, mostly deserters and Africans. A brilliant commander and organizer, Sertorius organized and trained this nucleus along formal Roman lines. Supported by guerrilla bands, also under his command, he raised the standard of revolt in the interior, where his small army easily evaded the legions of Quintus Caecilius Metellus. Like Viriathus before him, Sertorius used Spain's vast spaces to lure legions from coastal enclaves and then attack lines of communication and harass at will. Clever Sertorius even made common cause with coastal privateers, who intercepted Roman supply ships. But his real key to success lay in building a strong political base from diverse Celtiberian tribes. In contrast to the average Roman governor, as Mommsen pointed out, Sertorius

25. Ibid.
26. Sutherland, op. cit.

. . . endeavored to attach the provincials to Rome and to himself personally. His chivalrous character rendered it easy for him to enter into Spanish habits, and excited in the Spanish nobility the most ardent enthusiasm for the wonderful foreigner who had a spirit so kindred with their own. . . . Throughout he exercised a just and gentle rule. His troops, at least so far as his eye and his arm reached, had to maintain the strictest discipline . . . he reduced the tribute, and directed the soldiers to construct winter barracks for themselves, so that the oppressive burden of quartering the troops was done away and thus a source of unspeakable mischief and annoyance was stopped. For the children of Spaniards of quality an academy was erected at Osca (Huesca) in which they received the higher instruction usual in Rome. . . . It was the first attempt to accomplish their Romanization not by extirpating the old inhabitants and filling their places with Italian emigrants, but by Romanizing the provincials themselves. . . .

By the end of 77 B.C., the whole of Nearer Spain had become ". . . by treaty or force dependent on Sertorius, and the district on the upper and middle Ebro thenceforth continued the mainstay of his power."[27]

Pompey arrived with reinforcements the following year. A more skillful tactician than Metellus, Pompey invaded the highlands and slowly forced Sertorius to fragment his forces. Although Sertorius held his own for another few years, Roman weight slowly told, as it had in the case of Viriathus. Loss of his better officers, particularly his chief lieutenant, L. Hirtuleius, hurt him, as did the defection of various tribes. But Pompey had still not won a "decisive" battle against him when a rival, Perperna, murdered Sertorius, in 72 B.C.

Pompey could scarcely claim victory. Sertorius' legion probably never exceeded five thousand troops, but in trying to capture it and subdue the supporting guerrillas, Mommsen tells us that, in all, the Romans employed 120,000 infantry, 2,000 archers and slingers, and 6,000 horse. Mommsen summed up the tragic record:

. . . The [Roman] state suffered from it beyond description. The flower of the Italian youth perished amid the exhausting fatigues of these campaigns. The public treasury was not only deprived of the Spanish revenues, but had annually to send to Spain for the pay and maintenance of the Spanish armies very considerable sums, which the government hardly knew how to raise. Spain was devastated and impoverished, and the Roman civilization, which unfolded so fair a promise there, received a severe shock; as was naturally to be expected in the case of an insurrectionary war waged with so much bitterness, and but too often occasioning the destruction of whole com-

27. Mommsen, op. cit., Vol. 4; see also Sutherland, op. cit.; Adcock, op. cit.: A pupil of Marius, Sertorius ". . . combined skill in the normal tactics of a Roman army with a keen appreciation of the advantages which Spain offers to a nimble army which can make the country and its inhabitants its allies."

munities. . . . The generals had encountered an opponent far superior in talent, a tough and protracted resistance, a warfare of very serious perils and of successes difficult to be attained and far from brilliant.[28]

The final territorial expansion began under Julius Caesar's governorship of Further Spain when, in 61–60 B.C., he extended Roman frontiers to the mouth of the Douro. After the interim of the Caesar-Pompey wars, Augustus continued the task in a series of bloody campaigns that won Rome control of the northwestern corner in the vicinity of the Cantabrian Mountains.

With this conquest, completed in 19 B.C., nearly all of Spain lay subject to Roman control. Sporadic uprisings, however, continued to mar the scene, and Augustus was forced to garrison the newly won areas with three legions—a heavy commitment, considering their material value.

Some authorities suggest that, even with various reforms, the essential ruthlessness of the Roman policy had not really changed at the beginning of the fifth century A.D., when Eastern barbarians crossed the Rhine and flooded Gaul and Spain. According to Salvian, local peoples even preferred barbarians to imperial tax collectors, and big landowners had as much to fear from agrarian insurgents, the Bagandae, as from the barbarians.

The Roman experience in Spain, once the Carthaginians were defeated, is remarkable for several reasons. One is the value of leadership to both sides. Roman fortunes soared under capable leaders such as Scipio Africanus, Cato, Gracchus, and Scipio Aemilianus; they suffered under such incompetents as Lucullus and Galba. In general, Roman leadership was lacking, and not alone in Spain. One authority, F. E. Adcock, noted that ". . . the faults of Roman generals and admirals are sometimes those of inexperience, more commonly the failure to discover new tactics to meet either unfamiliar heresies or some unusual situation. . . . Overconfidence combined with an imperfect intelligence service and bad scouting was a frequent cause of defeat."[29]

A Roman commander in Spain faced three essential challenges. First he had to inspire troops who held little reason for being inspired—leadership had to replace reason. Leadership was greatly aided by tactical victory, but in order to achieve this, the commander had to be sufficiently competent and flexible to respond satisfactorily to the second challenge, his tactical environment. And in order to exploit a tactical victory, he had to meet the challenge of the political environment.

Roman strength lay primarily in organization and force of arms—in the ability to wage sustained war. Although a Roman army might be

28. Ibid.
29. Adcock, op. cit.

tactically defeated—even decimated, as happened more than once—it was replaceable and, just as important, the Roman senate was willing to replace it. So long as communications existed with the home country —so long as Rome controlled the western Mediterranean—the Romans were able to pursue a strategy of attrition or, more simply, exhaustion. In the end, this gained the political-economic goal in Spain—but at a tremendous price. The strategic-economic value of the conquest could not conceivably justify the effect of the prolonged war on domestic politics, while the large garrison forces required to hold the peace were made available only by weakening vulnerable frontiers.

If leadership was important to the Romans, it was vital to the guerrillas, who sadly lacked cohesion and organization. Defense of the homeland is a splendid motivation for militant action, but unless organized, it is virtually useless, a nuisance nagging to nothing.

A Punicus or a Mummius could lead a tribal insurrection; a Viriathus was required to organize and train an intertribal force large enough and good enough to threaten Roman aspirations for a decade. Considering the lack of military organization, training, arms, equipment, supply, and communications, Viriathus' achievements are startling, particularly since part of his army reached paramilitary and even regular military status sufficient to wage limited but successful semiorthodox warfare. In the end, however, organizational and material deficiencies engendered enough fatigue and dissatisfaction to trigger inter- and intratribal rivalries (never very quiescent) and forced him to make peace with the Romans at a time when he held an entire Roman army at his mercy. This was a fatal mistake, as it turned out. It was possibly unavoidable: the guerrilla also gets tired.

Rebel strength lay primarily in extreme mobility based on local knowledge of the terrain and aided by minimum logistic requirements. This worked very well for hit-and-run warfare: the ambush, the sudden attack, the isolated assassination. Lacking staying power, however, unable to organize and build a regular military force, the guerrillas remained vulnerable to the tactical extension of Rome's political policy, *divide et impera*—divide and rule. Had the Roman senate decreed a just political-economic policy for prudent commanders to follow, it is conceivable that the conquest of Spain would have taken ten years, not two centuries.

The tactical lessons are manifest. On the Roman side, failure of most commanders to adjust to local challenges wasted thousands of lives. This is in part understandable. It is an uncomfortable paradox that the weight of an organized military force may at times prove a weakness in a campaign against irregulars, but nonetheless this weight is often necessary to win the tactical domination essential to gain and maintain peace. But this weight must be held to an absolute minimum—Scipio Aemilianus, for example, quickly eliminated the numerous camp fol-

lowers and unnecessarily bulky supply trains. From the beginning in Spain, the situation called for what was eminently possible: a streamlining of standard legion organization and of standard tactics, both developed for a different kind of war. The Spanish experience brought significant changes in organization—it probably helped produce the cohort in place of the manciple—and it also brought changes in weapons, probably accounting for the Romans' adopting the two-edged sword.[30] But such changes came all too slowly, as did tactical modifications.

A few commanders rose to the tactical challenge. Gracchus, Cato, the Scipios, and Pompey each fought noteworthy campaigns. Experienced military commanders, they had learned a great deal from previous wars, and were not above learning from the Spanish enemy. The inability or refusal of other Roman commanders either to respect or learn from this same enemy invariably brought disaster—the inevitable result of the arrogance of ignorance reinforced by the arrogance of power.

30. Parker, op. cit.

Chapter 3

Cyrus' tactical tricks • Hannibal's cunning • Fabian strategy and tactics • Tactical adaptation in Spain • The spear and sword of the West versus the bow and arrow of the East • Warfare in early China • The amazing Sun Tzu: The Art of War *• Quasi-guerrilla tactics of Goths and Huns • Fridigern and the battle of Adrianople • Political weaknesses of the barbarians • Rise of the Franks • Attila and the Huns*

NEITHER EASTERN TRIBES nor Celtiberians monopolized guerrilla tactics. Persian, Greek, and Roman commanders who assembled forces secretly, marched rapidly, and struck unexpectedly often proved victorious. Nor did early guerrillas monopolize cunning and deception. Orthodox generals of antiquity on occasion produced victory, sometimes against great odds, by introducing unorthodox tactics to the battlefield.

These commanders used a variety of tricks, any one of which would have brought wrathful protest if used by guerrillas. Some stemmed from imagination of individual commanders, some from a boorish technological extension of existing weapons. They are interesting for two reasons: first because they demonstrate the genesis of what too many contemporary strategists and commanders believe is exclusive to our day, the contrasting use of surprise, deception and shock; and second because their circumscribed use in the West indicates a philosophy of warfare that

before the birth of Christ was beginning to contrast with that of the East.

Some tricks were basic, even amusing. The Persian king Cyrus, to neutralize the power of Lydian cavalry, ". . . collected together all the camels from his supply train and mounted riders on them then advanced them in front of his other troops . . . the reason being that the horse has a natural dread of the camel and cannot abide either the sight or smell of him. The Lydian warhorses immediately galloped off the field, a great combat ensued and the Persians won the victory. . . ."[1]

Thus wrote Herodotus, who went on to describe another Cyrian ploy, on a slightly higher plane. Frustrated in his siege of Babylon, Cyrus ingeniously diverted the Euphrates in order that his troops could enter the city by means of the dry river bed. Had the Babylonians any notion of what was taking place, ". . . they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street-gates which gave upon the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy as it were in a trap." But not dreaming that Cyrus could or would divert a river, ". . . they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and revelling until they learnt the capture but too certainly."[2]

The Phocians relied on extreme if cruel cunning in a war against the stronger Thessalians. As a defense against Thessalian cavalry, the Phocians dug a trench in a pass the invaders would have to use, filled it with empty wine jars, then camouflaged it and sat back, weapons on the ready. Seeing the enemy, the Thessalian cavalry ". . . rushed rapidly forward and became entangled in the wine-jars, which broke the legs of their horses." The Phocians later pulled off one of the most successful night attacks of antiquity by whitening their bodies with chalk, which caused the enemy to imagine a supernatural visitation. Completely panicking, the Thessalians were slaughtered.[3]

Darius was not so subtle, but by attaching finely honed scythes to his chariot wheels, he combined shock and terror to gain a far greater tactical advantage than that warranted by the weapon itself.

An even less subtle use of an existing weapon was conceived by an unknown commander who first used catapults to heave decaying animal cadavers into besieged towns in order to cause disease. This was later refined by heaving plague-ridden human corpses over city walls.

On the less violent side are instances of tactical adaptation. In a regular military organization standard tactics are necessary if the commander's will is to be expressed, but an able commander will bend and shape his tactics to an unusual degree if the situation so dictates.

Hannibal's early victories in Italy owe considerable to his having acted

1. Herodotus, op. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

unexpectedly, for example by taking an "impossible" route of march to ambush a Roman army. De Beer offers several instances of the Carthaginian general's cunning. To throw off a Roman army guarding a pass through the Apennines that he needed to use, ". . . Hannibal had lighted torches tied to the horns of a number of cattle and drove them at night in another direction. The Romans mistook the cattle for the Carthaginians, while Hannibal's men were then able to slip through." In De Beer's words: ". . . His ruses were so numerous and his stratagems so subtle that the Romans felt constantly insecure. He became the embodiment of what the Romans called 'Punic faith,' by which they meant treacherousness. When they did the same thing, it was of course no longer treachery. . . ."[4]

Hannibal was stymied, on the other hand, by Quintus Fabius Maximus, who turned the Roman army into virtually a guerrilla force. For months, Fabius shadowed Hannibal's marches, ". . . harassing his foragers, cutting off stragglers, nipping off a stray patrol, but never permitting himself to be drawn into full-scale battle."[5] Impatient Romans derisively called him "the Laggard"; history has treated him more kindly by acknowledging him as the inventor of Fabian tactics.

The most successful Roman commanders in Spain were the most adaptable. When Gracchus was suddenly attacked by twenty thousand "peace petitioners," who had come to his camp bearing olive branches, he ". . . adroitly abandoned his camp to them and simulated flight; then suddenly turning he fell upon them while they were plundering, killed most of them, and made himself master of the Complega . . ." (and, it should be noted, offered an equitable treaty at once accepted).[6] On another occasion, the Roman general M. Fulvius Nobilior was ambushed by a Segedian force under Carus and took a terrible beating with some six thousand casualties. But when Carus ". . . was engaged in a disorderly pursuit after the victory, the Roman horse, who were guarding the baggage, fell upon him, and in their turn killed no less than 6,000 Arevaci, including Carus. . . ."[7] When one of Scipio Aemilianus' tribunes, Rufus, led his cavalry into a Numantian ambush, Scipio followed hard on, divided ". . . his horse into two bodies, and ordered them to charge the enemy on either side alternately, hurling their javelins all together and then retiring, not to the same spot from which they had advanced, but a little farther back each time. In this way the horsemen were brought in safety to the plain"—a neat fighting withdrawal. Scipio now decided to retire across a river. Learning that the enemy had set an ambush around the difficult and muddy ford, he ". . . took a route that was longer and less exposed to ambushes. Here he marched by

4. De Beer (*Alps*), *supra*.
5. Hargreaves, op. cit.
6. Appian, op. cit.
7. Ibid.

night on account of the heat and thirst, and dug wells which yielded for the most part only bitter water. He saved his men with extreme difficulty, but some of his horses and pack animals perished of thirst."[8]

On the part of the Romans, such tactical adaptation was rare, and almost always was forced by the enemy rather than produced voluntarily by a commander trained to think in terms of either the unexpected or the indirect approach based on cunning. As J. F. C. Fuller presciently pointed out, the homeric tradition of warfare stressed the cult of the individual hero: ". . . It is out of valor that European history rises; the spear and sword, and not, as in Asia, the bow and arrow, are its symbols. The bravest and not the most crafty are the leaders of men, and it is their example rather than their skill which dominates battle. . . . Valor disdained inventiveness."[9]

Long before the birth of Christ, valor had embraced inventiveness in the Far East. Until early in the fifth century B.C., Chinese armies conformed to the dynastic tradition of the West. They were invariably commanded by kings or princes or lords, who engaged in frequent "honorable" battles fought ". . . to satisfy a whim, to revenge an insult, or to collect booty . . . primitive melées which usually produced no decisive results."[10]

As specific states grew in size and strength and in turn began nibbling at less powerful neighbors, China, in the mid fifth century B.C., entered a period known as the Warring States. Feudalism declined sharply and warfare became what one ancient Chinese nobleman termed "a fundamental occupation." Powerful rulers now formed standing armies commanded by professional officers who conducted important campaigns far from their home states. Technological advances such as the invention of the crossbow (which did not appear in the West until the fifth century A.D.) and the introduction of iron weapons spelled the decline of primitive chariot warfare. Armies grew increasingly sophisticated, generals employed staff officers, and highly trained, elite units practiced march security and scouting techniques.

One of the more interesting treatises ever written on warfare dates from this period: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War,* written probably around the mid fourth century B.C. In thirteen relatively short chapters, this brilliant philosopher-general displayed a strategic and tactical insight as unorthodox as it was astute, and the work undoubtedly caused neighboring rulers much uneasiness. Often standing at odds with Greco-Roman military doctrines (as we believe we know them), it is essentially a demand for an indirect approach to war at political, strategic, and tactical levels.

8. Ibid.
9. Fuller, op. cit.
10. S. B. Griffith, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War, supra.* This section is taken almost completely from Dr. Griffith's excellent work.

By Sun Tzu's time, war had become ". . . a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death, the road to survival or ruin." Such are disadvantages of war to the state that it should be avoided whenever possible by clever diplomacy (which should utilize high-level espionage). Able statesmanship, by isolating and demoralizing the potential enemy, should defeat him before the combat stage is reached. In Sun Tzu's mind, ". . . to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." Sun Tzu recommended that a state go to war only if the diplomatic offensive failed. But a state should do this only after making a careful estimate of the situation to determine if human, physical, and doctrinal factors favored rapid victory, ". . . for there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited."

If a state decided on battle, the able general must pay closest attention to such factors as terrain, weather, and enemy plans, ". . . for the crux of military operations lies in the pretence of accommodating one's self to the designs of the enemy." Therefore: ". . . Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. Know the ground, know the weather; your victory will then be total."

Sun Tzu insisted that both strategy and tactics be fashioned with the knowledge that ". . . all warfare is based on deception": ". . . Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near." The able general must maneuver his army in such a way as ". . . to make the devious route the most direct and to turn misfortune to advantage." The commander who understands the strategy of the indirect approach "will be victorious."

Having "shaped" his enemy by his own foresight, by control of his forces, by extreme mobility (aided by native scouts) and by careful terrain appreciation, the general next deployed two tactical elements: the *cheng,* or orthodox force, normally used to hold the enemy, and the *ch'i,* or unorthodox force, normally used to attack the enemy's flanks and rear. These two forces ". . . are mutually reproductive; their interaction as endless as that of interlocked rings. Who can determine where one ends and the other begins?" The one complements the other, and if the tactical commander correctly employs them, ". . . his potential is that of a fully drawn crossbow; his timing, the release of the trigger."

That Sun Tzu's words were assiduously studied is proved by the careful remarks of "the Commentators"—later analysts such as Tu Yu, Li Ch'üan, Chang Yü, and Tu Mu, who clarified some of Sun Tzu's principles and added contemporary experiences to illustrate them.

These offer an invaluable insight into Chinese military thinking, and Dr. Griffith wisely included a selection of them in his translation of Sun Tzu's work. The oriental mystique is well illustrated in one discussion

on terrain. Sun Tzu stated that ". . . in encircled ground I would block the points of access and egress."

Centuries later, a famous scholar named Tu Mu read this sentence. Picture old Tu in a silk robe sipping tea, stroking his wispy beard. Then, suddenly inspired, he puts brush to rice paper, the beautiful Chinese characters reading: ". . . It is military doctrine that an encircling force must leave a gap to show the surrounded troops there is a way out, so that they will not be determined to fight to the death. Then, taking advantage of this, strike."

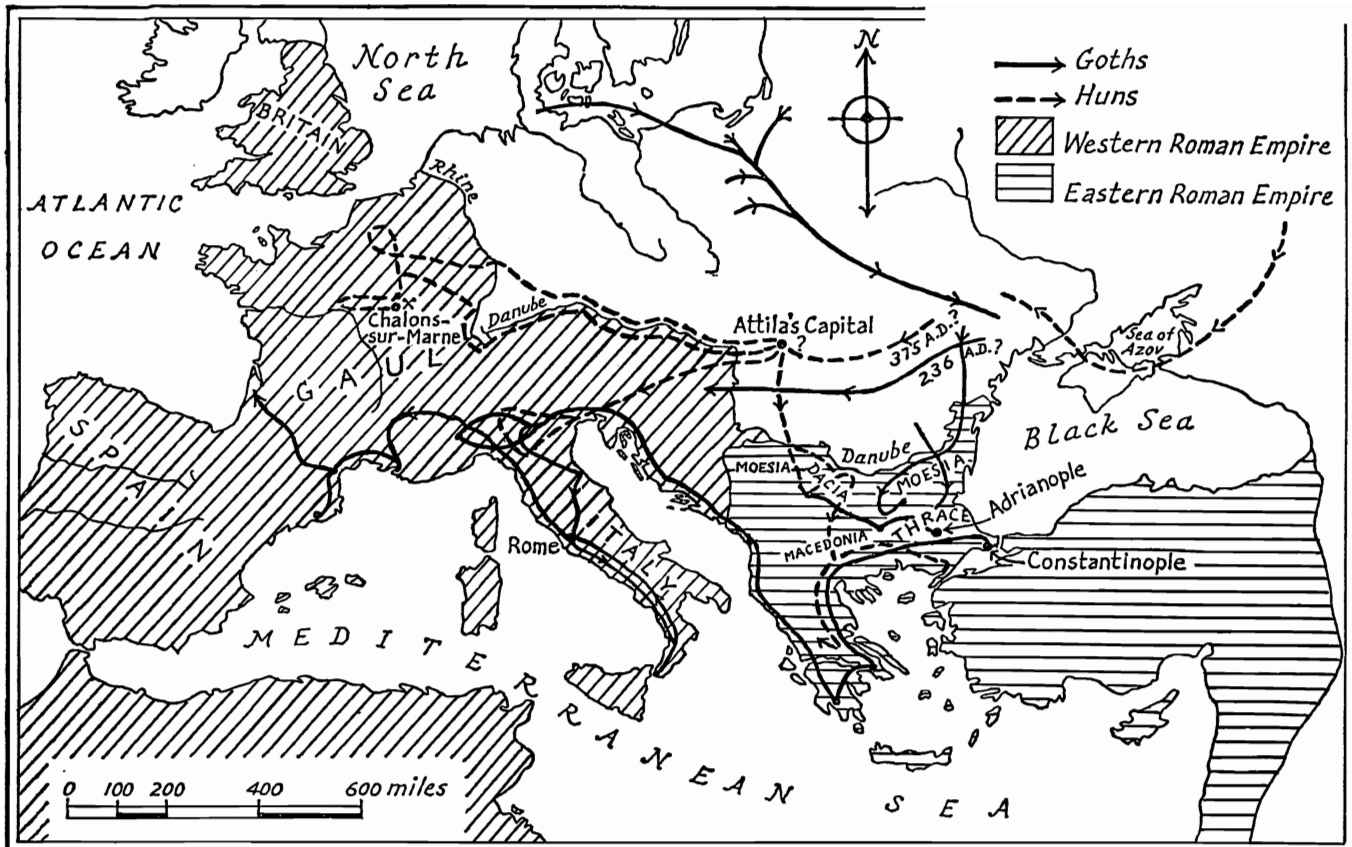
Tu Mu now finishes his tea, strolls to a pool, feeds an idle carp, relives another campaign or two, and suddenly remembers that one day a general is the encircler, the next day the encircled. He returns to his brush and rice paper and concludes: ". . . Now, if I am in encircled ground, and the enemy opens a road in order to tempt my troops to take it, I close this means of escape so that my officers and men will have a mind to fight to the death."

Just what currency Sun Tzu's work gained outside China is a moot question. Considering the literacy level of the barbarian tribes that invaded the Roman Empire, a tempting answer is, None at all. But this is to disallow that songs, legends, stories, and teachings have always survived primarily by word of mouth. Commercial intercourse by boat also existed among China, Egypt, and Africa; students may have passed on his teachings, probably in mutilated form, to various incursive tribes such as the Hiong Nu, ". . . who attacked the empire of China in the second and first centuries B.C." before turning west.[11]

These tribes practiced a quasi-guerrilla form of warfare remarkably oriental, but part of the reason was the nomadic quality of the central Asian environment—the necessity for tribal mobility and great stealth in hunting and a marked preference for plunder, not conquest.

Supreme among these tribes in the West were the Goths and the Huns, who in the fourth and fifth centuries overran large parts of both the Eastern and the Western Roman empires. No one is certain of their origins. The Goths, originally a Teutonic people, probably migrated from southern Russia, where they had become expert horsemen, to the middle and lower Danube; by A.D. 236, they had penetrated imperial borders. In the next fifteen years, they crossed over the Danube and into the Balkans, overrunning Moesia and Thrace, a campaign culminating in A.D. 251 in the battle of Forum-Trebonii, where they killed Emperor Decius and decimated his army. For some twenty years, they virtually controlled the middle provinces, but, about A.D. 270, the Romans stopped fighting each other long enough to force them from the Balkans

11. C. D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1960).


North Sea
BRITAIN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Rhine
Danube
Chalons-sur-Marne
GAUL
SPAIN
Attila's Capital
375 A.D.?
236 A.D.?
Sea of Azov
Black Sea
Danube
MOESIA
DACIA
MOESIA
Adrianople
THRACE
MACEDONIA
Constantinople
Rome
ITALY
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
0 100 200 400 600 miles
N
Goths
Huns
Western Roman Empire
Eastern Roman Empire

M.E.P.

and, under Diocletian, even to rule them, a task aided by Gothic fear of the Huns.[12]

The Huns may have stemmed from the previously mentioned Hiong Nu. Whatever their antecedents, about A.D. 375 ". . . a combination of overpopulation, the effect of climatic changes on an essentially pastoral existence, and the endless struggle for power among the nomadic tribes north of the Himalaya mountains" combined to drive them west.[13] They apparently arrived in considerable numbers; ancient historians speak of seven hundred thousand, but this is doubtlessly exaggerated. According to the Roman historian Priscus, a chronicler of these dark decades, they ". . . were skilled in hunting but in no other task except this. After they had grown into a nation they disturbed the peace of the neighboring races by thefts and plundering."[14] Another historian, Ammianus, noted that "they are faithless in truces" and "burn with an infinite greed for gold."[15]

Once on the Danube, the Huns subdued neighboring tribes not so much by superior numbers, we are told, as ". . . by the terror of their looks, inspiring them with no little horror by their awful aspect and by their horribly swarthy appearance." Priscus continues to look down his patrician nose at these unwonted intruders: ". . . They have a sort of shapeless lump, if I may say so, not a face, and pinholes rather than eyes. . . . Somewhat short in stature, they are trained to quick bodily movement and are very alert in horsemanship and ready with bow and arrow; they have broad shoulders, thick-set necks, and are always erect and proud. These men, in short, live in the form of humans but with the savagery of beasts."[16]

These men, also in short, were fine warriors. Mounted on light, fast ponies, they traveled in small groups which rapidly concentrated to attack, then quickly dispersed to meet again by prearranged plan. Unlike the Goths, their major weapon was the horn bow, which shot a noiseless, bone-tipped arrow; their skill was such as to literally shower the enemy with these deadly arrows if they did not wish to close with him. According to Ammianus, if they chose to close they used the sword ". . . regardless of their own lives; and while the enemy are guarding against wounds from the sabre-thrusts, they throw strips of cloth pleated into nooses (lassos) over their opponents and so entangle them that they fetter their limbs and take from them the power of riding or walking."[17]

12. C. W. C. Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1924), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.
13. R. S. Hoyt, *Life and Thought in the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1967).
14. Gordon, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Fuller, op. cit.

Hun warriors lived on their horses and off the land, their foraging diet supplemented by meat, blood, and milk from extra horses and mares led by each man. The warrior bands preceded women, children, and older warriors, who traveled in wagons. In times of danger, they formed these into a defensive laager, or "wagon-city."

Although the Goths feared the Huns, they nonetheless copied their quasi-guerrilla tactics. Under their great chief Fridigern, the Ostrogoths soon rebelled against restrictive Roman rule in favor of plundering raids through Bulgaria and Macedonia. Adopting the wagon-city tactic, they relied primarily on heavy cavalry for shock power, but also employed infantry armed with pikes and with the long and short sword as well as battle-axes, ". . . which, whether thrown or wielded, would penetrate Roman armor and split the Roman shield."[18]

A major weakness, lack of siege trains, prevented Fridigern from capturing Adrianople in A.D. 378 (as it had prevented Hannibal from capturing Roman cities). Having withdrawn a few miles from this walled bastion, Fridigern was attacked by a large Roman force under command of the eastern emperor, Valens. Hastily summoning his cavalry from a raid, the barbarian leader cunningly gained time first by parley with the enemy, then by firing fields ripe with August harvest in order to delay and confuse deployment of the ponderous Roman legions. When these began to close on him, he held them back by volleys of missiles fired from within the protected laager. And now his cavalry returned to charge and rout the Roman horse and then fall on the exposed Roman flank, in Ammianus' words, ". . . like a thunderbolt which strikes on a mountain top, and dashes away all that stands in its path."[19] The Roman ranks, already confused by heavy missile fire, pressed one onto the other, a chaotic mass so compressed that ". . . men could not raise their arms to strike a blow." At this point, Fridigern loosed his carefully hoarded infantry to deliver the *coup de grâce*. Only a few thousand enemy escaped the slaughter. Ammianus Marcellinus estimated a loss of some forty thousand Roman-allied lives—a disaster to Roman arms comparable only to Cannae (216 B.C.).[20]

18. Oman, op. cit.; see also Hoyt, op. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. Older historians, such as Oman and Fuller, have held that Fridigern's victory foreshadowed a new epoch in the history of war: cavalry would replace infantry as the decisive arm (which it did in the Middle Ages); but see also Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). Professor White argues that, during the battle of Adrianople, an impetuous advance had already confused the Roman army and had made it particularly vulnerable to cavalry action, ". . . not because of superior strength [of Ostrogoth cavalry], but rather by effecting a surprise attack which amounted almost to ambush." The rise of the horseman, the mounted knight, at the expense of the foot soldier depended in large part, Professor White argues, on the adoption of the stirrup, in the eighth century A.D., to give the rider the necessary shock power.

Although Fridigern's quasi-guerrilla tactics are interesting, his victory did not topple the Roman Empire. Along with other barbarians, the Goths wanted booty more than "victory." Lacking specific political goals, Fridigern ". . . spent the next year aimlessly pillaging Greece and the provinces to the north."[21] A new emperor, the Spanish general Theodosius, made peace with the Goths, reorganized the Roman army, raised cavalry units, and ". . . began to enlist wholesale every Teutonic chief whom he could bribe to enter his service."[22] Six years after the Roman defeat, he had brought forty thousand Goths and other Teutons into his army of the east; these became the Teutonic *foederati,* whose dubious loyalty went to the emperor's person rather than to the empire, and which, more than any other influence, explained the eventual disintegration of Roman rule in the West.

The willingness of some barbarian tribes to assimilate with the Romans and fight other barbarian tribes was a major weakness, only slowly overcome by tribal amalgamations and growth culminating in the rise of the Franks. It was not fully repaired until Charlemagne introduced political purpose into tribal conquest to revive the Western Roman Empire. Earlier tribes, loyal to a single chief, interested only in plunder and not territorial conquest and settlement, refused to unite. At a time when the Roman army was overextended and the empire torn with civil war, a tribe would strike here, another there, spaced onslaughts usually contained by the hard-pressed legions. Had the tribes struck simultaneously, they undoubtedly would have overrun the Roman Empire as early as the fourth century.

A large part of this weakness stemmed from the *comitatus* concept, wherein particularly able warriors formed a bodyguard to a chief or supreme warrior: ". . . Everywhere in the Germanic world the ruler, whether king or chief, was attended by a bodyguard of well-born companions."[23] When tribes came together in earlier centuries, as we noted with Attila and the Huns, intense jealousy invariably ensued, with constant bickering and jockeying for favor by the chief lieutenants. Internecine feuds obliterated whole tribes. Leaders could never feel secure. Attila the Hun acceded to power only by murdering his coregent, his brother Bleda. Attila, who forged a number of tribes into a Danubian kingdom of sorts, undoubtedly recognized the tenuous quality of his political structure. He certainly did not shirk from the violence of his environment. His brutal raids up to the gates of Constantinople and later in the West killed and maimed thousands of hapless victims. Attila rather cleverly advertised himself as "the scourge of God"—meaning, as Professor Hoyt has pointed out, ". . . the punishment visited by God's

21. Hoyt, op. cit.
22. Oman, op. cit.
23. F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943); see also Hoyt, op. cit.

wrath upon a sinful people. The terror struck into the hearts of his intended victims by this sort of propaganda was a potent 'secret weapon.' "

Attila evidently possessed considerable charisma, as evidenced by his lengthy reign and by accounts left by various Roman ambassadors. A later source described him as ". . . short of stature with a broad chest, massive head and small eyes. His beard was thin and sprinkled with grey, his nose flat, and his complexion swarthy, showing thus the signs of his origins." Haughty in carriage, he cast ". . . his eyes about him on all sides so that the proud man's power was to be seen in the very movements of his body." But although he was a lover of war, ". . . he was personally restrained in action, most impressive in counsel, gracious to suppliants, and generous to those to whom he had once given his trust."[24] He was also something of a politician, for if on occasion he led devastating military raids deep into the empire, he was also content to sit quietly by in his Danubian kingdom receiving tribute from the terrified Romans. (Professor Gordon estimated that, between A.D. 443 and 450, he was paid twenty-two thousand pounds of gold!)

Materially profitable, yes; politically constructive, no. Attila's numerous conquests were no more permanent than those of Fridigern or of Alaric, who, in A.D. 407, led his Goths to the virtual conquest of Italy, including the sacking of Rome. And then? Two years later, on his own volition, he returned to the Rhineland. This was political naïveté in its extreme form and brings to mind the lament of the cavalry general Maharbal after the Carthaginian victory at Cannae: "You know how to gain a victory, Hannibal; you know not how to use one."

Political naïveté helps to explain the military shortcomings of the barbarians. Their daring and skill and cunning were largely neutralized by a lack of staying power, which in their own minds they did not need. They wanted to eat, plunder, and move on. They invariably followed the line of least resistance, as noted by Amédée Thierry: ". . . The nomads, unlike ourselves, do not consider flight a dishonor. Considering booty of more worth than glory, they fight only when they are certain of success. When they find their enemy in force, they evade him to return when the occasion is more opportune."[25]

Although, on occasion, Attila used siege engines and was not above learning from the Romans, for example by replacing his ponies with horses, he generally avoided attacking defended towns and cities: ". . . operations took the form of whirlwind advances and retirements. Whole districts were laid waste and entire populations annihilated, not only in order to establish a heat of terror which would evaporate opposition, but also to leave the rear clear of all hostile manpower and so to facilitate withdrawals. The tactics may be defined as 'ferocity under

24. Gordon, op. cit.
25. Fuller, op. cit.

authority.' Fury, surprise, elusiveness, cunning and mobility, and not planning, method, drill, and discipline were its elements."[26]

When these guerrilla characteristics were not allowed to assert themselves, the result was usually disastrous. Attila was fought to a standstill by Aëtius at Chalons-sur-Marne in A.D. 451, a victory that depended largely on his Teutonic *foederati* buttressed by Theodoric's heavy Visigothic cavalry—barbarians brought under Roman discipline. Attila did manage, however, to extricate his surviving force and continue plundering tactics until his premature death, possibly the result of a hemorrhage on the night of his wedding to the young and beautiful Kriemhild.[27]

26. Ibid.
27. Hoyt, op. cit.; Gordon, op. cit. Priscus gives the cause as hemorrhage induced by intoxication; other sources state that a woman stabbed him to death.

Chapter 4

Justinian's campaigns • Belisarius: brain versus brawn • Justinian's Long Wall • Belisarius' sad end • Emperor Maurice's defense against guerrilla tactics • Emperor Leo's great work: Tactics *• Emperor Nikephoros Phokas:* On Shadowing Warfare *• The growing difference in warfare between East and West*

WE HAVE SEEN how Theodosius adapted his military machine to repair the disaster of the Byzantine defeat at Adrianople in A.D. 378. While the Western Empire, torn by internal dissension, dissolved into a sea of invading Germanic tribes, the Eastern Empire managed to survive by a judicious blending of city fortifications, native armies, privately controlled mercenary cavalry hosts, and outright bribes to deflect such potential predators as the Huns and the Ostrogoths.

The heavy-cavalry units formed by Theodosius more than justified themselves. By Justinian's reign (527–65), the mainstay of the army was the horse archer supported by light cavalry and heavy infantry. The historian Procopius was obviously impressed: ". . . They are expert horsemen, and are able without difficulty to direct their bows to either side while riding at full speed, and to shoot an opponent in pursuit or flight. They draw the bowstring along by the forehead about opposite the right ear, thereby charging an arrow with such impetus as to kill

whoever stands in the way, shield and corselet alike having no power to check its force."[1]

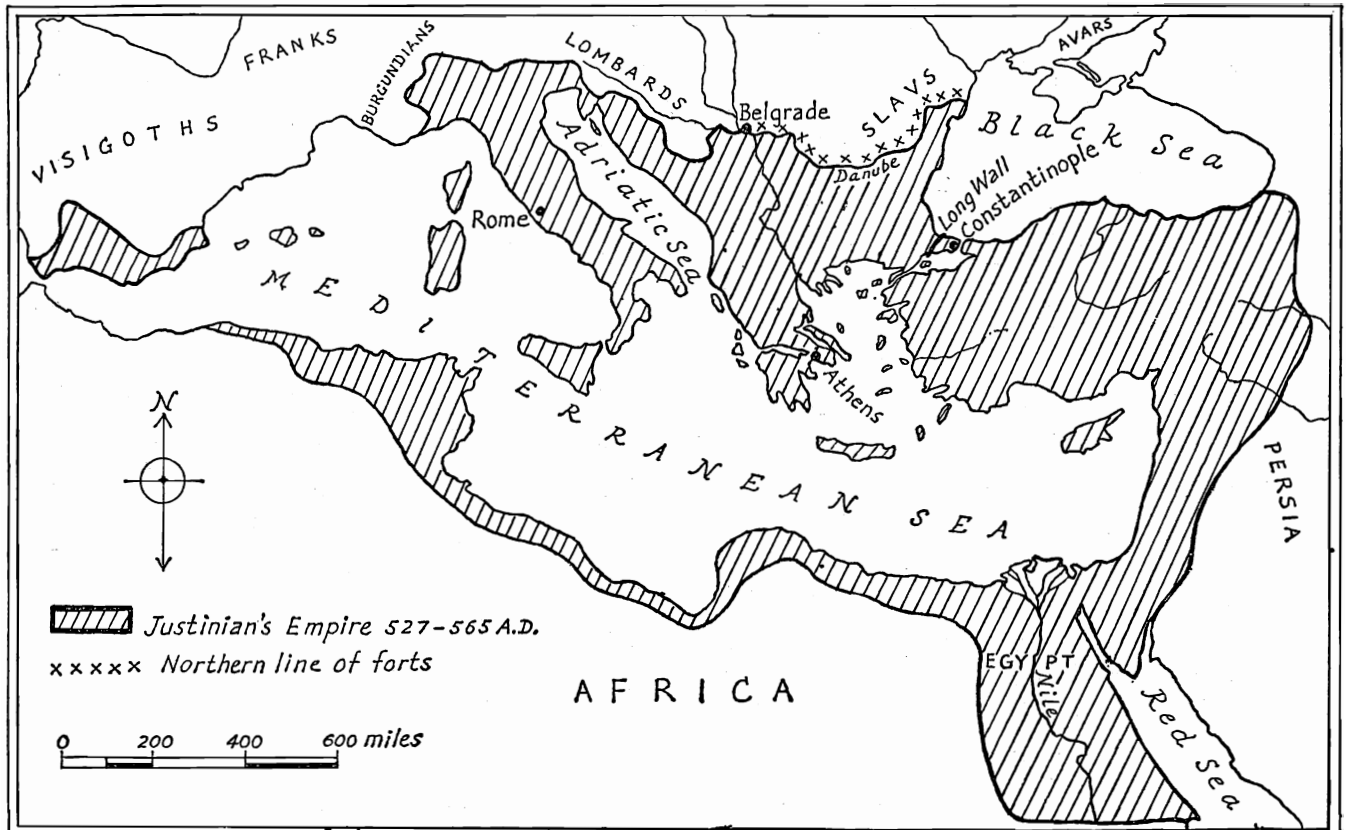
By building small, mobile armies around such disciplined barbarians, Belisarius and Narses recovered numerous Roman provinces from the Vandals in Africa and from the Goths in Italy, achievements more remarkable considering Justinian's parsimony in supporting these expeditionary forces. Perhaps because of limited means, Belisarius relied on brain rather than brawn. He saw no dishonor in avoiding battle when he could, a lesson driven home early in his career. At twenty-six years of age he commanded a force that was screening a Persian withdrawal. Opposite Callinicum, his officers and troops urged him to take this last opportunity to strike the enemy. In a public harangue, Belisarius replied: ". . . Whither would you urge me? The most complete and most happy victory is to baffle the force of an enemy without impairing our own, and in this favorable situation we are already placed. Is it not wiser to enjoy the advantages thus easily acquired, than to hazard them in the pursuit of more?" Failing to convince his men, he grudgingly agreed to battle, only to suffer a near-disastrous defeat.[2]

He did not so err again, and in campaigns in Africa, Sicily, and Italy he also displayed political shrewdness. In North Africa, he scourged two of his soldiers who had stolen fruit and emphasized to his troops ". . . the importance of soothing and conciliating the native Africans, and of detaching them from the Vandal cause, to which from religious differences they were already disaffected." A few years later, in Italy, he ordered a lieutenant in a distant province to ". . . avoid all insult or injury to the Italian inhabitants."[3]

Although aware of his tactical superiority over the Goths, who had little knowledge of archery, Belisarius respected their superior numbers as well as the ability of such Gothic leaders as Totila. His polyglot army, which included Isaurian mountaineers and Hunnish and Moorish cavalry, probably numbered only about twelve thousand, and from this he had to garrison cities and strong points, since part of his strategy was to let the enemy wear himself out by siege attacks, whereupon the garrison force would sally forth and attack. In 537, during the siege of Rome, the citizens pressed him to give battle. Belisarius replied:

> . . . I well know the character of that senseless monster the people, unable either to support the present or to foresee the future, always desirous of attempting the impossible, and of rushing headlong to its ruin. Yet your unthinking folly shall not induce me to permit your own destruction, nor to betray the trust committed to me by my sovereign and yours. Success in

1. R. A. Preston, and others, *Men in Arms* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1962). Hereafter cited as Preston; see also Fuller, op. cit.
2. Lord Mahon, *The Life of Belisarius* (London: John Murray, 1829).
3. Ibid.


FRANKS
BURGUNDIANS
LOMBARDS
AVARS
VISIGOTHS
Belgrade
SLAVS
Black Sea
Danube
Long Wall
Constantinople
Adriatic Sea
Rome
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Athens
PERSIA
N
Justinian's Empire 527-565 A.D.
xxxxx Northern line of forts
AFRICA
EGYPT
Nile
Red Sea
0 200 400 600 miles

M.E.P.

war depends less on intrepidity than on prudence to await, to distinguish, and to seize the decisive moment of fortune. You appear to regard the present contest as a game of hazard, which you might determine by a single throw of the dice; but I, at least, have learnt from experience to prefer security to speed. But it seems that you offer to reinforce my troops and to march with them against the enemy. Where then have you acquired your knowledge of war? And what true soldier is not aware that the result of a battle must chiefly rest on the skill and discipline of the combatants? Ours is a real enemy in the field; we march to a battle and not to a review. I am, however, willing to praise your courage, to forgive your murmurs, and to prove to you that my present delay is founded on judicious policy.[4]

Belisarius' successful campaign in Italy proved a mixed blessing in that by causing the Goths to withdraw troops from the east, it opened Justinian's borders to fresh barbarian incursions. To hold these in check, Justinian relied on a large and expensive fortified complex stretching from Belgrade along the south bank of the Danube to the Black Sea—some sixty fortresses theoretically linked by five hundred intervening towers, probably used to shelter local peasantry until the barbarians passed by on their way to richer loot. In addition to this line, Justinian defended the pass at Thermopylae and, farther south, fortified the isthmus of Corinth; grander by far, he repaired the *Makron Teichos,* or Long Wall, built by Emperor Anastasius: forty miles north of Constantinople, its ramparts stretched sixty miles from the Propontis east to the Black Sea.

So long as troops existed in sufficient numbers to man these defenses, they helped keep barbarians in check. But Justinian overextended both economically and militarily, and the abilities neither of Belisarius nor Narses, once again fighting in Italy, could repair a paucity of military means. The last years of Justinian's reign marked a decline in Byzantine arms. According to Agathias,

. . . the emperor having entered on the last stage of his life seemed to weary of his labors, and preferred to create discord among his foes or to mollify them with gifts, instead of trusting to arms and facing the dangers of war. So he allowed his troops to decline in numbers because he did not expect to require their services, and the ministers who collected his taxes and maintained armies were affected with the same indifference.[5]

As one result, his border defenses became virtually useless, an unprotected sheepfold, according to Agathias, where the prowling wolf, far

4. Ibid.

5. Oman, op. cit.; see also, J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1912); J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1923), 2 vols.

from encountering a bite, is not even threatened by a bark; and in 559 Zabergan led his Bulgarians into Thrace seemingly without difficulty.[6]

Belisarius met this new threat, again with careful restraint. When his soldiers wanted to attack precipitately, he cautioned: ". . . Judgment, and not headlong courage, is the true arbiter of war."[7]

But even Belisarius could not escape the dissension of Justinian's last years. In 564, the emperor accused the general of trying to assassinate him, stripped him of all honors and holdings, and had him blinded. As a beggar, the victim of Justinian's wrath stood before the gates of the convent of Laurus and pleaded, "Give a penny to Belisarius the General."[8]

When Justinian died, Constantinople faced the threat of the Avars and Slavs in the north and the Persians in the south. Under Maurice (582–602), ". . . the empire entered a defensive phase which was to be its military outlook for the next 500 years."[9]

Maurice and his successors differed radically from Western tradition in their approach to warfare. Though Hellenistic in outlook in many respects, they seem to have reverted to the oriental thought of Sun Tzu. They definitely preferred diplomacy and deception (including bribery) to battle. Because of limited human resources, war was to be fought only as a last resort. But since almost constant incursions of Slavs, Avars, Bulgarians, Persians, Saracens, Franks, Russians, and Turks meant a good many last resorts, the Eastern Empire attached greatest importance to its armed forces, many details concerning which have been preserved in two treatises, Maurice's *Artis Militaris* and Leo VI's *Tactics*.

To deal with barbarian hordes, Maurice reduced the standing army in size and restored it to control of the central government. He fortified his frontiers in depth and defended them in part with local militia. This system evolved by the end of the seventh century into decentralized defense, with the empire ultimately divided into military districts, or themes, each containing ". . . a permanent army corps, bolstered by local militia and commanded by a *strategos* who was also the head of the area's civil government."[10] The hub of empire, Constantinople ". . . was surrounded by a sixty-foot moat, guarding a triple ring of immense walls, each wall studded with towers at frequent intervals, and the innermost wall reaching a height of thirty feet," a formidable defense, further strengthened by a powerful fleet and by the secret and

6. Mahon, op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Preston, op. cit.
10. Ibid.; see also Sidney Toy, *A History of Fortifications* (London: William Heinemann, 1955).

devastating weapon of "Greek fire," which was poured on ships or on scaling parties.[11]

The relatively small professional army was well ahead of its time. Although continuing to rely primarily on mounted bowmen, it also included infantry and artillery units, the whole supported by engineers and quartermasters, even a medical corps. Other innovations included sectionalized boats, which, transported by mules, could be put together for fording purposes, and a series of military textbooks to instruct officers on diverse strategies and tactics ". . . based on the principle that the methods to be employed must be varied according to the people to be fought."[12]

Maurice wrote knowingly of the battle characteristics of the Persian, Lombard, Avar, and Slav enemy, describing tactics that should be used against each. No detail escaped his attention. He noted of the Slavs that ". . . they have abundance of cattle and grain, chiefly millet and rye, but rulers they cannot bear and they live side by side in disunion." But he was also impressed with their guerrilla tactics and their habit, when pursued, of disappearing under water and breathing through a reed until the danger passed.[13]

Sensing the danger of fighting against greatly superior numbers, yet wishing to avoid overdependence on unreliable mercenaries, Maurice favored a nation-in-arms concept: ". . . We wish that every young Roman of free condition should learn the use of the bow, and be constantly provided with that weapon and with two javelins." This ambition apparently came to nothing during the Persian and Saracen onslaughts of the seventh and eighth centuries, which brought the Eastern Empire continuing crisis and cost it Egypt and Syria.

Maurice's thinking was elaborated three hundred years later by Emperor Leo VI (886–912), whose *Tactics* borrowed freely from Maurice's work. For centuries, the Eastern Empire had been pursuing a "no-win" policy in order to survive against hordes of powerful enemies. At Leo's accession, it stood on the permanent defensive. Faced with fighting Franks, Saracens, Slavs, and Turks, the emperor found suitable countertactics prescribed by Maurice, who had written from firsthand experience:

> . . . The Franks and Lombards are bold and daring to excess, though the latter are no longer all that they once were: they regard the smallest movement to the rear as a disgrace, and they will fight whenever you offer them battle. When their knights are hard put to it in a cavalry fight, they will turn

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. F. Schevill, *History of the Balkan Peninsula* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922).

their horses loose, dismount, and stand back to back against very superior numbers rather than fly. So formidable is the charge of the Frankish cavalry with their broadsword, lance, and shield, that it is best to decline a pitched battle with them till you have put all the chances on your own side. You should take advantage of their indiscipline and disorder; whether fighting on foot or on horseback, they charge in dense, unwieldy masses, which cannot maneuver, because they have neither organization nor drill. Tribes and families stand together, or the sworn war bands of chiefs, but there is nothing to compare to our own orderly division into battalions and brigades. Hence they readily fall into confusion if suddenly attacked in flank and rear—a thing easy to accomplish, as they are utterly careless and neglect the use of pickets and vedettes and the proper surveying of the countryside. They encamp, too, confusedly and without fortifying themselves, so that they can be easily cut up by a night attack. Nothing succeeds better against them than a feigned flight, which draws them into an ambush; for they follow hastily, and invariably fall into the snare. But perhaps the best tactics of all are to protract the campaign, and lead them into hills and desolate tracts, for they take no care about their commissariat, and when their stores run low their vigor melts away. They are impatient of hunger and thirst, and after a few days of privation desert their standards and steal away home as best they can. For they are destitute of all respect for their commanders—and they will deliberately disobey orders when they grow discontented. Nor are their chiefs above the temptation of taking bribes; a moderate sum of money will frustrate one of their expeditions. On the whole, therefore, it is easier and less costly to wear out a Frankish army by skirmishes, protracted operations in desolate districts, and the cutting off of its supplies, than to attempt to destroy it at a single blow.[14]

The Turks posed a different problem: innumerable bands of light horsemen armed with javelins and scimitars, but, like the Huns, relying on the bow and arrow, ". . . given to ambushes and stratagems of every sort . . . in battle they advanced not in one mass, but in small scattered bands, which swept along the enemy's front and around his flanks, pouring in flights of arrows, and executing partial charges if they saw a good opportunity." In proper terrain, they could be beaten by heavy cavalry; nor could they subdue trained infantry including foot archers, whose larger bow outranged the horse archers: ". . . The general who had to contend with the Turks, therefore, should endeavor to get to close quarters at once, and fight them at the earliest opportunity. But he should be careful about his flanks, and cover his rear if possible by a river, marsh, or defile. He should place his infantry in the front line, with cavalry on the flanks, and never let the two arms be separated. Heedless pursuit by

14. Oman, op. cit.

the cavalry was especially to be avoided, for the Turks were prompt at rallying, and would turn and rend pursuers who followed in disorder."[15]

The best defense against Eastern predators was a nation-in-arms, once called for by Maurice and echoed now by Leo: ". . . The bow is the easiest of weapons to make, and one of the most effective. We therefore wish that those who dwell in castle, countryside, or town, in short, every one of our subjects, should have a bow of his own. Or if this be impossible, let every household keep a bow and forty arrows, and let practice be made with them in shooting both in the open and in broken ground and in defiles and woods. For if there come a sudden incursion of enemies into the bowels of the land, men using archery from rocky ground or in defiles or in forest paths can do the invader much harm; for the enemy dislikes having to keep sending out detachments to drive them off, and will dread to scatter far abroad after plunder, so that much territory can thus be kept unharmed, since the enemy will not desire to be engaging in a perpetual archery-skirmish."[16] A lack of internal homogeneity apparently extinguished this scheme.

Supreme realists, Maurice and Leo never ignored the enemy but constantly respected and studied him. Few Frankish or Anglo-Saxon commanders would have written of an enemy, as Maurice and Leo did of the early Saracens, that they were ". . . the best advised and most prudent in their military operations." Or counseling that the Oriental did not like ". . . cold and rainy weather . . . at times when it prevailed he did not display his ordinary firmness and daring, and could be attacked with great advantage."[17]

The tenth century also added to Byzantine military literature. Emperor Nikephoros Phokas, around 965, ordered a handbook of defensive warfare prepared to help counter the incursive raids made by a great Moslem general, Sayf al-Dawla. The work, *On Shadowing Warfare,* reflects many of the earlier teachings of Maurice and Leo; according to its author, it was a method ". . . whereby a small army, too weak to engage the enemy in battle, could nevertheless preserve unharmed both itself and the territory of the state." Dr. Howard-Johnston, the translator of this work, concluded that

> . . . the particular elements of the method resembled those of modern guerrilla warfare, in that they relied heavily upon the natural advantages offered by terrain, on the willing cooperation of the civilian population, on good intelligence, on interrupting the enemy's line of communication, and

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

finally on the demoralizing effect of an endless sequence of small, surprise, "carefully planned tactical attacks in a war of strategical defensive."[18]

On Shadowing Warfare evidences sophisticated military thinking produced by almost continuous offensive and defensive wars. Like Sun Tzu's *Art of War,* and like Maurice's and Leo's writings, it forms an interesting contrast to Western thinking of the time.

Oman underlines the vast difference in Eastern and Western military philosophy at this stage:

> . . . Of the spirit of chivalry there was not a spark in the Byzantine, though there was a great deal of professional pride, and a not inconsiderable infusion of religious enthusiasm. The East-Roman officer was proud of his courage, strength and skill; he looked upon himself as charged with the high task of saving Christendom from pagan and Saracen, and of preserving the old civilization of the empire from the barbarian. But he was equally remote from the haughty contempt for sleights and tricks which had inspired the ancient Romans, and from the chivalrous ideals which grew to be at once the strength and the weakness of the Teutonic West. Courage was considered at Constantinople as one of the requisites necessary for obtaining success, not as the sole and paramount virtue of the warrior. The generals of the East considered a campaign brought to a successful issue without a great battle as the cheapest and most satisfactory consummation in war. They considered it absurd to expend stores, money, and the valuable lives of veteran soldiers in achieving by force an end that could equally well be obtained by skill. . . . They had a strong predilection for stratagems, ambushes, and simulated retreats. For the officer who fought without having first secured all the advantages for his own side they had the greatest contempt.[19]

The traditional criticism levied on the Byzantines is that, by accepting the strategic defensive, they forfeited initiative and eventually lost the empire. This criticism fails to respect the fact that a defensive strategy demands as competent leadership as an offensive strategy. Byzantine leadership was unfortunately spotty; thus, when the army mutinied and killed Maurice in 602, power went to an imbecile emperor, Phocas, under whom empire fortunes plunged, only to be retrieved by Heraclius' reforms and leadership. Had firm leadership continued, had the nation-in-arms concept worked, the Eastern Empire might have avoided a constant internal weakening by overreliance on quasi-assimilated military mercenaries. Even with these weaknesses, the military disasters against the Seljuk Turks of Arp Arslan, particularly the decisive battle of Manzikert, in 1071, might have been avoided had Romanus respected Leo's and Nikephoros Phokas' tactical instructions instead of yielding

18. James Howard-Johnston, "Studies in the Organization of the Byzantine Army in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries" (Oxford: Ph.D. thesis, 1971).
19. Oman, op. cit.

to his own rashness.[20] The critic should also remember that, despite its final fall, the Eastern Empire lasted longer than any in history, nor did its eclipse in any way diminish the tactical brilliance of some of its emperor-generals.

20. Ibid. Oman points out that command confusion, specifically alleged treachery of the cavalry commander, Andronicus, undoubtedly played a major role in the Byzantine defeat.

Chapter 5

Viking raids and invasions • French and English countertactics • Magyar tactics • Their defeat by Henry the Builder and Otto the Great • The rise of feudal warfare in the West • Knightly warfare: fiction versus fact • Early crusades • Seljuk Turk tactics • Byzantine influence on Frankish crusaders • Battle of Dorylaeum and Bohemond's tactical changes • The Frankish experience • Political failures of Seljuk Turks and Egyptians • The strategy of limited war • Political failure of the Franks

THE BARBARIAN PATTERN of the fourth and fifth centuries was emulated throughout the Middle Ages, notably by the Vikings in Britain, Ireland, and France; the Magyars and later the Mongols in central Europe; and the Persians, Slavs, and Saracens in the Eastern Empire.

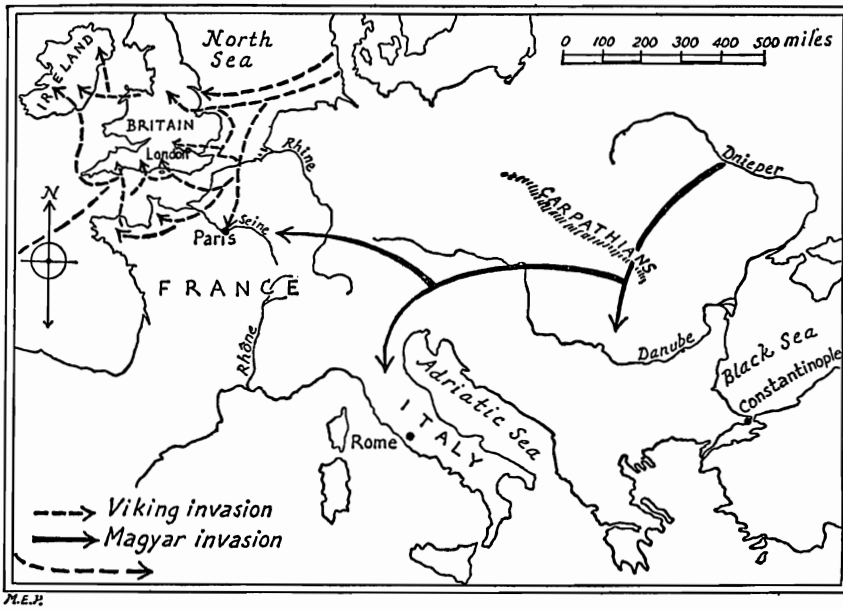
Late in the eighth century, sleek Viking warships, their high bows fronted by leering dragon sprites, began to appear off English and Irish coasts. These open, oak-hulled vessels about seventy-five feet long were propelled by sixteen pairs of pine oars ". . . so regulated in length that they struck the water in unison," as well as ". . . a big square sail made of strips of heavy woolen cloth."[1] The shallow-draught vessels were easily beached to disgorge sixty to a hundred fierce warriors—Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians, small ". . . warbands of adventurers enlisted under the banner of some noted leader."[2]

1. Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968). Professor Jones has taken the Gokstad ship as prototype for his interesting and detailed description.

2. Oman, op. cit.; see also J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400–1000* (London: Hutchinson, 1952).

The intruders at first raided rich monasteries along the coast. They wanted booty, not battle, though they were efficient enough with spear, sword, and ax. But they preferred to rely on surprise and terror:

. . . The unexpectedness, the swiftness, and the savagery of the viking raid on the monastery at Lindisfarne in 793 came as a bolt from the blue not only to the monks surprised and slaughtered there but to Alcuin over in Charlemagne's court, [who wrote]: "It is some 350 years that we and our forefathers have inhabited this lovely land, and never before in Britain has such a terror appeared as this we have now suffered at the hands of the heathen. Nor was it thought possible that such an inroad from the sea could be made."[3]



Cruising along a foreign coast, the Vikings might beach to take on food and water, perhaps raiding a herd of cattle; or strike a monastery or town, steal whatever of value they could find, sometimes kidnap the able-bodied to take back as slaves. If contested by arms, they hastily re-embarked to strike in a safer place, but in those early decades they found in their own phrase "little defence for the land."[4]

3. Jones, op. cit.; see also John Beeler, *Warfare in Feudal Europe 730–1200* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971).
4. Ibid.

Until about A.D. 825 local lords, magnates, and imperial officials regarded these as little more than nuisance raids—unpleasant, but possible to live with. Charlemagne and Louis the Pious had largely vitiated the Viking threat with able diplomacy including bribery, and also a strong army. But the breakdown of the Carolingian empire into warring factions made the realm much more vulnerable.

From the Viking standpoint, success also bred expansion, a welcome development, considering a swelling population and limited natural resources at home. The sight of stolen gold or husky slaves certainly appealed to those who theretofore had remained behind, tilling the unwilling ground. By 834, the raids had grown larger and were spreading inland to France, Frisia and Aquitaine. The predators boldly sailed up rivers, possibly forming a defensive laager with their boats, rounded up horses and raided sometimes a hundred miles distant, then escaped by water before the local lord could collect a force and attack. Later they established semipermanent island and river bases, some of which withstood lengthy sieges. In 842, a force of no less than ". . . 67 ships appeared off the Loire" to sack Nantes—perhaps at the invitation of an ambitious nobleman. After this brutal but profitable raid, the Northmen withdrew to the island of Noirmoutier to spend the winter.

At the same time, the raids had spread to England and Ireland, and by 850 would even reach North Africa. Thus ". . . the nuisance raids of individual leaders" developed ". . . into big, well-organized expeditions which exploited local divisions and lived off the invaded country for lengthening periods of time." From their bases, the invaders pushed ever farther inland: the Danes plundered Paris on two occasions and in 885–86 held it under siege for eleven months. Prior to this, however, the Viking effort had entered its third phase, ". . . of conquest and residence."[5]

French and English rulers adopted several countermeasures. Whether faced with nuisance raids or the later expeditions, the obvious solution, a well-organized, mobile army, was virtually an impossibility at this time. Professor Gwyn Jones cites the dilemma of Charles the Bald in Aquitaine: ". . . in theory, Charles, like his brothers, could raise armies, build fleets, garrison towns, fortify coasts, bar rivers, and manhandle all vikings out of his realm—and who can doubt that he would have liked to? But theory and fact are different things. Charles had much to contend with: thrusting foreign foes, rivalry and enmity from his brothers, the veiled disaffection of great nobles, and the open rebellion of great provinces. He could be confident neither of the fighting spirit of his soldiers nor the patriotism of the counts who hung back from leading them."[6] To cope, he chose the reasonable alternative of bribery:

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

in 845, he paid the Viking chief Ragnar seven thousand pounds of silver to leave Paris. Similar payments followed over the years, the *Danegeld,* or bribe, also becoming familiar to the English, who paid out hundreds of thousands of pounds, at first to the Danes and later, as taxes, to their own kings.

Local rulers also introduced military measures which helped pave the way for the feudal structure that played such an important role in Western civilization. In neither country could local levies deal adequately with the challenge. These gave way to semiregular forces raised by important lords to whom lesser nobles and freemen turned for protection. In England, these were primarily infantry forces which were augmented by a series of fortified towns called *burhs* and also by a navy. The Franks relied on ". . . cavalry, walled towns, and fortified bridgeheads."[7]

When neither bribery nor military forces sufficed, rulers perforce yielded to delaying action and even limited assimilation. Although the Saracens, in 881, destroyed the monastery at Monte Cassino and went on to sack papal possessions, they lacked political cohesion and, cut from reinforcements from home, eventually faded from the picture.[8] But King Alfred's peace with Guthrum in 878 established the Danes on English soil, where in time they themselves became subject to hostile raids and from where they exercised a decisive influence on English arms. In the tenth century, the Franks bribed the Vikings with the gift of the rich province that later bore their name, Normandy, and from where William, Duke of Normandy, sailed to invade England in 1066 to beat Harold Godwineson at the battle of Hastings.[9]

Toward the end of the ninth century, the Magyars struck Europe from the east. From the Bug and the Dnieper, they crossed the Carpathians into the Danube Valley. Once the home of the Avars, this area was peopled by the Slavs, who quickly submitted to the bellicose newcomers. What was to become the kingdom of Hungary was thus born.

The Magyars were no more attractive than the early Huns, described by Priscus, and were just as cruel. But they fought well. Generally mounted, they were masters of reconnaissance; they traveled fast and struck unexpectedly, and in one chronicler's words (Regino), ". . . no man could stand against them if their strength and their perseverance were as great as their audacity." Their weaknesses were traditional among barbarians: no siege engines, slight staying power. Oman wrote that ". . . their tactics . . . were to hover round the enemy in successive swarms and overwhelm him with flights of missiles. When charged by

7. Oman, op. cit.
8. Hoyt, op. cit.
9. C. N. Barclay, *Battle 1066* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1966).

the heavy Frankish horse, they fled, still pouring their arrows behind them."

A few years after claiming Hungary, the Magyars began raiding into Italy and Bavaria, areas torn by civil war. Once again, success bred expansion: By A.D. 924, they had crossed the Rhine, plundering as far as Champagne; thirty years later, they coursed through Burgundy, crossed the Alps into Italy and returned triumphantly to the Danube.

Duke Henry of Saxony began contesting these raids in 924. His means were by now familiar: After a large amount of damage had been done by the invaders, he gained temporary surcease by bribery; he then constructed a series of border strongholds similar to the English *burhs,* a zealous effort which earned him the name Henry the Builder; finally he raised cavalry formations headed by his nobles—in all, an effective defense, as proved by the victory at Merseburg in 933.[10] Henry's son, Otto the Great, carried on this work and, in 955, ended the Magyar threat with his great victory at the Lechfeld—a set-piece battle foolishly accepted by the Magyars, who retired to Hungary and in due time were converted to Christianity.

During the tenth century, the barbarian threat to the West declined while feudal warfare rose in importance. The rise of the mounted knight, who brought a new shock power to battle, and the concomitant development of military feudalism gradually brought imperial and religious wars designed to spread aristocratic authority by conquest and retention of land. Although crusaders would face a new style of warfare in the Middle East and although the Mongols would sweep through central Europe in the thirteenth century—a short-lived incursion we shall discuss in time—warfare in the West was developing in a peculiar fashion. By the time of the First Crusade (1095–99), it was becoming highly stylized, with armies cored by the mounted knight.

This did not mean mass armies of mounted knights. Two important factors checked the growth of knightly warfare. One was the Church, which wanted to limit warfare in order to protect its own holdings. Various popes proscribed from the battlefield such weapons as the crossbow, ". . . a weapon fateful to God and unfit for Christians." Lateran councils forbade employment of Spanish and Netherlandian mercenaries and tried to prevent bloody knightly tourneys by denying Christian burial to those who fell.[11] Neither the man in armor nor priests dependent on lords particularly heeded any of these prohibitions, though in time the tourney became less violent.

Another factor was cost. Horses were expensive, so was armor, and so were education and training required to produce a proficient knight.

10. Beeler, op. cit.
11. R. G. D. Laffan, *Select Documents of European History* (London: Methuen, 1930), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.

A knight was so valuable that an enemy preferred to capture and hold him for ransom rather than kill him. Mounted knights rarely fought alone—they needed servants and foot soldiers—and these men could not accompany expeditions and still work the soil. Most knights owed only so much annual military service to a lord—usually forty days—and this also tended to restrict campaigns.[12]

Although the arrangement at times sorely hindered bellicose desires of a lord or king—no one apparently *ever* had enough knights—it was not without social benefit. For if the Church was interested in maintaining the status quo, so was aristocracy. So long as a lord commanded a loyal force of knights, his authority was not likely to be questioned by bothersome peasant upstarts. The last thing nobles wanted was armed peasants: When a group of peasants in Belgium in 859 bravely took arms against an invading force of Danes, we have reason to believe that their own lords turned on them and killed them!

An important aspect of feudal warfare was a chivalric code that painted practical factors with a romantic veneer not entirely discounted even today. The early-twelfth-century epic poem *La Chanson de Roland* set the tone. *The Song of Roland* treated Charlemagne's invasion of Spain as a Christian crusade against Moslems. Aside from glorifying the campaign, in reality a costly flop, the work not only accepted but glorified war's brutality and cruelty at this time. And it was cruel: On one occasion, Charlemagne murdered forty-five hundred unarmed Saxon captives. On another occasion, a Byzantine emperor, Basil II (976–1025), sent the Bulgarian czar fifteen thousand prisoners, all blinded except for one in every hundred to serve as guide.[13]

The bards who sang and many of the scribes who wrote of the age of chivalry were as blind (intentionally) as Basil's poor prisoners. Arthurian legends have taught generations of youngsters to think of an era of richly armored knights setting forth on elaborately caparisoned steeds to uphold manly honor and maidenly virtue by slaying EVIL, sometimes human, sometimes dragon. Less-golden teachings have concentrated on the physical and awkward bulk of man and horse indulging in meaningless campaigns and melee-type tactics.

Within these terms, the age of chivalry is about the last place to search for military unorthodoxy.

But these terms are too easy.

Knighthood greatly varied in both definition and performance over the centuries and in different Western countries. Oman tells us that

12. Hoyt, op. cit.; R. C. Smail, "Art of War." In A. L. Poole (ed.), *Medieval England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.; Sidney Painter, "Western Europe on the Eve of the Crusades." In Kenneth M. Setton (ed.), *A History of the Crusades* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.; Beeler, op. cit.

13. Schevill, op. cit.

". . . the original knights of the [Norman] settlement were a mixed multitude of many races drawn from many different stations in life; some were the kinsmen of great Norman barons, others were military adventurers who had drifted in from all parts of the Continent."[14] Two modern historians of this period, Strayer and Munro, concluded:

> . . . the modern eye looks past the pageantry of knightly combat to see a record of horror, atrocity, and devastation surpassing that of the barbarian raids of the ninth century. As was usual, in medieval wars, non-combatants suffered more severely than soldiers. . . . Some districts in France lost all their inhabitants and reverted to a state of wilderness; others were so harassed that both religious and secular officials abandoned their posts, while the people became little better than savages. Never was the contrast between the chivalric ideals of the aristocracy and their actual behavior more acute.[15]

The truth seems to be that knightly warfare as many of us envisage it never did exist. Modern medieval historians, for example the late R. Stewart Hoyt, R. C. Smail, and John Beeler, have reinterpreted existing evidence—admittedly in short supply—to contradict the exclusive nature of this warfare and to throw new light on its campaigns and tactics. They have pointed to the important and almost constant role of the foot soldier in feudal combats, and they have also suggested and in many ways proved that, on occasion, good commanders developed effective strategy and adapted tactics in accordance with the combat environment of their day.

The First Crusade is a case in point. As Smail points out in his excellent book *Crusading Warfare,* the relatively small European army that contested Islamic control of Syria had either to adjust tactically or perish.[16] Their enemies, the Seljuk Turks and the Egyptians, were far superior in numbers, they knew the country, and they had positive ties to its diverse peoples.

From the standpoint of quasi-guerrilla tactics, the Egyptians are of little interest: They fought dismounted, using lance and sword, and until Saladin successfully merged an Egyptian army with the Turks, the Europeans, though on occasion losing a battle, defeated them or at least held their own.

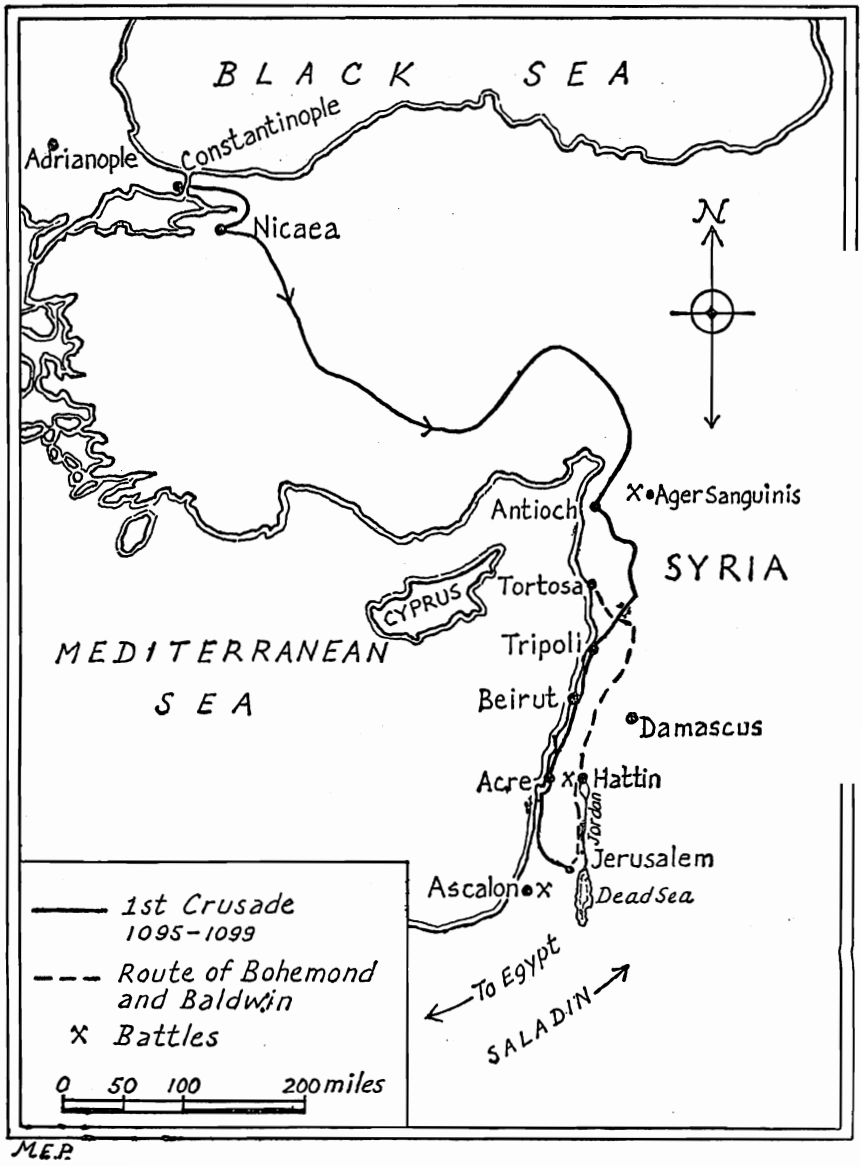
The Turks provided a far greater challenge. In addition to bow and arrows, horsemen carried a light lance and shield and also sword and club. Their tactics skillfully blended surprise, mobility and firepower. The crusaders first experienced them in strength at Dorylaeum, where

14. Oman, op. cit.

15. J. R. Strayer and D. C. Munro, *Middle Ages, 395–1500* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1942).

16. R. C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare (1097–1193)* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956); see also S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 3 vols.; Setton, op. cit.

the local emir, Kilij Arslan, who had abandoned his capital at Nicaea to the invaders, attacked in force. Opening fire from a distance, the Turks caused the knights to charge from the main body, as dictated by Western tactics. But, instead of standing ground, the Turkish horse-



men galloped off while others closed in on the main force. Unable to find a target, the knights became confused and fell back on their foot soldiers and pilgrims, while their enemies began moving in for what they imagined would be the kill. Although the Turks were frustrated by a cohesive and determined defense of heavier-armed foot soldiers, the battle was admittedly going badly for the Franks when a second crusader force appeared and chased off Kilij Arslan.[17] Recognizing the superior strength of the Franks, the emir ". . . sent orders out to evacuate the cities along the crusaders' route, and he and his people took to the hills after ravaging the countryside and blocking the wells."[18]

The crusaders soon learned to know and respect Turkish tactics: An anonymous chronicler of the time ". . . declared that, if only they were Christians, they would be the finest of races."[19] In fighting pitched battles and in attacking marching columns, the Turks invariably tried to surprise the Franks and often did. They usually opened arrow fire from a distance, a barrage designed to confuse, demoralize and even break up the Frankish force. In pitched battles, the Turks attempted to draw off Frankish horse while working around the flanks of the foot host; on the march, they attacked front, center and rear, hoping to disable or kill horses by arrow fire and thus sting knights into precipitate charges.

The Turk was a master of feigned retreat. On occasion, he led Frankish horse a chase lasting days; on other occasions, he lured them into prepared ambush. When attacking marching columns, he concentrated on separating the components, usually striking the rear. And, just as disconcerting, if things went wrong for the attackers they did not hesitate in breaking off action and disappearing.

Nearly everything about Turkish fighting methods—from hideous yells to drum signals to surprise and deception—must have upset the newcomers. Yet, from the beginning, the Franks held certain advantages. The diverse columns were fired with a zeal compounded of religious conviction, desire for adventure, and, not least, hunger for land and loot. They had already suffered considerably in the long trek from France and Italy to the Middle East—no easy matter in that day—and they were prepared to suffer in satisfying diverse ambitions.

Their military forces also held certain natural advantages over the enemy. Frankish body armor offered reasonable protection from arrows; more than one account describes foot soldiers after a battle as looking like porcupines from spent arrows protruding from armor. Frankish horse was heavy and the Turkish archer at a disadvantage once contact was achieved. Moreover, if the Turk closed in, he came up

17. Ibid.

18. S. Runciman, "The First Crusade: Constantinople to Antioch." In Setton, *supra.*

19. The work referred to is a pro-Norman chronicle, *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum.*

against tight ranks and heavier-armed foot soldiers, as at Dorylaeum, and in coming to close quarters, he had to fully engage, which made him vulnerable to cavalry action, provided that knights could be restrained until the propitious moment.

This was a matter of good generalship, and here, like most armies, the Franks were not generously endowed. One exception was the stormy Bohemond, who commanded at Dorylaeum. Bohemond was the son of Robert Guiscard, a minor Norman nobleman who had carved out an impressive dukedom in Italy[20]: Emperor Alexius' daughter, Anna Comnena, later wrote that father and son ". . . might rightly be termed 'the caterpillar and the beast'; for whatever escaped Robert . . . his son Bohemond took to him and devoured."[21] Robert and Bohemond had taken an expedition to Albania, from where they hoped to wrest Greece, if not the whole Byzantine Empire, from Alexius, an ambitious project that failed. Bohemond jumped at the material opportunity offered by the First Crusade and quickly raised an army.[22]

Bohemond was an impressive leader. At forty years of age, he was a large, powerful and fiery man who, according to Anna Comnena, ". . . in roguery and courage . . . was far superior to all the Latins who came through [Constantinople] then, as he was inferior to them in forces and money."[23] Undeniably ambitious—he failed to persuade Alexius to appoint him commander-in-chief or Great Domestic of the East—he was also a skillful general who adapted rapidly to the new tactical challenge imposed by the Seljuk Turks.[24]

Just what influence, if any, the Byzantine experience exerted is not clear. Older authorities such as Oman held that the Franks expressed contempt for the Byzantine Greeks, learned nothing from them militarily, and suffered in consequence. This is probably true of some crusader leaders. Frankish knights might not have studied either Maurice's or Leo's tactical treatises—the favored work of the time was Vegetius' *Epitoma rei militaris* (*Summary of the Art of War*)—but some were professional soldiers who had experienced some contact with Byzantine warfare.[25] Moreover, most of them spent some time in Constantinople on their way to Syria. Although Alexius trusted neither Bohemond, his former enemy, nor most crusaders, he still reasoned that if properly controlled, their armies could do him more good than harm by challenging Seljuk Turkish rule in the south. If crusader leaders pledged fealty to Alexius' overlordship, and nearly all did, he helped them. In addition

20. Painter, op. cit.
21. Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967). Tr. E. A. S. Dawes.
22. Frederic Duncalf, "The First Crusade: Clermont to Constantinople." In Setton, *supra*.
23. Comnena, op. cit.
24. Runciman ("The First Crusade"), *supra*.
25. Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit.

to rich presents, he supplied their armies with food. According to Anna Comnena, he also ". . . discoursed of the things likely to befall them on their journey [to Jerusalem], and gave them useful advice; he also instructed them in the Turks' usual method of warfare, and suggested the manner in which they should dispose the army and arrange their ranks, and advised them not to go far in pursuit of the Turks when they fled."[26] Alexius also provided a force of infantry including a detachment of engineers, who helped the Franks besiege and capture Nicaea (which Alexius promptly claimed); he also furnished Byzantine guides under one Taticius, and it would not be surprising if they advised on enemy tactical habits[27]; in 1101, at the request of Stephen of Blois, who had brought out a large army, Alexius ". . . gave them Raymond of Toulouse and the Greek general Tsitas as advisers and a force of mounted native auxiliaries known as Turcopoles—estimated at 500 strong—to serve as guides."[28]

Bohemond was probably smart enough to respect the value of local knowledge, but he was also a good enough general to realize that tactical changes were in order. His changes strongly reflected the teachings of Leo the Wise. First in importance was flank protection, which in pitched battles meant seeking favorable terrain. Second was the necessity of retaining a mounted tactical reserve, which in subsequent battles Bohemond personally commanded. This meant placing the foot soldiers in front of the knights, and this became standard battle order for nearly a century.

Bohemond and other commanders, such as King Baldwin I, also made significant changes in marching order, paying particular attention to front and rear guards when marching in column. In open flat ground, they assumed a different formation: In 1099, when approaching battle at Ascalon, ". . . their force was divided into nine squadrons organized in three ranks of three squadrons, a square formation in which attack could be met equally well from whatever direction it developed."[29] This early version of the marching square may have been learned from Alexius—his daughter described it graphically: ". . . had you seen it, you would have said a living walled city was marching. . . ." The trick was to keep closed up and moving. Smail offers a fine illustration during the siege of Acre in 1190, when a Latin column found itself isolated from the main body:

. . . Saladin ordered his men to hem in the Franks on all sides. His horsemen kept close to the Latin column, and his mounted archers were constantly reinforced throughout the day. Despite the Muslims' arrows, and the re-

26. Comnena, op. cit.
27. Runciman ("The First Crusade"), *supra.*
28. James L. Cate, "The Crusade of 1101." In Setton, *supra.*
29. Smail, op. cit.

peated short attacks at close quarters to which they were subjected, the Franks, grouped around their standard, marched slowly forward in close order. The foot-soldiers protected the knights like a wall and, together with the archers, especially distinguished themselves in the rear of the column. It was here that the Turks followed their normal practice and developed their heaviest attacks, and often, as at Arsuf in the following year, forced the Christian infantry to face about and to fight while marching backwards. As in 1147 they concealed their losses by carrying their wounded, and by burying their dead as they marched.[30]

None of this was easy, neither in early days nor later, and violations were common. In general, the knights were an impatient and vainglorious lot, a Frankish trait commented on by Emperor Leo two centuries earlier, and one constantly exploited by the Turks. A Frankish commander had a difficult time instilling and maintaining what chroniclers called *disciplina militaris*—particularly cavalry discipline, foreign to knightly concepts of challenge, honor and individual valor. During a Turkish attack in 1111, Roger of Antioch ordered ". . . that no man should accept the enemy's challenge [to battle] under pain of losing his eyes."[31] When knights obeyed, a Frankish force was seldom defeated: harassed and hurt, yes—but not stopped. When commanders neglected either march or battle discipline, they suffered. Bohemond himself fell into a Turkish ambush and spent three years in captivity before being ransomed.[32] In 1119, Roger of Antioch, commanding a force of seven hundred knights and some three thousand foot, was taken by surprise, the enemy approaching by "little-used paths"; he was killed and his army so decimated that Latin writers called the battlefield Ager Sanguinis (Field of Blood). In 1149, Raymond of Antioch met a similar fate.[33] New arrivals did not necessarily benefit from past lessons. As one authority, Professor James Cate, has noted:

> . . . The crusades of 1101 had no organization, no system, no luck, and so they set a pattern of failure that was to be followed by those of 1147 and 1190. Of more immediate importance was their failure to reinforce the Latin kingdom. The newly established states of the Crusaders were forced, therefore, to rely largely on their own resources for both defense and administration. These resources were very limited, and therein lies the major problem of the ensuing years.[34]

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Harold S. Fink, "The Foundation of the Latin States, 1099–1118." In Setton, *supra:* Bohemond returned to Italy, collected another army, and landed in Albania, but once again failed to defeat Alexius; he died in Apulia in 1111.
33. Smail, op. cit.
34. Cate, op. cit.; see also Fink, op. cit.

Tactical adaptation was only partly responsible for early Frankish victories which gained them a foothold and allowed them to seize and hold Antioch, Jerusalem, and other cities, and to capture and defend existing castles and build new ones. But the Franks probably would not have carved out their various Syrian kingdoms, let alone retain them for nearly a century, had it not been for a supreme enemy weakness. This was political, not military: had the sultan controlled his emirs, or local governors, sufficiently, he could have fielded an army of such strength as to have overwhelmed the relatively slim crusader forces.

Fortunately for the crusaders, the sultan's relations with his Syrian and other emirs were stormy. Moslem rulers such as Kilij Arslan, Zanki, and his son Nūr-ad-Dīn, exercised a hegemony that the sultan resented; conversely, they viewed the sultan's expeditions from Mesopotamia with suspicion. In 1111, for example, when the sultan took the offensive against the Franks, his local emirs offered only lukewarm co-operation to the invading force. The Frankish prince Tancred (Bohemond's nephew) refused battle, and the Turkish forces, finding no worthwhile loot, soon returned home. In 1115, local emirs actually allied *with* the Franks against Moslem invaders. The situation was no better in Egypt, which was wracked by civil war, a fragmentation that lasted until Saladin, the great Egyptian leader, managed to infuse a kind of unity and break Frankish power in Syria.[35]

If enemy political weakness saved the crusaders and allowed them to survive, their own political weakness prevented them from expanding their coastal holdings into a Franco-Syrian empire of any importance. Despite religious trappings, the early crusades represented a colonizing effort—a transplanting of the feudal system to the Middle East. No overall political plan existed. Feudal lords occupied existing castles or built new ones, not in accordance with a single strategy but rather in areas that seemed to offer the best opportunity for exploitation. As Smail has emphasized, the castle did not serve *primarily* a military function, although the security it offered formed a vital ingredient in the feudal holding it dominated. But the Franks did not build a planned defensive complex designed either to repel unwanted invaders or to serve as a springboard for further expansion to important east Syrian cities.

Political weakness on either side in time brought a fundamental change to crusading warfare. Lacking a strong political base, the new feudal kingdoms never grew militarily dominant: knights and foot soldiers were forever in short supply, and local magnates could not afford to risk losing armies. But local feudal lords soon discovered that such was the political fragmentation of the enemy that quite often no need existed to risk battle: natural causes limited depth and duration of enemy incursions. The enemy could burn crops and terrorize peasants,

35. H. A. R. Gibb, "The Rise of Saladin 1169–1189." In Setton, *supra.*

but, lacking equipment to besiege castles and fortified towns, and lacking the strength and staying power necessary to defeat crusading armies, he could not establish a permanent presence and he could not collect loot sufficient to satisfy his soldiers. As one result, his invasion forces, composed of tribal contingents, often melted away, particularly at season's end, when the fighting man was needed at home. In this sense, the art of warfare from the Frankish standpoint became that of *not* fighting battles, or at least restricting them to a minimum.[36]

The crusaders apparently did not realize that good fortune was giving them a breathing space—nearly fifty years—in order to erect a political-military bastion from an indigenous population variously composed of Armenians, Christian Syrians and Moslems. Though apologists later spoke of Frankish assimilation in Syria, the record shows a rule primarily of force with attendant lack of political growth or even change. Local peoples served the Franks because they had to. Frankish behavior offered no particular attraction to local loyalties, particularly when enemy armies frequently challenged Frankish presence. Smail has cited instances of local collaboration with Turks and Egyptians, but perhaps the most telling indication of Frankish failure occurred after the battle of Hattin, in 1187, when ". . . the Franks in the district of Nablus evacuated the area as the Muslim peasants rose *en masse* in favor of the victorious Saladin."[37]

36. Smail, op. cit.
37. Ibid.

Chapter 6

Warfare in the West • Norman conquest of Ireland • The great Mongol invasion of Europe • Vietnam's savior: Marshal Tran Hung Dao • Edward I's pacification of Wales • The English experience in Scotland: William Wallace and Robert Bruce • The guerrilla leader Bertrand du Guesclin • John Zizka and the Hussite wars

STRATEGY AND TACTICS of the Middle Ages, particularly of feudal warfare in Europe, remain obscure. Modern historians tend to argue that combat was not as stylized as we normally think, but rather that it differed from country to country and from commander to commander—in other words, that warfare continued to develop as it had since the birth of time. If the mounted knight enjoyed his place in the sun, his role slowly diminished as mercenaries and citizen soldiers augmented feudal hosts and as armies grew in strength and staying power essential for longer campaigns. If the mounted knight outlasted feudal warfare, he eventually succumbed to weapon development, first the longbow, which shredded French cavalry formations at Crécy and Agincourt, then gunpowder.

Although lacking details, we know that clever commanders continued to employ tactical tricks during these decades and centuries. The feigned flight seems to have been a Norman favorite (possibly the result

of Byzantine influence): William of Normandy allegedly used it not once but twice in the same afternoon to break Harold's infantry and win the battle of Hastings in 1066.[1] In the battle of the Standard, in 1138, Prince Henry fought his way through English foot only to find himself and his small cavalry band cut off; ordering his knights to throw away identifying badges, he led them forward to merge with the English and slowly pass through to freedom.

The Normans appear to have used considerable tactical flexibility during the conquest of Ireland (1169–75). In addition to small, seemingly effective armies cored by mounted knights, they relied on three main tactical devices: ". . . the feigned retreat, the flank attack by horsemen, and the sudden surprise."[2] In these campaigns and in defending against Norse incursions from Wales, the Normans, according to Basil Liddell Hart,

> . . . showed their skill and calculation by the way in which they repeatedly lured their opponents to battle in open ground where their mounted charges had full effect, by the way they exploited feigned retreats, diversions, rear attacks to break up the opposing formation, and by the strategic surprises, night attacks and use of archery to overcome opposition when they could not lure an enemy from the shelter of his defenses.[3]

Although their military campaigns were facilitated by extreme political dissension in Ireland,[4] their arms and ability were superior to the Irish so long as the latter fought "orthodox" battles. The Normans found more difficult going in bogs and forests, where the Irish set skillful ambushes which often stopped Norman horsemen. One Irish leader delayed a Norman force by cutting trenches across forest paths and throwing up ramparts behind the trenches.[5] Another leader, Dermot MacMurrogh, utilized a similar defense:

> . . . In order to keep attackers to the paths and to prevent infiltration into the woods, which might outflank him, Dermot "plashed" the margins of the pathways, in the approaches to his barriers; he made, that is, impenetrable hedgerows of the undergrowth on either side by interweaving cut branches amid the growing shrubs and saplings.[6]

The Normans could not carry war into the bogs with any success, and to the bogs the Irish eventually retired, leaving cities and open country

1. But see Beeler, op. cit., who challenges this traditional version.
2. Oman, op. cit.
3. B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History—A Study in Strategy* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1929).
4. A. J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (London: Ernest Benn, 1968).
5. G. A. Hayes-McCoy, *Irish Battles* (London: Longmans, Green, 1969).
6. Ibid.

to the castled supremacy of the English. But the expansion of English supremacy—the successful colonization of Ireland—demanded a continued military effort backed by an influx of settlers. Having neither, the Normans slowly compressed their rule into the greater Dublin area—what became the English Pale. In Oman's words: ". . . Hence came that unhappy division of the island, destined to last for four centuries and more, in which the natives held out in their fastnesses, while the invaders dominated the open land—each levying unending war on the other, yet neither able to get the advantage."[7]

While Western knights continued to depend on weight to give their armies shock power, Eastern armies continued to stress mobility. Like the Franks and Normans, Eastern peoples were also on the move. By the twelfth century, successive migratory waves (which started around 12,000 B.C.) had populated Vietnam, Malaya, the Philippines, Java, Indonesia, and Australia. The dominant power in Southeast Asia was China, which held suzerainty over what are today's Tibet, Korea, and most of Vietnam.

Toward the end of the twelfth century, the Mongols sharply challenged the Chinese position. Genghis Khan (1162–1227) succeeded in consolidating a group of Mongolian tribes, nomads living between Lakes Baikah and Baikal in Asia, and in forming and training an army which in 1214 penetrated the Great Wall of China and captured Peking, capital of the Kin dynasty.

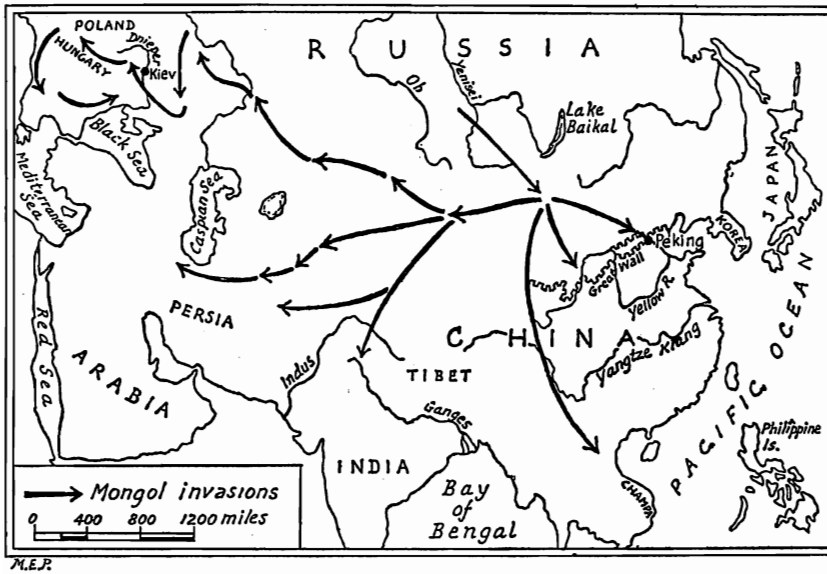
A few years later, while one army remained to fight in China, Genghis led another force west, conquered the Khwarazm Empire (northern India-Turkestan-Persia), and marched north to defeat a Russian army on the Dnieper. This empire did not collapse with the Khan's death, in 1227; his son Ogdai, aided by such civil counselors as the brilliant Yeliu Chutsai and by such outstanding generals as Subutai, defeated the Hin Chinese to win northern China before invading the lands of the Sung dynasty, to the south. Ogdai then led his army across Asia to invade Russia, sack Kiev, conquer most of Poland, and, early in 1241, occupy Hungary.[8] Ogdai's sudden death caused the Mongols to return to Asia, where, after considerable delay, Mangu Khan was elected Great Khan in 1251. Under his rule and that of Kublai, who succeeded him in 1260, the main empire moved east, leaving subordinate empires in Russia and Persia. Although the Mongolian Empire would prove short-lived, the Yuan dynasty, which Kublai established in China, lasted until 1368.

The Mongol conquests represent a tremendous military achievement. Basil Liddell Hart wrote that ". . . in scale and in quality, in surprise and in mobility, in the strategic and in the tactical indirect approach,

7. Oman, op. cit.
8. H. T. Cheshire, "The Great Tartar Invasion of Europe," *The Slavonic Review,* Vol. 5 (London, 1926).

their campaigns rival if they do not surpass any in history."[9] Professor Bury noted that their success was due to "consummate strategy" and not

> . . . to a mere overwhelming superiority of numbers. . . . It was wonderful how punctually and effectually the arrangements of the commander were carried out . . . Such a campaign was quite beyond the power of any European army of the time, and it was beyond the vision of any European commander. There was no general in Europe, from Frederick II downward, who was not a tyro in strategy compared to Subutai. It should also be noticed that the Mongols embarked upon the enterprise with full knowledge of the political situation of Hungary and the condition of Poland—they had taken care to inform themselves by a well-organized system of spies; on the other hand, the Hungarians and Christian powers, like childish barbarians, knew hardly anything about their enemies.[10]



The Mongol armies consisted primarily of horse archers who, in the Eastern tradition, literally lived on horseback. Armed with bow, lance and scimitar, the hardy, well-trained warriors used two varieties of bows and three "calibers" of arrows for various tactical situations. Some authorities believe that, as early as 1218, Genghis Khan used guns and gunpowder for siege work in the conquest of Turkestan. According to Marco Polo, who visited Kublai Khan's empire, each warrior marched

9. Liddell Hart, op. cit.
10. Bury, op. cit.; see also P. Kendall, *The Story of Land Warfare* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957).

with eighteen horses and mares in order to supply himself with milk, blood, meat and remounts. Subutai's armies marched in widely separated columns, the flanks ahead of the center; such was the mobility of the cavalry that the columns could converge upon plan, after which they were tactically controlled in the Chinese fashion by a variety of signals.

Tactically, Subutai's armies were not suitable for fighting in hilly, wooded country, nor did they carry siege machines. The most effective defense occurred in Bohemia, where Václav I ". . . saw to it that Prague, Olomouc, Brno, and other towns in Bohemia and Moravia were adequately fortified; he also ordered the monasteries to be turned into strongholds so that the civilian population could take refuge there, while the monks, who were provided with weapons, received instructions to store up food."[11] How effective the Bohemian defense would have proved had the Mongols remained is another matter, but perhaps Václav was aware of their political shortcomings. As it turned out, he was correct: Ogdai's sudden death brought a succession problem and caused the Mongols to return to Asia.

A few years later, the Mongols turned south to Vietnam, an invasion of the Red River Valley with a force, according to ancient annals, doubtlessly exaggerated, of two hundred thousand. ". . . The Vietnamese, as they would so often do later, abandoned their cities and headed for the hills, leaving their capital to be burned by the invaders. But the Mongols, still unused to the tropics and tropical diseases, were defeated by the environment; after a fruitless pursuit of the Vietnamese, they withdrew."[12] About 1268, Kublai Khan led another invasion aimed at conquering the Champa kingdom on the Gulf of Tonkin, an inconclusive campaign described by Marco Polo.[13]

Once fleet of foot, the Mongol armies were growing heavier with the addition of infantry and even war elephants. In 1284, such a host descended for the third time on Vietnam. And now appeared a remarkable man: Marshal Tran Hung Dao, ". . . who withdrew to the mountains, wrote his *Essential Summary of Military Arts,* and began to train his troops for protracted guerrilla warfare! 'The enemy must fight his battles far from his home base for a long time. . . . We must further weaken him by drawing him into protracted campaigns. Once his initial dash is broken, it will be easier to destroy him.' "[14]

Three years passed before Kublai's "initial dash was broken," but he nonetheless had to withdraw. Dao now had his guerrillas plant ". . . thousands of iron-spiked stakes in the Bach-Dang river north of

11. Cheshire, op. cit.
12. Bernard Fall, "Two Thousand Years of War in Viet-Nam," *Horizon,* Spring 1967.
13. Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (New York: New American Library, 1961). Ed. Milton Rugoff.
14. Fall, op. cit.

Haiphong through which the Mongol fleet had to pass. The ships arrived at high tide, when the stakes were submerged. A small Vietnamese naval force cleverly decoyed the enemy into a fight which looked like an easy victory until the Mongol ships found themselves stranded or gored on the stakes by the momentum of the out-flowing tides. That was the moment Marshal Dao's infantry chose to attack and defeat the invaders."[15]

Marshal Dao knew how to use a victory. Bowing to the inevitable, he voluntarily began paying tribute to the Mongols ruling in Peking.

One of the most interesting pacification campaigns of these turbulent years was Edward I's conquest of Wales. In the preceding two hundred years, Anglo-Norman expeditions had only partially subjugated these rude peoples who enjoyed making war against each other almost as much as against the English.

Edward, who came to the throne in 1272 and reigned until 1307, did not return to England until 1274. To his annoyance, the powerful northern Welsh ruler, Llewellyn ap Gruffydd, otherwise the Prince of Wales, refused to do homage. Edward decided to force the issue and invade the country, but wisely took his time in organizing the expedition. In this interim period, he came on a remarkable analysis of earlier campaigns in Wales written by a highly educated and widely traveled cleric who was half Welsh, Giraldus Cambrensis, otherwise called Gerald de Barri. Giraldus had served in Wales and had advised Henry II on his pacification campaigns.[16] He had written a history of the Norman conquest of Ireland; two other works, *Itinerarium Kambriae* and *Descriptio Kambriae,* not only offered generous and generally accurate information on Welsh guerrilla tactics but possibly gave Edward a rough plan of campaign.[17]

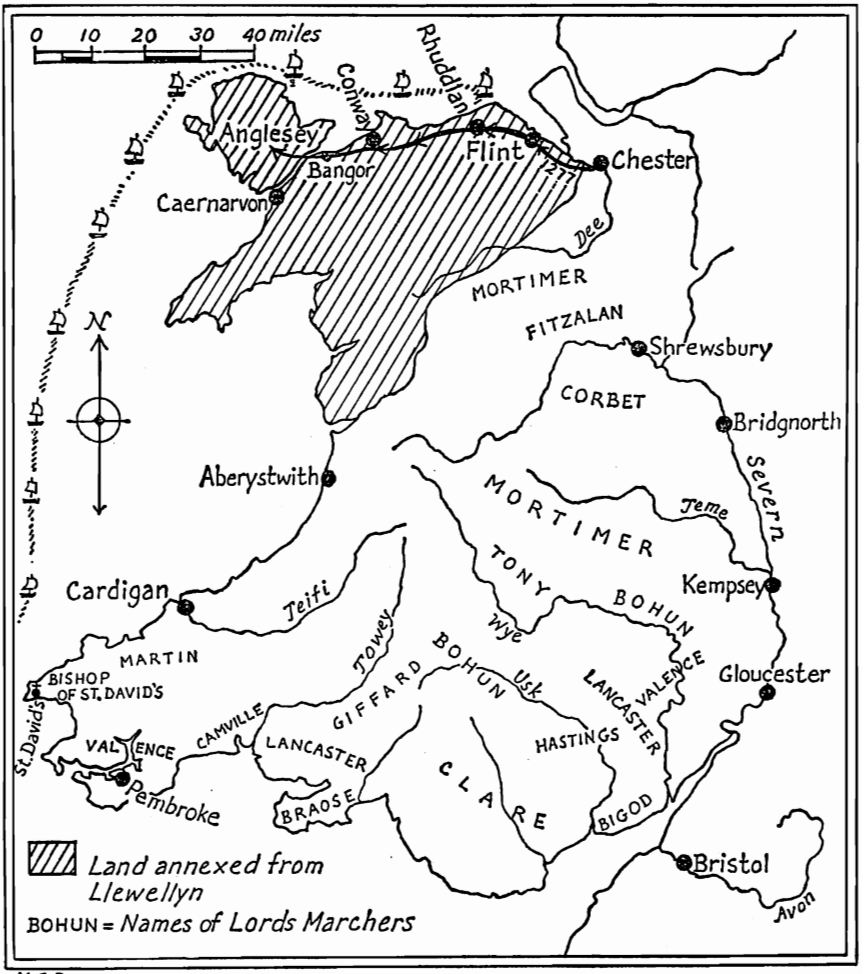
Giraldus emphasized the totally hostile environment of this mountainous and wooded target area: dreadful weather, few roads, mostly barren land whose entire settlements disappeared into remote mountain valleys to leave an invading army to fend for itself.

Although Welsh princes preferred to let land and weather defeat an invader, Giraldus left no doubt of their willingness to fight under favorable conditions. A tradition of universal military service existed: ". . . when the trumpet sounds the alarm, the husbandman rushes as eagerly from the plow as the courier from his court." Wearing light armor to retain mobility and armed with bows and spears, the Welsh bands fought in broken country, where they ". . . relied on a single charge accompanied by wild shouts and the noise of trumpets, calculated to de-

15. Ibid.

16. Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937). Ed. and tr. H. E. Butler.

17. John Beeler, *Warfare in England 1066–1189* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966).



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moralize the enemy." If an attack failed, they disappeared into the woods. But Giraldus warned pursuers to look sharply for ambushes. He also warned that ". . . the Welsh were as easy to defeat in a single battle as they were difficult to overcome in a protracted campaign."[18]

Was it possible to subdue them? It was, if the prince developed a strategy based on enemy weaknesses. Sounding remarkably like Sun Tzu fifteen centuries earlier, Giraldus wrote:

. . . The prince who would wish to subdue this nation, and govern it peaceably, must use this method. He must be determined to apply a diligent and constant attention to this purpose for a year at least; for a people who with

18. Ibid.

a collected force will not openly attack the enemy, nor wait to be besieged in castles, is not to be overcome at the first onset, but to be worn down by prudent delay and patience. Let him divide their strength, and by bribes and promises endeavor to stir up one against the other, knowing the spirit of hatred and envy which generally prevails among them; and in the autumn let not only the marches [the border country], but also the interior part of the country be strongly fortified with castles, provisions, and trusted families.[19]

The clever prince would place an embargo on food and cloth coming into the country from England and a naval blockade to stop supply from Ireland. Let the harsh winter run out, and when the guerrillas were hungry and the land barren and unfriendly to ambush,

. . . let a body of light-armed infantry penetrate into their woods and mountainous retreats, and let these troops be supported and relieved by others; and thus by frequent changes, and replacing the men who are either fatigued or slain in battle, this nation may be ultimately subdued. Nor can it be overcome without the above precautions, nor without great danger and loss of men. Though many of the English hired troops may perish in a day of battle, money will procure as many more on the morrow for the same service; but to the Welsh, who have neither foreign nor stipendiary troops, the loss is for the time irreparable.[20]

Supported by Lords Marchers, or English border barons, Edward invaded Wales in 1277, with a force of several thousand cavalry, infantry and the medieval equivalent of engineers, the whole supported by a secure home base and a small fleet sailing from the Cinque Ports.

Edward intended to advance along the coast ". . . and then to strike up the river valleys, fortifying posts provisionally during the campaign, where he could construct permanent castles afterwards when Wales was annexed."[21]

Edward's first concern centered on the danger of ambushes in densely wooded border country. One chronicler noted that between Chester, from where the army marched, ". . . and Llewellyn's country lay a forest of such denseness and extent that the royal army could by no means penetrate through without danger. A large part of this forest being cut down, the king opened out for himself a very broad road for an advance

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. J. E. Morris, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1901). Edward built ten castles between 1277 and 1295, at a cost of probably £100,000—an immense figure at the time. Several of the castles are extant; see also C. H. Pearson, *History of England During the Early and Middle Ages* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1867); Liddell Hart, op. cit.

into the prince's land, and having occupied it by strong attacks, he entered through it in triumph."[22]

The king built his first forward base at Flint, the timber being brought around by sea. Here he also received considerable troop reinforcements, so that by the end of August he counted over fifteen thousand infantry, a force that included some nine thousand Welsh allies. He used Welsh labor for road and base construction, and, from extant documents, we know that he paid and fed them well.

Pushing on to Rhuddlan by a newly cut road, he again received supply from his fleet. He now marched to Conway and captured the island of Anglesey, described by Giraldus as "the granary of Wales," in time for the harvest.

Edward's carefully conducted campaign had thrown Llewellyn off balance. Deprived of support from tribes which had submitted to the king, short of food with winter approaching, and unable to attract the invaders to the interior, where he wanted to fight, Llewellyn now accepted the inevitable and sued for peace. The treaty of Conway extended English rule and administration deep into Wales. Edward had won a magnificent campaign with a minimum expenditure of life, but to maintain his sovereignty he was forced to build a series of expensive castles and to meet heavy administrative costs.

Peace lasted less than five years. Although King Edward apparently did not intend to absorb Wales into England, he and his lieutenants left no doubts of its subordination to his overlordship:

> . . . in one respect Edward was ill-fitted to deal with an uncivilized people. He was over-strict for the times even in England. . . . But his officers were nowhere harsher than in Wales, where the people, unaccustomed to a minute legality, complained that they were worse treated than Saracens or Jews. Old offenses were raked up; wrecking [causing ships to wreck by false signals] was made punishable; the legal taxes were aggravated by customary payments; and distresses [seizure of goods] were levied on the first goods that came to hand, whether Llewellyn's own or his subjects'. . . . David [Llewellyn's brother] was alienated from the English cause by petty quarrels with Reginald Grey, justice of Chester, who insisted on making him answer before the English courts, hanged some of his vassals, and carried a military road through his woods.[23]

Judging the time ripe for rebellion, in early 1282 Llewellyn and David captured and burned a few fortresses ". . . and the Welsh spread over the marches, waging a war of singular ferocity, slaying, and even burning, young and old women and sick people in the villages."[24] But

22. Ibid.
23. Pearson, op. cit.; see also J. D. G. Davies and F. R. Worts, *England in the Middle Ages—Its Problems and Legacies* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).
24. Ibid.

most strong points held out while Edward, who was unprepared for the rebellion, hastily mobilized an army by summoning troops from all over England and even Gascony. By June, he had collected around seven thousand infantry. Divided into two armies, supported by cavalry and supplied by a small fleet, this expedition marched on Anglesey, which Edward considered "the noblest feather in Llewellyn's wing," and which the navy also attacked.

While the fleet carried out a blockade and soldiers cut down sanctuary forests in the border country, skirmishing continued into early winter, when Llewellyn agreed to negotiate and ". . . presented his list of grievances as justifying the war."[25] Edward refused to discuss them, declaring that Llewellyn's action ". . . was inexcusable, because he had revolted first without appealing to the crown, being himself always ready to hear and investigate."[26]

During a battle in the rugged interior a month after this exchange, Llewellyn, possibly lured by treachery to a meeting of local chieftains, was caught without his armor and run through. Edward sent his head to London, where, garlanded with silver ivy leaves and mounted on a lance, it was carried through the streets and exhibited on the Tower.[27] The campaign continued until David and other chiefs surrendered, in late April.

To judge David, Edward summoned a parliament ". . . of barons, judges, knights and burgesses":

> . . . The sentence, which excited no horror at the time, was probably passed without a dissentient voice. David was sentenced, as a traitor, to be drawn slowly to the gallows; as a murderer, to be hanged; as one who had shed blood during Passiontide, to be disembowelled after death; and, for plotting the King's death, his dismembered limbs were to be sent to Winchester, York, Northampton, and Bristol. . . .[28]

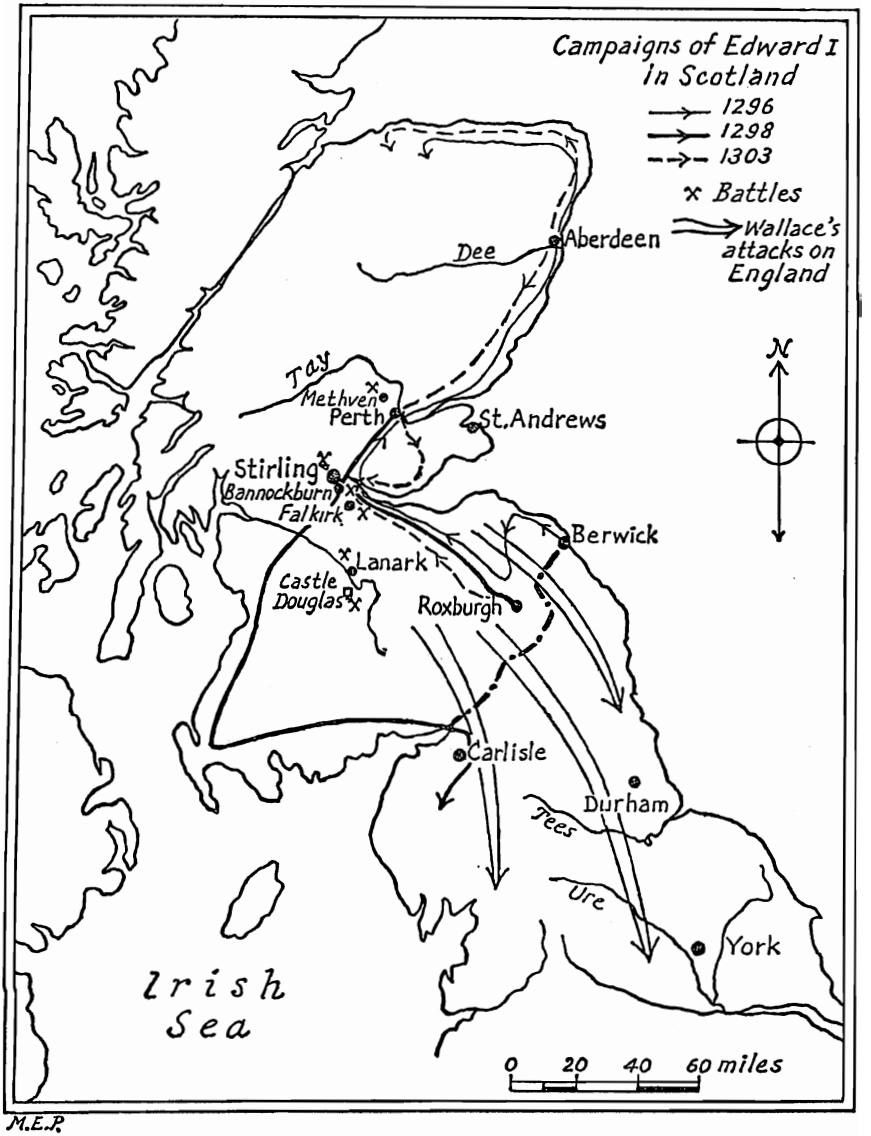
This short war cost Edward some ninety-eight thousand pounds, an immense sum even though it included about twenty-three thousand pounds for repair of castles.[29] Supplementing an already large income with taxes on his subjects and with loans from Italian bankers, he had continually to borrow more money to fight further guerrilla wars before he controlled the area.

In pacifying Wales, Edward displayed considerable talent and organizational ability. But geography also helped, for, by occupying certain strategic points, he cut rebel forces from adequate food supply and outside help. Rebel dissidence also aided the royal cause.

25. Morris, op. cit.
26. Ibid.
27. Hoyt, op. cit.; see also Pearson, op. cit.
28. Pearson, op. cit.
29. Morris, op. cit. Amazingly complete records including military and civil payrolls are extant.

Edward encountered a different set of operational factors in his later pacification of Scotland, where rebel forces enjoyed generous space for temporary sanctuary.

The trouble started in 1295. John Balliol, whom Edward had helped to the throne, had incurred baronial ire by paying homage to Edward's



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overlordship. Under baronial pressure, he renounced allegiance to England and formed an alliance with France. The following year, Edward invaded the lowlands and captured Berwick, where his army indulged in a general slaughter of Scots, men and women, an estimated eight thousand to sixty thousand lives, who fell "like the leaves in autumn," as one chronicler put it. After capturing other fortresses and towns and subduing the lowlands, Edward displayed a certain clemency, but tried ". . . to introduce the English system of government, for example the Lowlands were divided into shires, sheriffs were elected, and justices appointed. . . ."[30] As he erred in Wales, so in Scotland did he fail to respect the people's temper:

> . . . He was liberal in giving back lands to the nobles and gentry whom he kept with him and carried off into [the war in] Flanders. But he tried to tax Scotland on the English scale; to repress the disorders of a rude country, the cattle-lifting and feuds that were almost part of its domestic economy, as rigorously as could be done in the heart of England; and to introduce English monks, and invest English clergymen of Scotch benefices. . . .[31]

Edward's treasurer, Cressingham, was said to have done everything ". . . that could irritate or aggrieve an impatient people," while his lord lieutenant, the Earl of Warrene, resided out of the country ". . . to escape its climate."

> . . . In his absence the soldiery were at once unemployed and uncontrolled, and they behaved with the license of conquerors; while the constant reductions in their number, made by Cressingham's economy, weakened their efficiency, and filled the country with disbanded mercenaries. The people were ready to rise in arms, and only wanted a leader. . . .[32]

Most of the barons were in France fighting for Edward. But now a young gentleman, William Wallace, son of a country laird, took vengeance against some grievance, attacked Lanark garrison and killed a judge. Hunted as an outlaw, he slowly built up a band and acquired a reputation for skill and cunning in attacking English garrisons, that attracted other dissidents such as William Douglas and later young Robert Bruce to what soon became full-blown rebellion.

Although Scots nobles came to terms with the English, Wallace continued to fight and in September 1297 won the battle of Stirling, ". . . the turning-point in the fortunes of Scotch independence."[33] After putting John on the throne—he himself became guardian—he raided

30. Davies and Worts, op. cit.
31. Pearson, op. cit.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.; see also A. M. Mackenzie, *Robert Bruce King of Scots* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1934): The despised Cressingham fell in this battle. The Scots flayed his body and ". . . distributed the hide as souvenirs."

deep into northern English counties and when pursued scorched the earth in order to defeat the king's hungry soldiers.

Little is known of either Wallace or his tactics—A. M. Mackenzie rightly calls him "a cloudy figure." He apparently fought a rigorous guerrilla war; he was later indicted for murders, robberies, and sacrilege in churches. His methods undoubtedly stemmed in part from English severity, and he seems to have won and retained a considerable popular following in these precarious years when he was attempting to move a nation. His over-all strategy backfired in 1298, when Edward cornered and badly beat his army at Falkirk. Relying primarily on the missile (the long bow) as opposed to cavalry charges, the English were said to have taken ten thousand Scots lives.[34] However, as a later historian pointed out: ". . . Edward's victory was decisive, but it was almost profitless. The Scotch left him nothing but the possession of so much desolated land as his army could camp upon."[35]

Wallace escaped to the continent, where he attempted without success to enlist aid from France and from the pope. His best weapon remained the Scots people, especially the lowlanders, who for several years suffered the ravages of the English while still fighting back. The uneven war continued until 1303, when Edward, strengthened at home and at peace with France, led an invasion in such strength as to cause Scots nobles to lose heart and come to terms. William Wallace also petitioned for the king's amnesty—without success. Edward sent him to London, where ". . . he was taken through the streets in a mock procession . . . with a crown of laurel on his head, and tried by a special commission, consisting of three judges." The temper of the day probably explains the severity of sentence:

> . . . To Edward and his people—as even to Philip of France, and perhaps to some Scotchmen of the day—Wallace was no better than a brigand, leading an armed rabble against their natural lords, and subverting the foundations of a political order more valuable to every statesman than a mere principle of nationality.[36]

William Wallace was dragged through London streets to the gallows and hanged—but was cut down while still alive and disemboweled.

Robert Bruce, son of a gentleman who had fought on the king's side at Falkirk: as King Robert of Scotland, thirty-two years old, he picked up the standard of revolt and for nearly a quarter of a century waged intermittent warfare against the English. His army was never strong: he never once mustered a thousand cavalry. In the early battle of Methven, he ordered his men to cover themselves with linen smocks to conceal

34. Mackenzie, op. cit., offers an excellent analysis of Edward's tactics.
35. Pearson, op. cit.
36. Ibid.

a lack of defensive armor; Pembroke countered this ruse by agreeing to fight on Monday, then marching on Sunday evening to catch Bruce by surprise and destroy his army.

Bruce escaped with a few followers, and it is doubtful that he would have survived except for space and spirit. Although fear caused many Scots to withhold support of the rebels, the dying Edward's harsh policy turned others to Bruce. Edward's temper toward the end is best expressed by his reply to pleas for the life of a captured Scot baron. "His only privilege," Edward said, "shall be, to be hanged on a higher gallows than the rest, as his treasons have been more flagrant and numerous."[37] He ordered Lady Buchan placed in a cage and exhibited on the ramparts of Berwick castle. He dispatched the Earl of Pembroke to Scotland as governor with

> . . . orders that all those taken in arms, and all who sheltered them, were to be hanged or beheaded, while those concerned at all in the death of Comyn [who betrayed Bruce to the king and was murdered], and those who gave them countenance or support, were to suffer his full invention in the way of disembowelling and castration.

Bruce also utilized the space of the highlands:

> . . . He was in his own countryside, that he knew well, and he possibly knew that from the people of it he could count on neutrality at any rate. They would not follow him, but they would not betray. What he did was to disappear into the landscape.[38]

He disappeared to survive and then fight back. One of his lieutenants, Douglas, successfully raided Douglas castle, an ingenious and daring effort whispered about the land. Bruce gained recruits. Escaping capture or destruction a dozen times, he fought small engagements and his strength continued to grow. Edward died and John of Brittany replaced Pembroke. By the end of 1308, Bruce controlled most of Scotland north of the Tay. A year later he held his first parliament, at St. Andrews; he also gained rapprochement with Philip of France, a diplomatic move that caused Pope Clement once again to excommunicate him for ". . . damnable perseverance in iniquity."[39]

For five years, Bruce continued retreating before superior English forces while his army sporadically raided northern English counties, which on occasion bought off the invaders for hefty sums. Guerrilla attacks on English-held castles reduced them one by one. In time, Bruce grew strong enough to meet the enemy in pitched battle at Bannockburn, which he won.[40]

37. Ibid.
38. Mackenzie, op. cit.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.

Although the Hundred Years' War holds certain orthodox tactical interest,[41] we are mainly concerned with the figure of Bertrand du Guesclin, a guerrilla leader who eventually became High Constable of France.

Du Guesclin was a Breton, a small man with flashing green eyes over a flat nose, ". . . uncouth, querulous, almost illiterate, without fortune. . . ."[42] But with force, with imagination and with a fine disregard for the artificial niceties of knightly warfare.

At eighteen, he headed a small band of fellow Bretons in a war of ambush against the English who occupied Brittany. At thirty, he achieved sudden fame by disguising his small band as woodcutters and capturing the castle of Fougeray.[43]

Appointed to the king's service for this feat, Du Guesclin next opened a guerrilla campaign against an English army besieging the fortress of Rennes. By a series of hit-and-run raids, he slowly drew the bulk of English forces away from the starving fortress, then captured an English food convoy, which he delivered, along with troop reinforcements, to the hard-pressed defenders. Continuing to lead guerrilla campaigns, he became increasingly famous for his rapid movements, night and day, and for the detailed preparation and suddenness of his attacks against enemy flanks and rear.

During a temporary lull in the war, Charles V gave the fiery Breton the task of freeing the French countryside from the barbaric pillaging of the "Grand Companies"—groups of mercenaries formerly in English and French pay and now little better than outlaw groups, whose leaders bore such picturesque names as "Smashing Bars" and "Arm of Iron." These *routiers* had ". . . pillaged and plundered the realm to such an extent," says a chronicler, "that not even a cock was heard to crow in it."[44] Du Guesclin bribed the bulk of these to follow him to Spain. In

41. Fuller, op. cit.; A. H. Burne, *The Crecy War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955); A. H. Burne, *The Agincourt War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956).

42. Éditions G. P., *La merveilleuse histoire de l'armée française*. Paris, 1947; see also Siméon Luce, *Histoire de Bertrand du Guesclin et de son époque* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1867).

43. Ibid. From a hidden position, Du Guesclin and his men allegedly had watched most of the English garrison leave the castle. Du Guesclin had observed that no wood had been delivered in some days, so, with bundles of fagots covering their weapons, his party approached the walled château and persuaded the skeleton garrison to lower the drawbridge. Du Guesclin and his men threw their loads on the bridge to prevent its being raised, then rushed to the attack and took the castle, which they held for a year. One of my less imaginative critical readers has pointed out that either the fagots must have been *very* heavy or the defenders *very* weak. I agree.

44. Paul Lacroix, *Military and Religious Life in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1874).

the battle of Navarrete, against the Black Prince, most of them were killed and Du Guesclin was captured, but later ransomed.

When fighting with England started again, Charles V made Du Guesclin the High Constable, or commander-in-chief, of France. Du Guesclin used Fabian tactics to push the English from the country. With the regular army defending towns and castles in strength too great for English armies to overcome, Du Guesclin used *routiers* to wage almost purely guerrilla warfare: ". . . a war of harassment, surprises, ambushes, sudden assaults, and slow siege."[45] In Basil Liddell Hart's words, ". . . within less than five years he had reduced the vast English possessions in France to a slender strip of territory between Bordeaux and Bayonne. He had done it without fighting a battle."[46]

The diversified combats of the Middle Ages provide but scant defense for the traditional chivalric concept of knightly warfare. Not only was the dragon of rapacious warfare a favorite of the knights, but the dragon of peasant uprisings was a phobia. Nobles ruthlessly suppressed the *Jacquerie,* or peasant uprising, of 1358 in France, that of 1381 in England under Wat Tyler, and the Fleming revolt at Roosebeke in 1382.

But knightly warfare was already in decline, the inevitable result of improved weapons and of the invention of gunpowder, not to mention dynastic feuds such as those in Bohemia, which brought a series of guerrilla campaigns beginning in 1389 and lasting for twenty years. The future Bohemian leader John Zizka served in one of these bands, where ". . . he learned to make the best possible use of the terrain in attack and defense. . . ."[47] Artillery already had played a considerable part in the wars of the Teutonic knights against Lithuanians and Russians—campaigns that featured many guerrilla aspects. Zizka learned the use of fire weapons in Poland, and in fighting the Hussite wars (1419–34)—occasioned by Church-inspired crusades of German and Hungarian knights against the Bohemians—became ". . . the first European commander to make full use of the artillery arm, or to see the value of a mobile barricade of wagons as a factor contributing to the steadiness of a present army."[48]

In defending against the favorite knightly tactic—the cavalry charge—Zizka deployed armored wagons, each sheltering infantry armed with hand guns and crossbows, in a line called a *Wagenburg,* or wagon for-

45. E. Perroy, *The Hundred Years War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951). Tr. W. B. Wells.

46. Liddell Hart, op. cit.

47. Frederick G. Heymann, *John Zizka and the Hussite Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955).

48. H. A. L. Fisher, *Europe—Ancient and Medieval* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1938); see also Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1967).

tress. Between vehicles, he deployed four-wheeled carts holding cannon and protected by infantry armed with pikes. Behind each wing, cavalry waited in readiness to deliver a counterstroke or lead a pursuit. This formation thoroughly baffled invading knights, who unsuccessfully challenged it in more than fifty battles.

A major significance lay in Zizka's utilization of peasants and townsmen in a co-ordinated combat role. As Frederick Heymann concluded: ". . . Thus the Taborite army, in the way Zizka formed it, acquired a degree of rational subdivision, tactical organization, and actual battle co-operation far beyond anything used before in medieval warfare."[49]

49. Heymann, op. cit.

Chapter 7

The decline of guerrilla warfare • Machiavelli and military developments • Turenne, Condé, Martinet: seventeenth-century tactics • The great captains: Maurice of Nassau, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, Marlborough • Frederick the Great and guerrilla warfare • Pasquali Paoli and his Corsican guerrillas • The early colonizing period • North American Indian guerrilla tactics • The rise of orthodoxy in the American colonial army • Braddock's defeat • Colonel Henri Bouquet's reforms • Rogers' scouts • The rise of light infantry • Outbreak of revolution

THE INTRODUCTION and successful application of gunpowder to warfare placed guerrilla operations into general eclipse both in Europe and abroad. A series of peculiar environments unfavorable either to guerrilla or quasi-guerrilla tactics resulted from a technological-tactical competition between emergent European dynastic states. These were sufficiently wealthy to wage almost incessant war in bids for religious-dynastic supremacy at home and imperial supremacy abroad. Although often prolonged and sometimes fought with a ferocity defying even contemporary imagination, these wars were "limited" in the sense of their being fought for specific political objectives usually by professional armies—a state of affairs that in the West was not going to change until the end of the eighteenth century.

In the West, the entire *direction* of war was changing. By the end of the fifteenth century, it was becoming a serious profession, a matter of state interest. One of the first persons to respect this trend was Machia-

velli (1469–1527), who, in 1499, witnessed the French invasion of the Italian city-states. In his subsequent, often profound and generally disturbing works, he advised that ". . . the foundation of states is a good military organization"; accordingly, ". . . a Prince should therefore have no other aim or thought, nor take up any other thing for study, but war and its organization and discipline"[1] (which is precisely what Sun Tzu counseled circa 250 B.C.).

His words gained reinforcement by almost constant weapon development. The appearance of the arquebus, whose primitive and unreliable matchlock ignition was eventually replaced first by the wheel lock, then the flintlock, systems, the reluctance of some commanders to employ the new weapons without diluting the ranks of pikemen, the discovery of better casting methods for artillery made more mobile and accurate by the development of the limber and trunnion, the invention of the wheel-lock pistol, the evolution of castles into fortifications capable of withstanding prolonged artillery sieges—each made war more expensive, each moved it increasingly into the hands of the state, which relied more and more on professional armies commanded by great captains who changed tactical values of war without altering its ferocity.

Technology ruled the battlefield. The escalation of violence that it wrought was halted not by choice of rulers and commanders but only because the ghastly wars of religion, the plague, and the excesses of the Thirty Years' War, by ravaging large areas of Europe and sharply limiting the supply of manpower, exercised a moderating influence on the battlefield. With soldiers in short supply, difficult to recruit and expensive to train, commanders became increasingly reluctant to expend them in battle. The French general Turenne (1611–75), who, along with Condé, bridged the interim years between the end of the Thirty Years' War and the reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715), ". . . regarded battle as a last resort, to be accepted with caution and then only when conditions seemed favorable."[2]

This made increasingly good sense in the light of tactical changes. Vauban's socket bayonet fitted to the flintlock musket (the *fusil*—thus, the fusilier) had forever eliminated the pikeman and had caused the old infantry formation in depth (*en profondeur*) to yield to an embryonic line formation. During the last half of the seventeenth century, General Jean Martinet (from whom we take our common noun martinet) trained his French troops to deploy from column into line and advance in three ranks, pausing to fire platoon volleys on command, and finally to attack with the bayonet. The "line" was a geometrical formation—it was a prelude to the famed "square" of lines, which provided

1. Felix Gilbert, "Machiavelli: The Renaissance of the Art of War." In E. E. Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941).
2. Preston, op. cit.

ideal defense against cavalry charges—and the troops were trained to advance in unison, keeping step at a stately cadence of eighty paces per minute. Naturally enemy artillery fire exacted a tremendous toll from these shoulder-to-shoulder ranks, as did volleys of musket fire delivered at no more than fifty paces (because of technological limitations).

Few commanders could afford the loss wrought by confrontation battles, which were not difficult to avoid. Since the new formations required open and level terrain, a commander not wishing to fight could retire to hilly, wooded country or to a defended strong point or city in order to spend the winter rebuilding forces for a fresh campaign. From this tactical prudence grew the sophisticated tactics of siegecraft and fortification, which further "slowed" battlefield action.

Nature, technology and economics combined to alter this situation, albeit slowly. Man's proclivity to procreation soon repaired former ravages. No less interested an observer than Frederick the Great pointed out that Emperor Ferdinand I had barely supported an army of 30,000, yet, in 1733, Charles VI effortlessly fielded 170,000; Louis XIII supported 60,000 soldiers, but, in the War of Succession, Louis XIV kept between 220,000 and 360,000 men in the field.[3] Technological improvements, for example the ring bayonet and the iron ramrod, started giving an edge to offensive warfare, while riches pouring in from overseas colonies provided rulers with the means to extend the battlefield.

As usual, great captains played a significant role. The efforts of Maurice of Nassau and Gustavus Adolphus to free formations from rigidness and restrictive weight were continued by Marlborough and Frederick the Great. Despite their efforts, war remained very restricted and sharply limited in political purpose, while possessing little tactical subtlety. Charles XII relied primarily on mobile-shock tactics pursued with a reckless charisma to defeat the Russians, Danes, Saxons and Poles in a series of battles, the Great Northern War, fought from 1700 to 1709; his impetuous nature and contempt for Peter the Great and the Russian army brought him defeat in detail at Poltava in 1709 and eliminated Sweden as a major power.

Marlborough's string of victories from 1704 to 1713 hinged on similar tactics, in which surprise played an important role, for example at Blenheim. By discarding care and caution common to the day, he gained complete strategic and tactical surprise, from which the French, fighting well, never recovered; at Oudenarde, he fought and won an "encounter" battle, a decidedly unorthodox practice at the time. Without question Marlborough's victories raised England to great-power status and forced France to sign the Treaty of Utrecht, but all this at a great cost in lives and treasure to gain a peace so fragile as to be chimerical.

3. Frédéric II, *Oeuvres* (*Histoire de mon temps*) (Berlin: Decker, 1846), Vol. 2 of 30 vols. Ed. J. D. E. Preuss.

Frederick the Great also displayed a tactical dualism. He maneuvered a lot, but he also fought a lot. In the *Instructions to His Generals,* he wrote: "In war the skin of a fox is at times as necessary as that of a lion, for cunning may succeed when force fails."[4] But he also advised: "War is decided only by battles and it is not decided except by them."[5]

Another great captain, Marshal de Saxe, echoed this dualism. He wrote in his principal work, *Mes Rêveries,* ". . . I am not in favor of giving battle. . . . I am even convinced that a general can wage war all his life without being compelled to do so." This oft-quoted passage scarcely complements the 1745 battle of Fontenoy, won by De Saxe, who prepared redoubts from which his infantry took the English and Dutch under murderous enfilade fire.

If warfare in this transition period was not particularly subtle, neither did it as a rule involve the general population. Yet, here and there, we find suggestions of what was to come. Tyrone's rebellion in Ireland, at the end of the sixteenth century, was in many ways a guerrilla war, with villagers and farmers frequently involved. When the Earl of Essex failed to stamp out the rebellion, Elizabeth turned to Charles Blount, who utilized tactics that would become all too familiar in the colonial period: he burned crops, razed villages and held hostages. He also introduced light and very mobile cavalry units that operated from fortified towns to scour surrounding areas—altogether a tactical adaptation that in time brought an Irish defeat (though not for long).

In the mid-seventeenth century, the Polish nobility faced a nasty invasion by Ukrainian Cossacks and Mohammedan Tartars whose unorthodox cavalry tactics at first had them on the run. Charles X of Sweden and Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia later had their hands full breaking through a ring of Cossack and Polish irregulars who were besieging Warsaw. Charles was finally forced to abandon Poland without having run various rebel bands to ground.

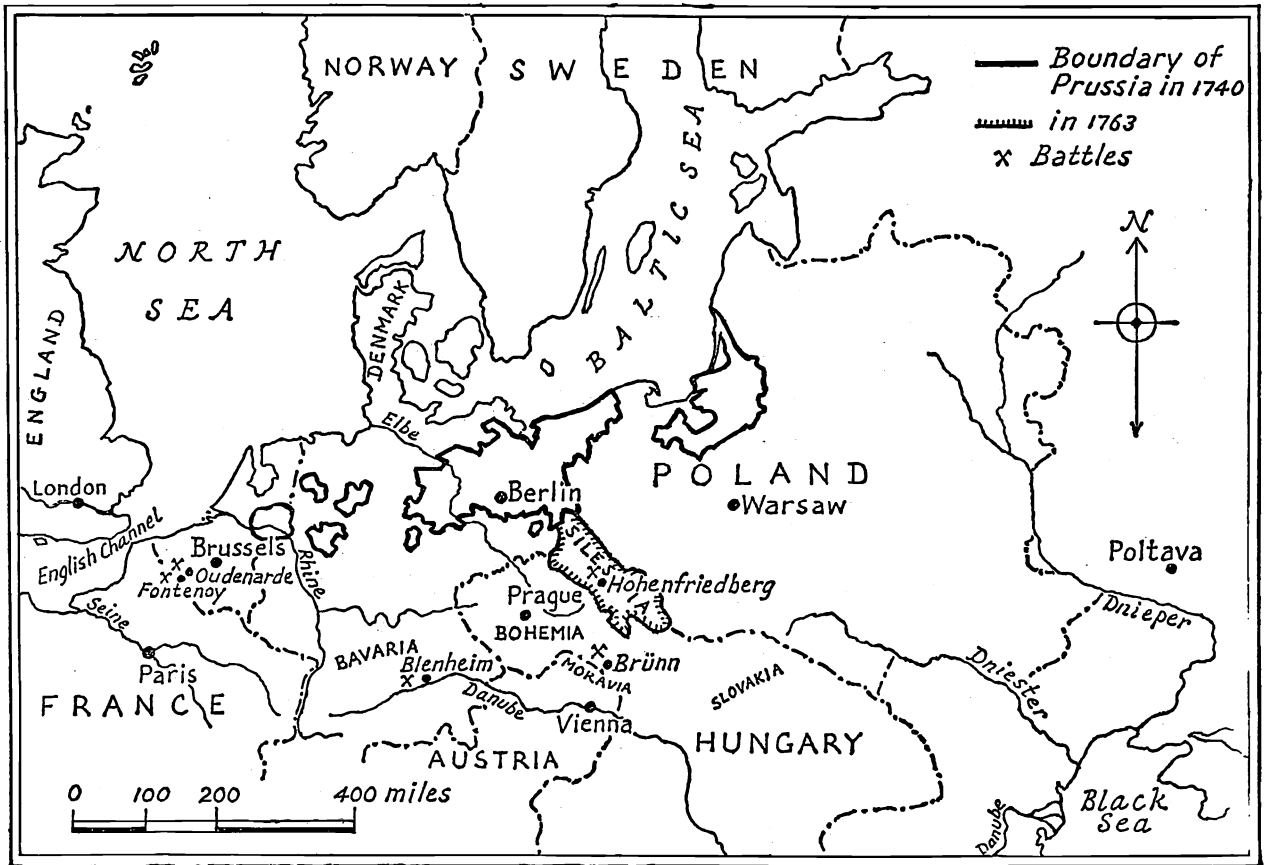
Early in the eighteenth century, prior to the battle of Blenheim, Marlborough defied contemporary custom by ravaging Bavaria, a psychological move intended to cause the Bavarian elector to desert his French alliance, and a practical move in that he denied the area's natural resources to the enemy.[6]

Frederick the Great was nearly captured by irregular mounted bands of Hungarians and Serbs in his first Silesian campaign, in 1741. So effective were these guerrillas that they screened the Austrian advance and almost cost Frederick a defeat. He was so impressed with their tac-

4. Frédéric II, *Oeuvres* (*Militaires*) (Berlin: Decker, 1866), Vol. 28 of 30 vols. Ed. J. D. E. Preuss.

5. Ibid.

6. W. S. Churchill, *Marlborough—His Life and Times* (London: G. C. Harrap, 1933), Vol. 2 of 4 vols. Churchill the historian expressed disapproval of this, Marlborough's "black" month.


Boundary of Prussia in 1740
in 1763
Battles
N
NORWAY
SWEDEN
NORTH SEA
BALTIC SEA
ENGLAND
DENMARK
Elbe
London
English Channel
Brussels
Oudenarde
Fontenoy
Rhine
Seine
Paris
FRANCE
Berlin
POLAND
Warsaw
SILESIA
Hohenfriedberg
Prague
BOHEMIA
BAVARIA
Blenheim
Brünn
MORAVIA
Danube
Vienna
AUSTRIA
SLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
Poltava
Dnieper
Dniester
Danube
Black Sea
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M.E.P.

tics that he organized special light-cavalry units to counter them. In early 1742, he again encountered Moravian irregulars and retaliated by devastating the land and besieging Brünn, neither action very effective. The Hungarians and Moravians provide early examples of guerrilla forces complementing orthodox army operations, in this case those of Austrian and French armies in Silesia, Bohemia and Bavaria.

Frederick encountered another ugly guerrilla situation in the second Silesian war. Leading his army south from Prague in 1744, he found himself in a barren, mountainous land whose peasants had buried their grain and hidden themselves and oxen in the forests. Some ten thousand Hungarian and Croatian hussars buzzed around his line of march, harassing foraging parties, striking columns in short, vicious attacks and cutting lines of communication until couriers failed to get through. Frederick's later, plaintive words describe a kind of warfare that in time would become only too familiar:

> . . . It might appear strange that an army as strong as the Prussian army could not hold this area in awe; force it to necessary deliveries [of supply]; to provide food; and to furnish numerous spies to keep it informed of the enemy's least movement. But one should understand that in Bohemia the nobility, priests and bailiffs are very attached to the house of Austria; that the religious difference furnishes an overwhelming obstacle to those people who are as stupid as they are superstitious, and that the [Vienna] court had ordered the peasants, all of whom were serfs, to abandon their hamlets at the Prussian approach, to bury their corn and hide in the neighboring forests—the court further promised to pay for all damage suffered from Prussian arms.

This was a particularly ugly situation for an army that depended largely on local provisions. Frederick continued:

> . . . The Prussian army thus found only deserted villages and wilderness: no one approached the camp to sell food; and the peasants, who feared rigorous Austrian retribution, could not be won over despite the sum offered. These difficulties were compounded by a corps of 10,000 hussars which the Austrians had sent from Hungary and which cut army communications in terrain composed only of marshes, woods, boulders, and every possible type of defile. Because of his superiority in light troops, the enemy had the advantage of knowing all that transpired in the king's camp [that is, because of intercepted communications]; nor did the Prussians dare send out scouting parties, at least without sacrificing them, due to the superior enemy parties: thus the king's army, entrenched in the Roman style, was confined to its camp.[7]

7. Frédéric II, op. cit.; see also Vols. 28 and 30 (*Oeuvres militaires*); see also Pierre Gaxotte, *Frederick the Great* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1941).

The net result forced the king's retreat. So traumatic had been the experience, however, that during this hasty maneuver over seventeen thousand troops deserted. One important official, after describing general discontent, added, "Our mistakes have set more than half the land against us." The experience exercised lasting influence on the soldier-king. A few months later, he won the battle of Hohenfriedberg, but declined to pursue the retreating columns deep into Bohemia.[8] The Austrians continued to use irregulars—the term guerrilla had not yet come into use—with great skill in the Silesian and Seven Years' wars (in which General Laudon emerged as a brilliant guerrilla commander among others). Almost every action in every campaign of these wars had irregular aspects, usually important and in several cases probably decisive. French and Prussian attempts to counter irregular operations greatly varied in result, but, even when successful, involved heavy investments of men and time. *Freikorps,* or voluntary units of irregulars established by the French and Prussians, notably Colonel Mayer's Prussian units, played a considerable role in the Seven Years' War.

While Frederick was so engaged, Corsican guerrillas were contesting Genoese rule of the island. This was scarcely unique. The Corsicans had been resisting someone from the third century B.C.; in those rare periods when they lacked an enemy, they delighted in fighting each other. The most recent trouble started with a revolt against Genoese rule in 1729. When the Genoese introduced German mercenaries, Corsican volunteers began guerrilla warfare. In 1732, the Germans suffered a bad defeat at Calenzana, the guerrillas being aided by villagers who threw beehives into German ranks.[9]

In 1738, the Genoese persuaded France to intervene. The first battalions, under Count de Boissieux, suffered a series of setbacks, but, in 1739, the Marquis de Maillebois took over, broke guerrilla resistance with a series of flying-column operations, and offered the people a reasonably fair peace. The French departed in 1741 and the Corsicans again rebelled.

After several years of intermittent fighting, Corsican guerrillas were up against it. But, in 1755, the twenty-nine-year-old Pasquale Paoli emerged as a national leader. The ubiquitous James Boswell, who later visited General Paoli, wrote of his accession: ". . . There was no subordination, no discipline, no money, hardly any arms and ammunition; and, what was worse than all, little union among the people."[10] Largely by personal persuasion, the tall, young and forceful general eliminated

8. Ibid.
9. L. H. Caird, *The History of Corsica* (London: Unwin, 1899).
10. James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica; and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1951). Ed. with an Introduction by Morchard Bishop.

disruptive vendettas and brought the people to concerted action against the Genoese. Increased autonomy allowed Paoli to introduce reforms ". . . in agriculture, in education, in democratic government, in commerce and in public education."[11]

A legitimate republic might have emerged from Paoli's efforts, but, in 1764, the Genoese persuaded France to occupy the island for four years as payment of a debt, a cynical arrangement causing Rousseau to remark that if the French ". . . heard of a free man at the other end of the world, they would go thither for the pleasure of exterminating him."[12] Paoli's guerrillas forced the small French force into several garrison towns, where they seemed content to wait out their time. But, in 1768, the Genoese sold their interest in the island to France. The following year, in Napoleon's words, ". . . thirty thousand French vomited upon our coasts in drowning the throne of Liberty."[13] Although Paoli's guerrillas fought well, the odds could only have been redressed by foreign intervention. Boswell carried on a vigorous campaign to bring about English intervention and did raise a considerable sum of money to buy arms for Paoli. The English Government was not as impressed as the public with "Corsica Boswell," whose lobbying prompted Lord Holland to the remark, ". . . Foolish as we are, we cannot be so foolish as to go to war because Mr. Boswell has been in Corsica."[14]

The French victory at Ponte-Nuovo forced Paoli to flee and practically ended Corsican resistance. The 1769 campaign cost the French, according to the Annual Register, some four thousand killed, and six thousand dead from either wounds or sickness.[15] Figures are lacking for Corsican deaths, but they must have been high.

Paoli's achievement is the more interesting because he wasn't a very good general. But he did foresee the strength inherent in nationalism. When the French objected that the Corsican nation had no regular troops, he replied: ". . . We would not have them. We should then have the bravery of this and the other regiment. At present every single man is as a regiment himself. Should the Corsicans be formed into regular troops, we should lose that personal bravery which has produced such actions among us, as in another country would have rendered famous even a *Marischal*."[16] On another occasion, he said, ". . . all Corsicans should be soldiers and members of the militia with the heart to defend the motherland." He also persuaded priests to preach ". . . that a martyr's crown awaited a Corsican who died for his coun-

11. Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell* (London. Secker & Warburg, 1966).
12. Caird, op. cit.
13. McLaren, op. cit.
14. Boswell, op. cit.
15. Caird, op. cit.
16. Boswell, op. cit.

try."[17] Paoli was not too interested in the philosophy of revolution. He told Boswell, ". . . If a man would preserve the generous glow of patriotism, he must not reason too much. . . . I act from sentiment, not from reasonings."[18]

Nonetheless, he remained realistic. When discussing his war against the French, he told Boswell, ". . . Sir, if the event prove happy, we shall be called great defenders of liberty. If the event shall prove unhappy, we shall be called unfortunate rebels."[19]

A paucity of guerrilla warfare also existed in the early-colonial period, when Western explorers sailing east and west found a wide variety of ancient cultures, such as those encountered by Columbus in the Caribbean. Though most of the island tribes were armed with bows and arrows and palm-tree cudgels, some exhibiting a more bellicose attitude than others, the majority greeted the Spaniards in a friendly if cautious manner. The Europeans, in turn, treated them with a sort of genial contempt, not hesitating to impress them as guides or hostages for their interisland voyages, or even as slaves to take back to Spain.[20]

Some ugly incidents did occur, but whether in the New World or in Africa and later in Asia and the Pacific, the natives, though greater in number and well armed according to their standards, could not stand for long against trained soldiers protected by body armor and armed with muskets and cannon.

Against such disproportionate odds, the native chose from three courses of action: he came to terms with the white man and attempted to profit thereby, as was the case with many coastal and some inland chieftains; or he retreated into jungle depths, moving when danger threatened either from the white man or from native tribes armed with Western weapons and indulging in the profitable slave trade reinstituted into Africa by the Portuguese and extended to the New World by the Spanish, French, English, Dutch and later the Americans; or, as happened mainly in continental areas, he physically contested the occupation of what he deemed his land.

Leaving location and chronology aside, the process of conversion (theft, if you will) remained generally the same: discovery followed by a coastal settlement, protection (ships' guns, a fort, a small garrison), consolidation (winning the tribes), initial exploitation, further discovery by penetration inland, protection (a fort and a garrison), consolidation, further expansion and further exploitation by the Catholic Church and/or the throne, later by private but royally chartered commercial

17. Caird, op. cit.
18. Boswell, op. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. S. E. Morison and Mauricio Obregón, *The Caribbean as Columbus Saw It* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964).

"companies"—the Virginia Company, the Dutch East India Company, the (British) East India Company—an inexorable process that gained the riches to support innumerable dynastic-religious wars in Europe while laying the groundwork for later, hemispheric wars.

The colonizing process differed in proportion to motives of the home country, strength devoted to the particular effort, and environment, both human and natural, of the target area. The first settlers in America arrived with a minimum of professional military support. In 1607, Jamestown settlers, heeding Captain John Smith's advice, formed ". . . immediately into three groups: one to erect fortifications for defense, one to serve as a guard and to plant a crop, the third to explore."[21]

In Virginia and New England, settlers encountered hostile Indians almost immediately, and for many decades had to rely for survival on ready militia forces. The effectiveness of these varied considerably. In general, the newcomers tried to assimilate the best features of Indian tactics, which stressed many of the features of guerrilla warfare: small-unit operations, loose formations, informal dress, swift movement, fire discipline, terror, ambush, and surprise attack. They were aided by concentration of numbers, and they also became adept at marksmanship, which grew more accurate as weapons improved.

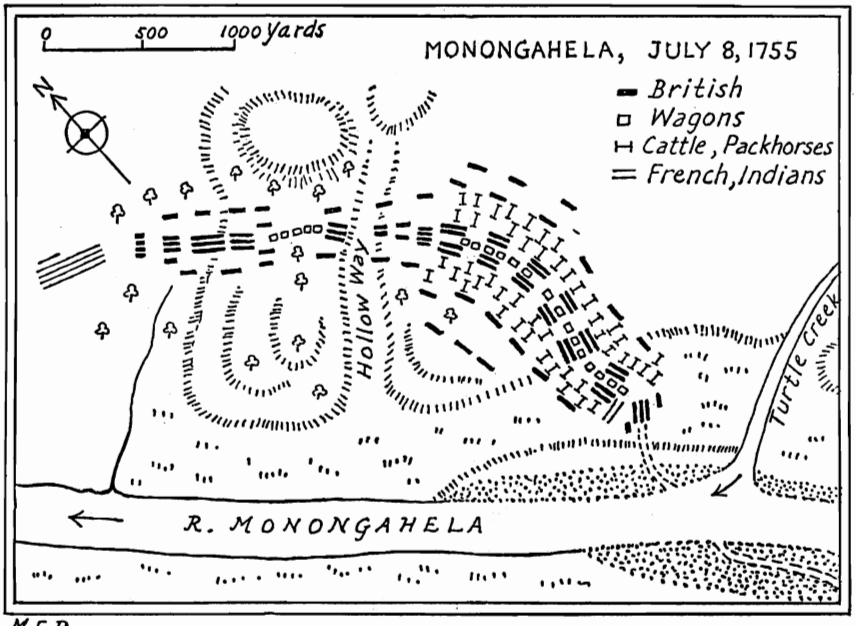
As frontiers expanded to remove the immediate Indian challenge to rear areas, settled colonists began to adopt European methods of warfare. Professor Weigley has noted that by the time of King Philip's War (1675–76) colonial militia tactics had become too formal and European to fight successful Indian-style warfare. Unable to counter "murderous" ambushes, the colonists began relying on Indian mercenaries. Orthodoxy advanced to such an extent that, by the mid-eighteenth century, militia commanders, upon Colonel George Washington's advice, were studying Humphrey Bland's *Treatise on Military Discipline,* ". . . the leading English tactical manual of the day." In 1754, when the French and Indian War started, Washington wrote that ". . . Indians are the only match for Indians; and without these we shall ever fight upon unequal Terms."[22]

The arrival of regular British regiments under General Braddock to fight the French and Indians encouraged the colonial trend toward orthodoxy. These units, splendidly equipped and perfectly drilled in the formal, Continental school made famous by Frederick the Great, were impressive enough and with better leadership and considerable adaptation might have coped satisfactorily with the new tactical environment. Braddock, however, suffered defeat in detail when he encountered an irregular force of French colonials and Indians in the forests of the

21. R. F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

22. Ibid.: see also J. F. C. Fuller, *British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Hutchinson, 1925).

Monongahela Valley. His force of fourteen hundred regulars and provincials was shredded by some nine hundred enemy using guerrilla tactics—he lost well over half his men and he himself died from wounds.[23]



M.E.P.

The British reacted by slowing down operations and by making specific tactical changes. In 1755, a Swiss mercenary, Colonel Henri Bouquet, assumed command of a new light-infantry regiment and set about teaching it to fight Indians properly. Bouquet was altogether a remarkable man. A skilled veteran of European fighting, he quickly adapted to the American scene, and we are fortunate to have a lengthy work which, though describing his successful campaigns of 1763, offers an insight into his earlier thinking.[24] A paragraph in the introduction of this work bears quoting:

23. Ibid.: Weigley suggests that had Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, commanding Braddock's vanguard, reacted correctly, ". . . the superior numbers and discipline of the British would probably have effected the rout of the enemy"; but see also Fuller, op. cit., who stresses Braddock's tactical ineptness. After citing British losses as 63 out of 86 officers and 914 of 1,373 men, he concludes: ". . . A French force of nine hundred irregulars, using Indian tactics, had beaten an English column fourteen hundred and fifty strong, using the tactics of Frederick the Great."

24. Anon., *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the Year MDCCLXIV Under the Command of Henry Bouquet, Esq.*, etc. (London: Reprinted for T. Jefferies, Geographer to His Majesty at Charing Cross, 1766).

. . . Those who have only experienced the severities and dangers of a campaign in Europe, can scarcely form an idea of what is to be done and endured in an American war. To act in a country cultivated and inhabited, where roads are made, magazines are established, and hospitals provided; where there are good towns to retreat to in case of misfortune; or, at the worst, a generous enemy to yield to, from whom no consolation, but the honour of victory, can be wanting; this may be considered as the exercise of a spirited and adventurous mind, rather than a rigid contest where all is at stake, and mutual destruction the object: and as a contention between rivals for glory, rather than a real struggle between sanguinary enemies. But in an American campaign every thing is terrible; the face of the country, the climate, the enemy. There is no refreshment for the healthy, nor relief for the sick. A vast unhospitable desart [sic], unsafe and treacherous, surrounds them, where victories are not decisive, but defeats are ruinous; and simple death is the least misfortune which can happen to them. This forms a service truly critical, in which all the firmness of the body and mind is put to the severest trial; and all the exertions of courage and address are called out. If the actions of these rude campaigns are of less dignity, the adventures in them are more interesting to the heart, and more amusing to the imagination, than the events of a regular war.

To this appreciation he added one of the enemy, for whom he held the greatest respect. In the new tactical environment, the Indian, not the white man, was the real professional:

. . . Let us suppose a person, who is entirely unacquainted with the nature of this service, to be put at the head of an expedition in America. We will further suppose that he has made the dispositions usual in Europe for a march, or to receive an enemy; and that he is then attacked by the savages. He cannot discover them, tho' from every tree, log or bush, he receives an incessant fire, and observes that few of their shot are lost. He will not hesitate to charge those invisible enemies, but he will charge in vain. For they are as cautious to avoid a close engagement, as indefatigable in harrassing [sic] his troops; and notwithstanding all his endeavours, he will still find himself surrounded by a circle of fire, which, like an artificial horizon, follows him every where.

Unable to rid himself of an enemy who never stands his attacks, and flies when pressed, only to return upon him again with equal agility and vigour; he will see the courage of his heavy troops droop, and their strength at last fail them by repeated and ineffectual efforts.

He must therefore think of a retreat, unless he can force his way thro' the enemy. But how is this to be effected? his baggage and provisions are unloaded and scattered, part of his horses and drivers killed, others dispersed by fear, and his wounded to be carried by soldiers already fainting under the fatigue of a long action. The enemy, encouraged by his distress, will not fail to encrease the disorder, by pressing upon him on every side, with redoubled fury and savage howlings.

He will probably form a circle or a square, to keep off so daring an enemy, ready at the least opening to fall upon him with the destructive tomahawk: but these dispositions, tho' a tolerable shift for defence, are neither proper for an attack, nor a march thro' the woods.

Bouquet was an educated man who could remind his readers that ". . . neither is there any thing new or extraordinary in this way of fighting, which seems to have been common to most Barbarians." He offered numerous examples not only from antiquity, but from his own century, pointing to light-infantry formations such as those raised by Marshal de Saxe and Frederick the Great. From his own extensive experience, he knew that as a "general maxim" the Indians ". . . surround their enemy. The second, that they fight scattered, and never in a compact body. The third, that they never stand their ground when attacked, but immediately give way, to return to the charge." It followed, then:

1st. That the troops destined to engage Indians, must be lightly cloathed, armed, and accoutred.
2d. That having no resistance to encounter in the attack or defence, they are not to be drawn up in close order, which would only expose them without necessity to a greater loss.
And, lastly, that all their evolutions must be performed with great rapidity; and the men enabled by exercise to pursue the enemy closely, when put to flight, and not give them time to rally.

He followed these general recommendations with specific advice in considerable detail on such items as clothing, arms, training, construction of camps and settlements, logistics, and various tactical formations —one is reminded of Caesar's work on Gaul. Under his tutelage, the company replaced the battalion as the unit of maneuver; troops learned to fire from kneeling and prone positions, and to march through woods in single file with scouts in front and on the flanks. Such alterations would not work miracles. It was not

. . . to be expected that this method will remove all obstacles, or that those light troops can equal the savages in patience, and activity; but, with discipline and practice, they may in a great measure supply the want of these advantages, and by keeping the enemy at a distance afford great relief and security to the main body.[25]

25. Ibid.; see also Fuller, op. cit.: ". . . First, by means of his advanced posts, he held the enemy at a distance; secondly, he collected his force together; thirdly, by four simultaneous charges, covered by fire, he broke the circle into four segments, that is, forced it to offer eight flanks to his attack; fourthly, he demoralized it by his fire, and, fifthly, pursued and annihilated it by means of his light troops, foot and horse.
"This formation against a savage foe is probably the most ingenious and effective that the history of irregular warfare has to record."

The British also used Indian scouts whenever possible and tried, unsuccessfully, to form an Indian regiment. Lord Howe, who arrived in 1757, retained a famous Indian fighter, Robert Rogers, to instruct him and his men in the fine art of guerrilla warfare. Rogers and other scouts later formed independent companies of frontiersmen who were to carry out scouting missions as well as use Indian tactics to protect lines of communication.[26] The British commander-in-chief in the colonies, Lord Loudoun, attached British officers to these units, and some of them later formed officer cadres for Gage's new regiment formed in 1758—the first light-infantry regiment in the British Army.[27]

Another British general, Brigadier James Wolfe, faced the tactical problems posed by Indians in the Quebec expedition from May to September 1759. His "General Orders" called for constant "care and precaution." But Wolfe introduced a Cromwellian note, not so much from prudery but from sound tactical instinct. He forbade swearing and scalping ". . . except when the enemy are Indians, or Canads [Canadians] dressed like Indians . . . no churches, houses, or buildings of any kind are to be burned or destroy'd without orders . . . the peasants who yet remain in their habitations, their women and children are to be treated with humanity; if any violence is offer'd to a woman, the offender shall be punish'd with death."[28]

Such temporary accommodations to a peculiar tactical environment did not immediately alter an ingrained rigid and inflexible nature of British regiments. Enthusiasm for light infantry did not claim many orthodox commanders, even though, by 1770, each battalion possessed a company of light infantry—but, too often, this unit served more a disciplinary than a tactical purpose, containing the most troublesome soldiers.[29]

American colonists, on the other hand, continued to be influenced militarily by terrain and temperament. Despite the best efforts of Washington and other militia commanders to instill formal British discipline, American formations remained fairly informal.

This was understandable. American settlers possessed a much more individual outlook than their European brethren, and they were better marksmen. The farmers and woodsmen who in 1775 voluntarily took up muskets and rifles to defy British rule were accustomed to hunting small game at a time when laws against poaching and possession of fire-

26. Weigley, op. cit.: Professor Weigley's discussion on deeds claimed versus deeds achieved by Rogers is most interesting.

27. Ibid.; see also Preston, op. cit.; Peter Paret, *Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966). In an introductory chapter, "The Frederician Age," Professor Paret argues convincingly against the generally accepted influence of the American wars on European armies and tactics; see also Fuller, op. cit.

28. Fuller (*The Decisive Battles of the Western World*), *supra,* Vol. 2.

29. Fuller (*British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century*), *supra.*

arms prevailed in Europe. The greenest American recruit aimed instinctively at a target, while his European opposite was trained only to point the piece at the enemy and fire volleys on command.

The potential of this type of warfare, particularly when fought by men infected with the emotional virus of revolution, was not wasted on the British commander-in-chief, General Gage. Contrary to most British officials and officers, who deemed the colonial soldier inferior to the British regular, Gage warned at outbreak of hostilities that he would need considerably larger forces and a year or two to subdue the New Englanders. Since other colonies would undoubtedly come to the aid of the North, ". . . he urged that the Ministry estimate the number of men and the sums of money needed, and then double their figures."[30]

Although early colonial militias and the 1st Continental Regiment (authorized by the Continental Congress in 1775) soon gave way to a regular army commanded by General George Washington, light-infantry tactics flourished throughout the revolution, which even in the North displayed guerrilla overtones.

One was the American soldier's use of terrain with which he was only too familiar. General Burgoyne, who himself would surrender to rebel wrath, early warned:

> . . . It is not to be expected that the rebel Americans will risk a general combat or a pitched battle, or even stand at all, except behind intrenchments as at Boston. Accustomed to felling of timber and to grubbing up trees, they are very ready at earthworks and palisading, and will cover and intrench themselves wherever they are for a short time left unmolested with surprising alacrity. . . . Composed as the American army is, together with the strength of the country, full of woods, swamps, stone walls, and other inclosures and hiding-places, it may be said of it that every private man will in action be his own general, who will turn every tree and bush into a kind of temporary fortress, from whence, when he hath fired his shot with all the deliberation, coolness, and uncertainty which hidden safety inspires, he will skip as it were to the next, and so on for a long time till dislodged either by cannon or by a resolute attack of light infantry.[31]

Another tactic was the voluntary co-operation sometimes offered by the civil population to the revolutionary army: Burgoyne, in his Saratoga campaign of 1777, faced something akin to a scorched-earth policy as he marched from Montreal to the Hudson. By the time he reached Sara-

30. J. R. Alden, *The South in the Revolution, 1763–1789* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1957). Hereafter cited as Alden (*South*); see also Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), ed. J. R. Alden, Vol. 2 of 2 vols.

31. E. M. Lloyd, *A Review of the History of Infantry* (London: Longmans, Green, 1908).

toga, the Continentals, together with New York and New England militias, had concentrated in strength sufficient to force his surrender.

Another was the individual's role, particularly the marksman armed with the long-barreled Pennsylvania rifle. The Prussian General von Steuben, who arrived at Valley Forge in 1778 to teach Washington's soldiers linear tactics, recognized the difference in individual outlook and marksmanship ability between the farmer-woodsman and the European peasant and dispensed with traditional precision deployment in order to exploit more accurate American firepower.

But, generally speaking, Washington's tactics remained orthodox, nor did he, in Professor Weigley's words, ". . . essay any tactical innovations so unconventional as to approach what later generations would call guerrilla war."[32] Guerrilla warfare, however, did come into its own in the South, where, as we shall see, Lord Cornwallis faced many problems of a modern insurgency.

32. Weigley, op. cit.

Chapter 8

Guerrilla warfare in the southern colonies • The background • Clinton's shift in strategy • Capture of Charleston • "Tarleton's Quarters" • Clinton's occupation policy • Conflict with Cornwallis • Cornwallis takes command • The political situation • Colonial guerrilla resistance • Horatio Gates and the Continentals • Cornwallis' victory at Camden • Guerrilla leaders: Marion, Sumter, Pickens • Cornwallis' punitive policy • His decision to invade North Carolina • British defeat at King's Mountain, and Cornwallis' retreat • Marion's guerrilla tactics • Nathanael Greene and Cornwallis' "country dance" • Battles of Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse • Cornwallis marches for Virginia • Greene's offensive: final guerrilla operations

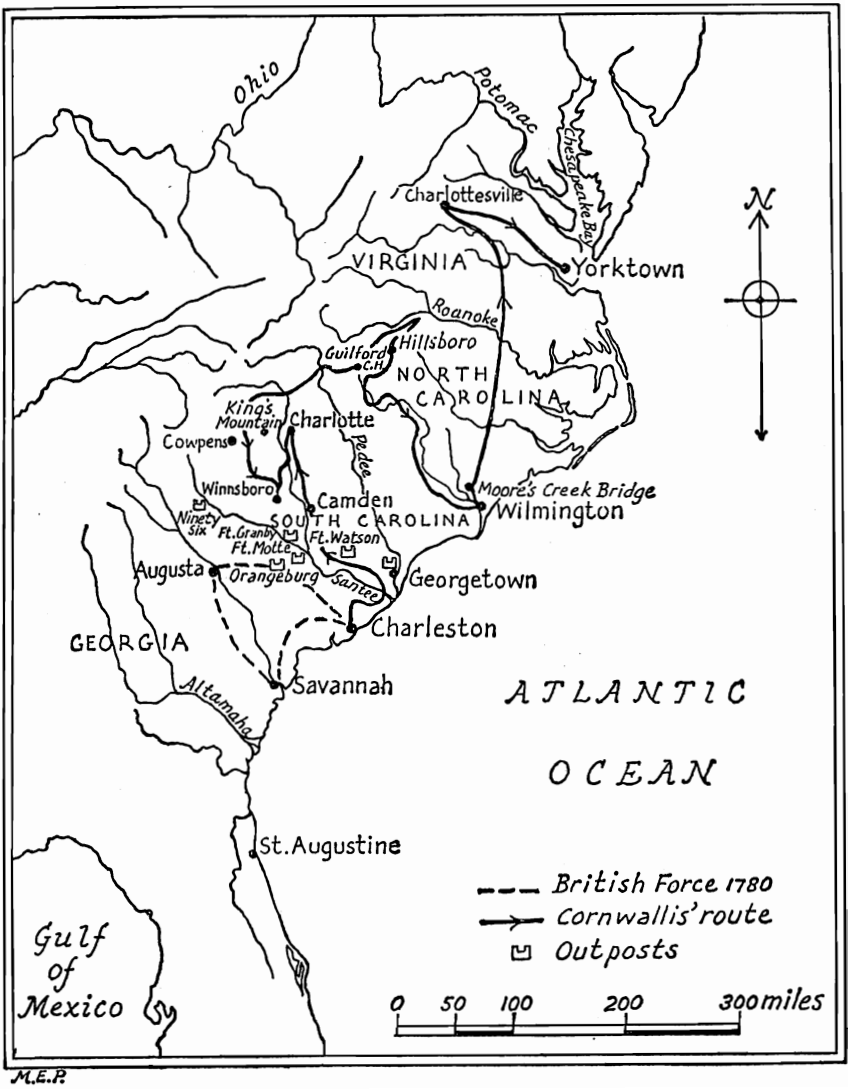
GUERRILLA ACTIVITY in the South occurred as early as July 1775, in Georgia, where Joseph Habersham organized a local group of "Liberty Boys." In addition to conducting raids such as ". . . seizing six tons of powder from a [British] ship at Tybee Bar," this group ". . . frightened neutrals and friends of Britain into quiet" during that crucial period when the patriots were rallying their forces.[1]

Patriot leaders raised similar groups in other southern colonies—no simple task, since, in many areas, loyalists and neutrals outnumbered patriots. Counterrevolutionary forces had to be fended off while rebels, as in North Carolina, organized a ". . . Provincial Congress and Committee of Safety, raised troops, appointed officers, printed money, levied taxes and otherwise made ready for war."[2]

1. Alden (*South*), *supra.*
2. Ibid.

Some of these hastily organized bands contented themselves with chasing colonial governors and other officials aboard British warships and with burning loyalist homes and plantations and driving off the owners after subjecting them to an unpleasant application of tar and feathers.

Other groups fought semiorthodox actions. Colonel Alexander Lillington, Colonel James Moore and Richard Caswell in North Carolina



met a Tory force at Moore's Creek Bridge to win a patriot victory that virtually ended local Tory resistance. Before the action, the patriots had removed bridge flooring and greased the supporting beams, thus completely confounding orthodox Tories.[3] Colonel Richardson, in South Carolina, raised a force of four thousand men which captured loyalist leaders and ". . . not only disarmed hundreds of loyalists but compelled many of them to pledge themselves to pacific behavior in the future."[4]

Such activity helped close the southern theater to regular British military operations until late 1778. At this time, General Sir Henry Clinton, British commander-in-chief, sent a force from New York to join with one raised by General Augustine Prevost from the St. Augustine garrison.[5] Clinton hoped to further an attrition strategy by seizing a series of coastal towns, thus forcing Washington to disperse his armies and lessen pressure against the British in the North. Both Clinton and his superior in London, Colonial Secretary Lord George Germain, also hoped the Tories in the deep South would rise in impressive numbers.[6]

In December, a small British force captured Savannah, and in the following month, seized Augusta, a noteworthy victory that attracted Tories from as far away as North Carolina to the British colors. These reinforcements sometimes encountered hostile patriot militia forces such as that under Andrew Pickens, who met and defeated seven hundred Tories in South Carolina and ". . . hanged five prisoners as traitors,"[7] an example of prevailing sentiment.

The failure of a patriot force supported by a French fleet to recapture Savannah and the withdrawal of this expedition to the West Indies turned Clinton's eyes again on South Carolina.[8] Attracted by ". . . the mildness of the climate, the richness of the country, its vicinity to

3. Ward, op. cit.; see also J. R. Alden, *The American Revolution, 1775–1783* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).

4. Alden (*South*), *supra.*

5. William B. Willcox (ed.), *The American Rebellion—Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775–1782,* with an Appendix of Original Documents (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1954). Hereafter cited as Willcox (*Clinton*). Professor Willcox offers an excellent biographical study of this controversial figure in his Introduction; see also William B. Willcox, *Portrait of a General—Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962). Hereafter cited as Willcox (*Portrait*).

6. J. R. Alden, *A History of the American Revolution—Britain and the Loss of the Thirteen Colonies* (London: MacDonald, 1969). Sir William Howe had warned against this eventuality, but Germain and Clinton, as Professor Alden put it, preferred "hope to information"; see also Willcox (*Portrait*), *supra;* William B. Willcox, "Sir Henry Clinton: Paralysis of Command." In George A. Billias (ed.), *George Washington's Opponents* (New York: William Morrow, 1969).

7. Alden (*South*), *supra.*

8. Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra;* see also Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969).

Georgia, and its distance from George Washington,"[9] he sailed south with a large expeditionary force in late 1779.

After considerable delays and difficulties, the British force landed, marched on Charleston and placed it under siege.[10] To isolate the city, in April 1780 Clinton ordered General Lord Charles Cornwallis and a force of nearly two thousand ". . . across Cooper River to intercept all communication between the garrison and the country, a service which he very effectively performed."[11] Clinton may have held an ulterior motive in so dispatching his second in command: the two generals by now were on the worst of terms, the result of Germain and King George having refused to let Clinton resign in favor of Cornwallis.[12] Acrimony aside, the operation was successful, and the commander of the Charleston garrison, Major General Lincoln, surrendered the city in May.

Clinton now sent two corps into the colony's interior, where, as he and Germain had hoped, loyalists came forth ". . . by the hundreds [to] take oaths of allegiance to the crown, and many took up arms in behalf of the King."[13] Cornwallis simultaneously led his corps against ". . . the only body of rebels remaining in arms in South Carolina." This belonged to Colonel Buford, the quarry of a cavalry task force consisting of two under-strength dragoon regiments, the Queen's Dragoons, commanded by a handsome but unscrupulous officer, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton. In late May, Tarleton reported to Cornwallis ". . . a march of 105 miles in 54 hours, with the corps of cavalry, the infantry of the legion mounted on horses, and a three-pounder. . . ."[14] Close to the North Carolina border, Tarleton caught up with a detachment of Virginia infantry, who surrendered to him. The British troops conducted a wholesale slaughter, shooting or stabbing 113 of the defenseless men to death and leaving another 150 bleeding to death before marching off with 53 prisoners—a despicable act indignantly described by the great British historian George Trevelyan.[15] To Carolina back-

9. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: T. Cadell, 1787).

10. Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra;* the campaign is described in detail; see also Wickwire, op. cit.; Piers Mackesy, *The War for America 1775–1783* (London: Longmans, Green, 1964).

11. Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis, *Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1859), ed. Charles Ross, Vol. 1 of 3 vols.; see also Wickwire, op. cit.

12. Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra,* the author's Introduction; see also Willcox (*Portrait*), *supra:* Cornwallis had asked for "a separate command away from the main army"; Wickwire, op. cit.: Clinton might have used the opportunity to rid himself of Cornwallis, who, he believed, was undermining his authority in the army.

13. Alden (*South*), *supra.*

14. Charles, op. cit.; see also Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra.*

15. George Trevelyan, *George the Third and Charles Fox* (London: Longmans, Green, 1914); see also Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra:* the general does not mention the incident; see also Fuller (*British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century*), *supra,* who registers neither surprise nor indignation.

woodsmen, the senseless act became known as "Tarleton's Quarters"—a phrase we shall hear again.

Clinton's provost marshals meanwhile were rounding up diehard rebels and evacuating them along with prisoners of war to coastal islands. Sir Henry also showered the general population with proclamations and manifestos ". . . calling upon all well-disposed persons to enrol themselves in the militia for a limited term of service, and announcing severe punishment against those who should take up arms on the other side. . . ."[16] Hoping to woo the population further, Clinton announced a parole system for those persons who promised not to take up arms against the British. He also promised royal protection to men who took a special oath of allegiance to the Crown. Cornwallis objected to this policy of "indiscriminate protection," by which ". . . some of the most violent rebels and persecutors of the whole province are declared faithful subjects, and are promised to be protected in their persons and properties."[17]

Despite such "gracious offers," a proclamation of May 1780 singled out ". . . some wicked and desperate men, who, regardless of the ruin and misery in which the country will be involved, are still endeavoring to support the flame of rebellion, and, under pretence of authority derived from the late usurped legislatures, are attempting, by enormous fines, grievous imprisonments, and sanguinary punishments, to compel His Majesty's faithful and unwilling subjects to take up arms against his authority and government. . . ." These persons, Clinton promised, would be severely punished.[18]

By June, organized rebel resistance appeared at an end in Georgia and South Carolina. The British had established important garrisons in the interior and along the border, and, with loyalists stirring in North Carolina, the area seemed under British control. ". . . I am clear in opinion," Clinton wrote to a friend, "that the Carolinas have been conquered in Charleston."[19] At Cornwallis' request, Clinton turned command over to him and sailed for New York.[20]

Clinton's instructions to Cornwallis have long been a subject of controversy. According to the Wickwires, ". . . the burden of . . . [Clinton's] instructions was clear, if not the means of implementing them. Cornwallis should pacify South and North Carolina, maintain order in Georgia and the Floridas, and then move north to take Virginia. Yet Clinton scarcely left his subordinate sufficient troops for such a large purpose." Under optimum conditions, the Wickwires have pointed out, Cornwallis needed three thousand men to pacify North Carolina; if

16. Charles, op. cit.; see also Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra.*
17. Charles, op. cit.
18. Tarleton, op. cit.; see also Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra.*
19. Wickwire, op. cit.
20. Ibid.: the authors give details of the command authority.

he ran into no trouble there, he would have to leave two thousand men to garrison the colony, which would give him only a thousand troops to pacify Virginia, ". . . one of the most actively rebellious provinces in North America."[21] Further, Clinton took with him most of the wagons and horses. Cornwallis lacked men, food, horses, wagons, and money. Supplying his interior garrisons alone constituted a major problem.

This does not necessarily make Clinton wrong and Cornwallis right. According to Professor Willcox, Sir Henry instructed Cornwallis ". . . to make the safety of Charleston and the rest of South Carolina his principal objectives, which were not to be endangered by any premature move into North Carolina." Although Clinton favored a lodgment in the Chesapeake Bay area, this perforce lay in the future. Clinton had a lot of shortcomings, but he was no fool. He foresaw Cornwallis working slowly up the Carolina coast in conjunction with the British fleet, developing loyalist bases, then moving inland, building as he went—a methodical but progressive pacification campaign to attract loyalists and consolidate politically and militarily a new theater of war. Once militia forces existed (and the naval situation had clarified), the regular army could continue operations to the north.[22] Lacking sufficient means for the task at hand, Cornwallis would have to generate new means. Clinton and Cornwallis were sufficiently experienced commanders to know that a major command task is to determine operational priorities—that is, equate means to mission. In this case, insufficiency of means dictated Cornwallis' moving carefully. On the other hand, Clinton's orders were often ambiguous, and such were relations between the two as to hinder even normal understanding.

The truth is, I believe, that both commanders erred. Clinton was at fault in opening a new theater of operations with insufficient means and with lines of communication sorely threatened by the French navy. As Professor Willcox has pointed out, in time ". . . division of force . . . led to a division of command." Moreover, the actual situation in the southern theater belied Clinton's expressed optimism, but none of that excuses Cornwallis' subsequent actions. The Charleston base was not politically secure. As Professor Alden has pointed out, ". . . Many patriots, offered a choice between serving under the British flag on the one hand and spoliation, imprisonment, and probably death through hardship and disease on the other, enlisted in the royal forces [and fought for the British in the West Indies, but not against their own people]."[23] Most inhabitants tried to save their lives and property by appeasing the momentary victor—most people answered the dilemma of civil war by

21. Ibid.
22. Willcox (*Portrait*), *supra.*
23. Alden (*South*), *supra;* see also Wickwire, op. cit.: Cornwallis imprisoned over 1,500 American soldiers in ships, where they lived miserably, perhaps 800 of them dying in 13 months.

accommodation in whole or in part. Many of those who swore allegiance to the British or who gave their parole did so under what they rightly regarded as duress, and they were not squeamish in later helping the rebels and even bearing arms against the British.

The political situation, in short, was ticklish, a fact that Clinton perhaps had recognized in wearing a velvet glove. His successor, Cornwallis, continued this policy, at least to a degree. Although confiscating estates of absentee rebels, he returned stolen and confiscated property to royalists and he continued to carry out Clinton's generous parole system. His dashing cavalry commander, Banastre Tarleton, later complained that this ". . . conduct opened a door to some designing and insidious Americans, who secretly undermined, and totally destroyed, the British interest in South Carolina." As for holding the occupying army in check, Tarleton observed that ". . . this moderation produced not the intended effect: It did not reconcile the enemies, but it discouraged the friends. . . ." Tarleton concluded that ". . . the future scene will discover, that lenity and generosity did not experience in America the merited returns of gratitude and affection."[24]

Cornwallis' attitude began to change in June, when submissive Americans in the Charleston area learned that substantial American reinforcements were on their way from the North and began to jump their paroles. One "good citizen," by name Lisle, the second in command of a militia battalion, waited until his men were supplied with arms and ammunition, then hustled them off to join patriot forces in the interior.

Try to imagine his lordship upon receipt of this information. At forty-two years, Cornwallis was chubby and rubicund. Undeniably ambitious —he had left a dying wife to return to this war for a third tour of duty— he was also capable: Professor Weigley regards him as ". . . probably the best British general in America."[25] Cornwallis, at the very least, would have agreed that he was a better general than Clinton. For months, he had been hoping that King George would appoint him commander-in-chief in North America. But the king, to whom Cornwallis reported via Lord George Germain, had held off. Cornwallis deeply resented the rebuff, which he explained in his own mind as the result of Clinton's intrigues against him. He still hoped to replace Clinton. But Clinton was a powerful man, or powerful enough not to be relieved by Cornwallis without sufficient reason. A successful blow by Cornwallis might just provide that reason. One thing certain: he could not afford to fail in his present mission.

And now, sitting at desk, scarlet tunic faint with powder from his wig, bleak eyes flashing over imperious nose, its volutes flared in anger, porcine hand impatiently rubbing long gray sideburns, he dictated a letter

24. Tarleton, op. cit.

25. Weigley, op. cit.; see also Hugh F. Rankin, "Charles Lord Cornwallis: Study in Frustration." In Billias, op. cit.; Mackesy, op. cit.

to Vice-Admiral Arbuthnot explaining his change in attitude: ". . . Nothing can in my opinion be so prejudicial to the affairs of Great Britain as a want of discrimination. You will certainly lose your friends by it, and as certainly not gain over your enemies. There is but one way of inducing the violent rebels to become our friends, and that is by convincing them it is in their best interest to be so."[26]

Off came the velvet glove.

But neither did the naked fist provide an answer. Rebel forces continued to plague the British. In addition to spreading malicious propaganda, the rebels ". . . also employed mild pressure, persecution, terrorization, and killing—not necessarily in that order. Often they terrorized and killed first." A British newcomer to the Carolinas, Brigadier General Charles O'Hara, shortly complained: ". . . The violence and the passions of these people are beyond every curb of religion, and Humanity, they are unbounded and every hour exhibits dreadful wanton mischiefs, murders, and violence of every kind, unheard of before. We find the country in great measure abandoned, and the few who venture to remain at home in hourly expectation of being murdered, or stripped of all their property."[27]

By mid-July, Cornwallis was complaining to Clinton of Sumter's new militia army of fifteen hundred men, as well as of ". . . the want of subordination and confidence of our militia in themselves."[28] General Washington now added to the British burden by sending down a force of Continentals under General Horatio Gates, hero of Saratoga, and, against Washington's wishes, newly appointed by Congress commander-in-chief of the South.

Gates was a good patriot, a poor general. A former British officer turned Virginia squire, he was fifty-two years old, an unhappy-looking man. He commanded a mixed bag: De Kalb's Continentals (Maryland line and Delaware regiment), a handful of horse, some Virginia militia, and Sumter's Carolina militia. De Kalb's troops were already tired, hungry, and sick when Gates caught up to them at Hillsboro in late July.[29]

Gates's appearance in the Carolinas exercised a psychological effect that greatly exceeded his combat potential. Tarleton later wrote that ". . . his name and former good fortune re-animated the exertions of the country: Provisions were more amply supplied by the inhabitants, and the continental troops soon reached the frontier of South Caro-

26. Charles, op. cit.
27. Wickwire, op. cit.
28. Alden (*South*), *supra*.
29. Ward, op. cit.; see also Wickwire, op. cit.: De Kalb had made heavy weather of the march: ". . . lack of food, limited transportation, long stretches of barren and unsettled country, the pestilential voraciousness of insects, violence of thunderstorms, the indifference of the inhabitants to the Revolutionary cause, all these things were strange to De Kalb."

lina."[30] In August, Cornwallis wrote Clinton that ". . . the whole country" between the Pedee and the Santee was ". . . in an absolute state of rebellion, every friend of government has been carried off, and his plantation destroyed."[31]

Gates wisely attempted to exploit the revolutionary air. On the banks of the river Pedee, he issued a proclamation similar in intent to that released by Clinton a few months earlier in Charleston. Gates offered immediate amnesty to all those who had accepted British paroles, on grounds that they had acted under duress. But he excepted those persons who ". . . in the hour of devastation have exercised acts of barbarity and depredation on the persons and property of their fellow citizens," and he warned against further disaffection, now that he was promising them security. Gates's temper is suggested by his remarking on this occasion that the British would long since have been driven from the continent ". . . but for the disaffection of many of the apostate sons of America."[32]

Having so pontificated, Gates continued his march south through barren country, which further wore down his force. At this time, a strange assemblage suddenly appeared in his camp. Its leader was another militia officer, Colonel Francis Marion, soon to become famous as the "Swamp Fox." Marion was a small, wiry, and handsome South Carolinian farmer of no great formal education. In 1759, he had enlisted and fought the Cherokees for two years. At the outbreak of revolution, he was commissioned a cavalry captain in the Second South Carolina Regiment. Trevelyan tells us, obviously with relish, the following: Marion was in Charleston when Clinton's expeditionary force landed. At a dinner party, his host refused to unlock the door until his guests had drunk the Madeira, an announcement that caused teetotaler Marion to exit by way of window. In so doing, he sprained his ankle and was taken to his farm. A few days later, Clinton placed Charleston under siege, but Marion had escaped.[33]

In the back country, Marion organized a ragtag force of locals whom he equipped with sabers ". . . fabricated by rural blacksmiths out of the circular saws of the timber-mills." To feed their pistols, they melted down pewter mugs and spoons. They rode what horses they could find or steal, and their over-all appearance left considerable to be desired. One Colonel Otho Williams was present when Marion and his band reported to Gates. ". . . Their numbers did not exceed twenty men and

30. Charles, op. cit.; see also Mackesy, op. cit.
31. Wickwire, op. cit.
32. Tarleton, op. cit.; he published the entire proclamation.
33. Trevelyan, op. cit.; Bryant later treated his exploits in the poem *Song of Marion's Men.*

boys, some white, some black . . . distinguished by small leather caps, and the wretchedness of their attire."[34]

The Continentals took one look and laughed until fit to bust. Gates was not amused, nor was he impressed with Marion's theories of Indian warfare. Although the guerrillas obviously weren't "apostate sons of America," they obviously weren't soldiers either, and, to get rid of them, Gates sent them on some slight errand.

This was premature, for shortly Gates was going to need all available help. The psychological effect of his army on local inhabitants had both alarmed and infuriated Cornwallis. Having failed to establish a political base, the British commander decided that he must now eliminate the new threat from the North—indeed, as long as the North could support the rebel effort in the South, he could not succeed in pacifying the area. Cornwallis was a man of action—what was needed, he decided, was a battle, a "decisive" battle to prove to the locals which side their bread was buttered on.[35] Determined to fight Gates, Cornwallis had marched north and occupied Camden, while Gates was marching south. In mid-August the two forces stumbled into each other. Gates now attacked the British position near Camden.

Five days after Gates had dismissed Marion, the American army was dead, dying, wounded, prisoner or, like its commander, on the run. ". . . In less than an hour Earl Cornwallis had shattered the only American army in the south . . . the most crushing victory that British arms ever achieved over the Americans in the Revolutionary War."[36] Marion meanwhile seemed to have disappeared. In reality, he was lying low waiting for an opportunity to strike. It came in the form of some hundred and fifty American prisoners being escorted to Charleston. Marion and his guerrillas swooped on the long column, dispatched guards, and freed the captured soldiers, a daring act that made him famous throughout the South.

Other militia-cum-guerrilla leaders began active operations during the dangerous hiatus created by Gates's defeat. Conspicuous besides Marion were Thomas Sumter and Andrew Pickens. Veterans of earlier fighting, they were natural leaders, at home in the tactical environment. Sumter was forty-six, tall, vigorous, and bold, and known as the "Carolina Game Cock." Pickens was five years younger, lean and rugged, an elder of the Presbyterian Church who seldom smiled and never laughed.[37]

These men attracted some followers, but their real popularity stemmed from British pacification methods. In Professor Alden's words,

34. Ibid.; see also Robert D. Bass, *Swamp Fox—The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion* (London: Alvin Redman, 1959).
35. Wickwire, op. cit.: the authors offer details of his thinking.
36. Ibid.
37. Ward, op. cit.

". . . the plundering, ravaging, and abuse of civilians by Hessians [mercenaries fighting for the British] and loyalists, and the brutalities of Tarleton, who refused quarter to patriots in the field, drove them to desperation and to bitter resistance."[38] Andrew Pickens, a militia colonel, had accepted British protection and taken the oath of allegiance, but defected, as the Wickwires noted, ". . . taking some men with him, because he considered the destruction of his property by some tories a violation of the protection the British had promised him in return for his oath."[39]

After defeating Gates at Camden, Cornwallis left no doubt of his feelings in a letter to a subordinate commander: ". . . I have given orders that all the inhabitants of this province, who had submitted [that is, accepted British protection in return for a special oath of allegiance], and who have taken part in this revolt, should be punished with the greatest rigor, that they should be imprisoned, and their whole property taken from them or destroyed; I have likewise directed that compensation should be made out of their effects to the persons who have been *plundered* and oppressed by them. I have ordered in the most positive manner, that every militia man who had borne arms with us and had afterwards joined the enemy should be immediately hanged. I have now, Sir, only to desire that you will take the most *vigorous* measures to *extinguish the rebellion* in the district in which you command, and that you will obey in the strictest manner the directions I have given in this letter, relative to the treatment of this country. . . ."[40]

Cornwallis' failure to compute accurately the extent, real or potential, either of royalist sympathy or of rebel support next led him to a fateful decision: the invasion of North Carolina, which he regarded as a sanctuary that supported the insurrection in South Carolina and Georgia. As he informed Clinton, ". . . unless he immediately attacked North Carolina he must give up both South Carolina and Georgia and retire within the walls of Charleston."[41] By his own admission, his southern base was scarcely secure, nor was his military posture particularly prosperous, despite material captured at Camden. But his Camden victory had eliminated threat of imminent invasion by orthodox Con-

38. Alden (*South*), *supra.*

39. Wickwire, op. cit.

40. Charles, op. cit.; see also, Wickwire, op. cit., for a slightly altered version, then another version, much altered by patriots who circulated it, as proof of Cornwallis' brutality. The Wickwires argue that Cornwallis was never as severe as called for by circumstances, but rather that he lost control over ruthless subordinates. Perhaps so. That does not excuse his condoning subordinate behavior such as Tarleton's, which represented ruthlessness without political purpose. Tarleton and other British commanders were practicing quantitative terrorism. Contrarily, Marion and other back-country patriots were practicing selective terrorism with specific political goals.

41. Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra.*

tinental forces, and he also believed that Tories by the thousands would rise to greet and support him. Though displeased with the new plan, Clinton now decided to send an expedition to Chesapeake Bay in order to create a "powerful diversion" and strike at the supply depots which would support Continental units opposing Cornwallis.[42]

In early September, Cornwallis started north to Charlotte, his left screened by a force of loyalist militia under Major Patrick Ferguson.[43] Charlotte turned out to be a dreadful base: ". . . the town and environs abound with inveterate enemies . . . the vigilance and animosity of these surrounding districts checked the exertions of the well affected, and totally destroyed all communication between the King's troops and the loyalists in the other parts of the province. No British commander could obtain any information in that position, which would facilitate his designs, or guide his future conduct . . . accounts of the preparations of the militia could only be vague and uncertain; and all intelligence of the real force and movements of the continentals must be totally unattainable."[44]

The British were still digging in at Charlotte when a patriot militia force fell on Ferguson at King's Mountain. Ferguson was killed, and some three hundred of his force killed or wounded and the rest captured. The Americans hanged nine of the prisoners, partly in revenge for British atrocities—"Tarleton's Quarters" come home—and probably also as a warning to other turncoats. Tarleton later wrote that ". . . the mountaineers, it is reported, used every insult and indignity, after the action, towards the dead body of Major Ferguson, and exercised horrid cruelties on the prisoners that fell into their possession."

Ferguson's defeat increased Cornwallis' isolation, and he wisely decided to retreat, his confusion clear from Tarleton's later report that ". . . owing to the badness of the road, the ignorance of the guides, the darkness of the night, or some other unknown cause, the British rear guard destroyed, or left behind, near twenty waggons, loaded with supplies for the army, a printing press, and other stores belonging to public departments, and the knapsacks of the light infantry and legion."

The expedition moved slowly and ponderously over muddy roads and swollen streams. Cornwallis succumbed to fever. Incorrect information from locals constantly frustrated efforts to locate a suitable area for winter quarters—". . . in all descriptions of country, they are influenced by secret considerations, which direct them to consult their own interest and convenience."[45] The force finally ended in Winnsboro to

42. Ibid.; see also Willcox (*Portrait*), *supra.*
43. Wickwire, op. cit.: the authors offer an excellent biographical sketch of this unfortunate officer; see also Fuller (*British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century*), *supra.*
44. Tarleton, op. cit.
45. Ibid.

suffer an uneasy period. Marion had gained immensely by the American victory at King's Mountain. With Gates removed from the picture, the forty-seven-year-old guerrilla leader kept striking at Cornwallis' lines of communication, both to other outposts and to the rear, to keep him off balance until Washington could send reinforcements from the North. Cornwallis had disdained the coast and use of sea power, and henceforth he would pay.

Cornwallis' report to Clinton in early December 1780 suggests the extent of Marion's operations:

> . . . Colonel Marion had so wrought on the minds of the people, partly by the terror of his threats and cruelty of his punishments, and partly by the promise of plunder, that there was scarcely an inhabitant between the Santee and Pedee [rivers], that was not in arms against us. Some [guerrilla] parties had even crossed the Santee, and carried terror to the gates of Charlestown. My first object was to reinstate matters in that quarter, without which Camden could receive no supplies. I therefore sent Tarleton, who pursued Marion for several days, obliged his corps to take to the swamps, and by convincing the inhabitants that there was a power superior to Marion, who could likewise reward and punish, so far checked the insurrection, that the greatest part of them have not dared to appear in arms against us since his expedition.[46]

Cornwallis elaborated his feelings on rebel terror tactics when Clinton asked him to explain the deportation of Charleston citizens to St. Augustine, an action objected to by General Washington. After recounting the subversive activities of these persons, Cornwallis wrote: ". . . I have only to say that the insolence of their behavior, the threats with which they in the most daring manner endeavored to intimidate our friends, the infamous falsehoods which they propagated through the town and country, and the correspondence which they constantly kept up with the enemy, rendered it indispensably necessary that they should either be closely confined or be sent out of the province. The milder measure was adopted. . . ." He concluded this long letter:

> I will not hurt your Excellency's feelings by attempting to describe the shocking tortures and inhuman murders which are every day committed by the enemy, not only on those who have taken part with us, but on many who refuse to join them. I cannot flatter myself that your representations will have any effect, but I am very sure that unless some steps are taken to check it, the war in this quarter will become truly savage.[47]

Although Cornwallis, as he explained to Clinton, had ". . . always endeavored to soften the horrors of war," he fully condoned Tarleton's

46. Charles, op. cit.
47. Ibid.

punitive operations, and, after Ferguson's defeat at King's Mountain, he also ordered Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Browne to encourage the Indians to attack outlying American settlements.[48] Moreover, the British army had to eat. Lacking a supply service from Camden or Charleston, this meant virtually living off the land. Since food was short, requisitions (usually paid in promissory notes if paid for at all) further alienated the locals to make many active patriot supporters.[49] Not only did patriot forces benefit from increased support, but Cornwallis increasingly found himself deprived of the key ingredient to counterinsurgency warfare: intelligence.

The final phase of the war in the South began in January 1781. Upon hearing of Cornwallis' victory over Gates at Camden, Clinton had sent down a corps, under Major General Leslie, that reached Charleston in December. Strengthened by Leslie's arrival and with his original force rested and reorganized—though still lacking many essentials—Cornwallis decided on a second invasion of North Carolina. But patriot forces also had increased. Congress, following Washington's advice, had placed Nathanael Greene in command of the southern theater.

Greene's major strength consisted of the Continentals of Delaware and Maryland, men of the Virginia line, Sumter's Carolina militia, two small but excellent units: Brigadier General Daniel Morgan's sharpshooting infantry of perhaps eleven hundred men and Lieutenant Colonel "Light Horse Harry" Lee's cavalry of some three hundred; and local guerrilla bands under Marion and other militia officers.

Nonetheless, as Tarleton later wrote, the superiority of the British force, ". . . when compared with General Greene's, gave every reasonable assurance, that with proper care the latter might be destroyed, or driven over the Roanoke; when it was imagined that the loyalists, who were computed to be the greater proportion of the inhabitants, would make indefatigable exertions to render themselves independent of Congress. Such was the opinion of thousands when the King's troops prepared for this expedition. . . ."[50]

The King's troops and their commander, Cornwallis, underestimated Nathanael Greene's abilities. Greene was a common-sense general. Son of a Rhode Island Quaker preacher, he had been an ironmaster until the war, in which he had fought hard and well in rising to his present command. At thirty-eight years, he was fit, a big man, hard as nails. But he also was bright enough to respect a formidable enemy. He once wrote to Anthony Wayne: ". . . Be a little careful and tread softly; for depend upon it, you have a modern Hannibal to deal with in the person

48. Ibid.
49. Wickwire, op. cit.
50. Tarleton, op. cit.

of Cornwallis."[51] Greene now chose to emulate Quintus Fabius Maximus, and even had boats collected so that if necessary his army could retreat across the numerous rivers!

Greene refused to risk his inferior force except on his own terms. He rightly discerned that Cornwallis was operating blind. If guerrillas could cut British communications, either to detachments operating in peripheral areas or to rear garrisons, Cornwallis eventually would have to retire. To confuse and annoy the British general further, Greene sent Morgan to the western frontiers of South Carolina with about 470 light infantry and some 70 light dragoons; he led the rest of his army toward Camden.

Cornwallis responded to Morgan's essay by sending a strong force under Tarleton after him. He himself pursued Greene's main force, but with little success except to tire his troops. In early January, he reported to Clinton: ". . . The difficulties I have had to struggle with have not been occasioned by the opposite army: they always keep at a considerable distance, and retire on our approach. But the constant incursions of refugees, North Carolinians, Back Mountain men, and the perpetual risings in different parts of this province, the invariable successes of all those parties against our militia, keep the whole country in continual alarm, and render the assistance of regular troops everywhere necessary. . . ."[52] He did not report a popular rhyme of the time:

> Cornwallis led a country dance,
> The like was never seen, sir,
> Much retrograde and much advance,
> And all with General Greene, sir.[53]

Cornwallis' hesitant advance—he took ten days to march forty miles—contrasted to Morgan's sure movements. Morgan was an old Indian fighter who had driven a wagon in Braddock's army. An Indian bullet had smashed out the teeth of his lower left jaw; his back carried scars from 499 lashes—the penalty for striking a British officer.[54] Although not as skillful a tactician as Tarleton, he knew the country better, he marched at night, and he persuaded or intimidated locals to refuse information of his movements to Tarleton's patrols. Out of touch with both Morgan and Cornwallis, Tarleton finally brought the former to bay at Cowpens, a disastrous attack that cost Tarleton some nine hundred men.[55]

Cornwallis reacted to this calamity by pursuing Morgan. To increase mobility, he destroyed all heavy baggage, ". . . even his supplies

51. Wickwire, op. cit.
52. Charles, op. cit.
53. Alden (*South*), *supra.*
54. Wickwire, op. cit.
55. Ward, op. cit.; Wickwire, op. cit.

of rum," and in the next few months proceeded as far as the northern boundary of North Carolina. Although he chased Greene into Virginia, he did not destroy the American army, a fact that caused local Tories to offer only lukewarm co-operation when he retired to Hillsboro to rest his weary and famished troops.[56]

When Greene returned, in March, with an even larger army, Cornwallis met him at Guilford Courthouse, an inconclusive battle that won the British commander the field but cost him over five hundred casualties he could ill afford. Cornwallis' claim to victory was disputed not only by a torn, bleeding, almost starving army, but by General Phillips in Virginia as ". . . that sort of victory which ruins an army."[57] Nor was Cornwallis' claim respected in London: The Annual Register noted that the battle was ". . . productive of all the consequences of defeat"; Horace Walpole sarcastically wrote, ". . . Lord Cornwallis has conquered his troops out of shoes and provisions, and himself out of troops"[58]; Charles James Fox bluntly remarked ". . . that another such victory would ruin the British army."[59]

With his remaining effectives exhausted, sick and hungry, Cornwallis retired on Wilmington to lick his wounds, his mood clear in a letter to Clinton dated early April: ". . . North Carolina is of all the provinces in America the most difficult to attack (unless material assistance could be got from the inhabitants, the contrary of which I have sufficiently experienced), on account of its great extent, of the numberless rivers and creeks, and the total want of interior navigation."[60]

Clinton made no effort to hide his dissatisfaction, neither at the time nor later, when he noted in his history:

> In short, after the most impartial review of Lord Cornwallis' two invasions of North Carolina, the only inference we can draw from them is that without adequate encouragement or the smallest certainty of being joined by any considerable number of the King's friends in that province . . . His Lordship withdrew from South Carolina . . . the chief means of its security and defense, in direct disobedience of the orders left with him by his Commander in Chief; and that, after forcing the passage of several great rivers, fighting a bloody battle, and running eight hundred and twenty miles over almost every part of the invaded province at the expense of above three thousand men, he accomplished no other purpose but the having exposed, by an unnecessary retreat to Wilmington, the two valuable colonies behind him to be overrun and conquered by that very army which he boasts to have completely routed but a week or two before.[61]

56. Wickwire, op. cit.: Colonel Lee's coup, which resulted in sudden death for one hundred loyalists, also dampened Tory enthusiasm.
57. Willcox, op. cit.; see also Rankin, op. cit.; Ward, op. cit.
58. Ibid.
59. Wickwire, op. cit.
60. Charles, op. cit.
61. Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra*.

Cornwallis faced a choice of staying in Wilmington, returning to South Carolina, toward which Greene now turned, or going on to Virginia. He chose to march north to the Chesapeake Bay area. The defense of the South now fell to young Lieutenant Colonel Lord Rawdon, at twenty-six years of age a combat veteran of the war. Rawdon commanded about eight thousand troops based on Savannah and Charleston. He maintained a ring of outposts—Ninety Six, Fort Granby, Orangeburg, Fort Motte, Fort Watson, and Georgetown—isolated garrisons manned with 120 to 630 men each, a complex that brings to mind ancient Rome's bastions against the barbarians.[62]

Greene now moved against Rawdon's outer defensive ring. He faced a formidable task, for his main force was neither strong nor well equipped. But Cornwallis' withdrawal left South Carolina loyalists without protection, which frequently meant that they were forced to lend active or passive support to Greene's irregular forces. Greene now ordered these disparate units under Sumter, Pickens, Marion, and Lee to exploit what seemed a God-given opportunity. Lee and Marion's small force struck the first blow by investing and capturing Fort Watson. Like Hannibal, they lacked essential engineering equipment for such a task; unlike Hannibal, they built a siege tower out of logs—"Maham Tower" —and got on with the job.[63] Although Rawdon held Greene's main force off at Hobkirk's Hill, north of Camden, the British commander was soon forced to fall back. Patriot forces now fell on other isolated outposts. Clinton later acidly observed the result:

> . . . in the short space of five weeks from the appearance of General Greene's army before Camden [which Rawdon evacuated] we lost or evacuated almost every post we possessed in the Carolinas and Georgia with provisions and stores to an immense amount and upward of 1000 troops killed, wounded or taken—all which heavy misfortunes we might most certainly have escaped had Lord Cornwallis fortunately either marched his army back to Camden after the Battle of Guilford or even retired to Charleston . . . after he had refitted at Wilmington.[64]

Within three months after Cornwallis' departure, Rawdon held only Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah—royal enclaves that without reinforcement would prove useless until finally evacuated after the fall of Yorktown.[65]

Why did Cornwallis march north?

In his own mind, he could not remain in Wilmington, where he was short of supply. As he wrote Clinton in late April: ". . . Neither my cavalry nor infantry are in readiness to move. The former are in want of

62. Ward, op. cit.
63. Ibid.
64. Willcox (*Clinton*), *supra.*
65. Ward, op. cit.

everything; the latter of every necessity but shoes, of which we have received an ample supply. . . ."[66] Tarleton later wrote that Cornwallis was influenced by news of British reinforcements reaching Virginia, and that he also hoped to lure Greene northward. We know that he had a tactical fixation on the North. He told Phillips, Clinton, and Lord George Germain that the conquest of Virginia was necessary to secure South Carolina and win the submission of North Carolina[67]; he could not pacify the South, he believed, so long as its rebels received support from North Carolina and Virginia.[68]

A deeper motive probably inspired his lordship, and this was a total (and impractical) reversal of British strategy. Shortly before departing for Virginia, he wrote Major General Phillips that ". . . if we mean an offensive war in America, we must abandon New York, and bring our whole force into Virginia; we then have a stake to fight for, and a successful battle may give us America. . . ."[69]

He forgot to add that a defeat could cost the same.

66. Charles, op. cit.
67. Ward, op. cit.
68. Wickwire, op. cit.
69. Charles, op. cit.

Chapter 9

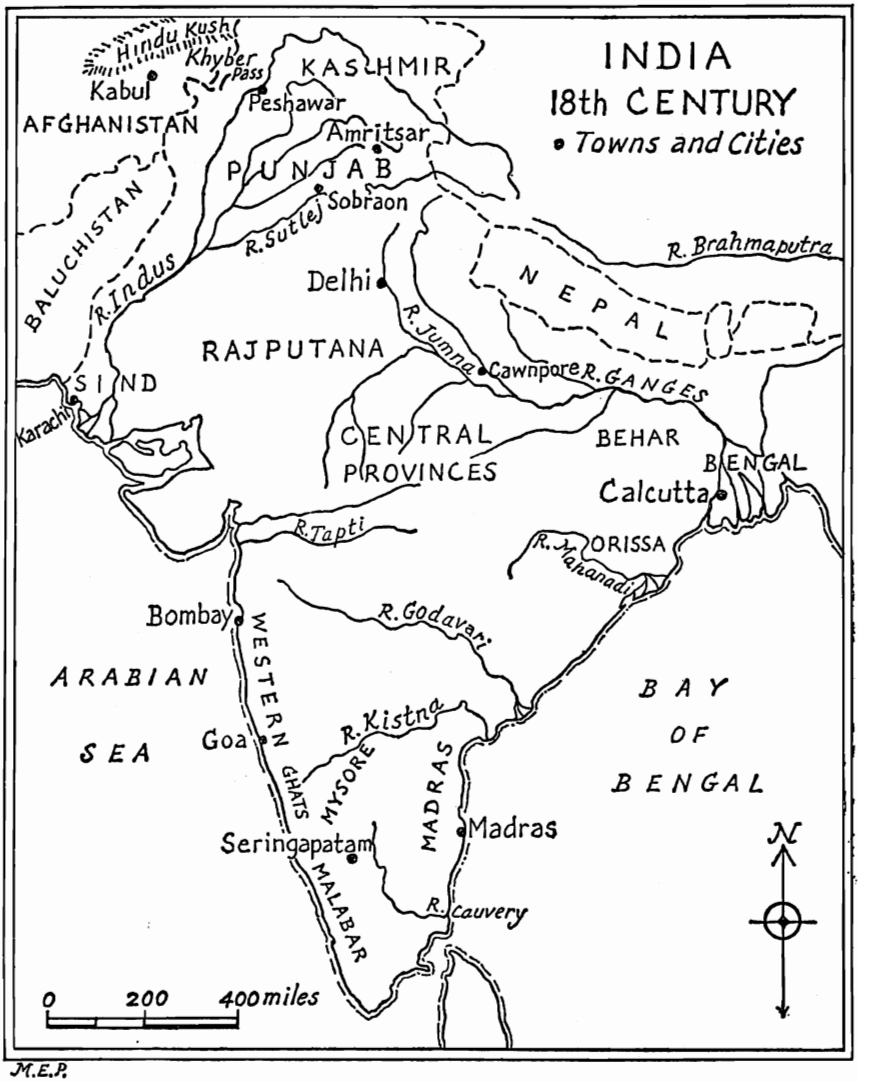
England's colonial wars • Indian guerrilla leaders: Sivaji and Tippu • Wellesley's tactical changes • The Vendée rebellion • Hoche's counterguerrilla tactics: "overawing" versus "exasperating" • The Italian lazzaroni *• Napoleon invades Spain • Spanish army disasters • The rise of guerrilla bands • Wellington's early battles and use of guerrillas • French excesses • Guerrilla offensives • French countertactics • Marshal Bessières' testament*

AMERICA was not the only place where England had to fight irregular wars. Early in the seventeenth century, she had established her first trading post in India, whose northern area formed part of the vast Mogul Empire. For a century, the Moguls continued to expand into India, but early in the eighteenth century, the dynasty dissolved, not the least of its problems having been the rise of a new Hindu military power, the Marathas, who fought brilliant guerrilla warfare under the famous leader Sivaji.

In the early-eighteenth century, control of the country rested in the hands of warring viceroys who fell victim one after another to territorial ambitions of England, France, and Holland. In a series of more or less orthodox military campaigns fought before and during the Seven Years' War, Clive largely eliminated French and Dutch threats to British influence: by 1759, England "was the only European race which counted in India."[1]

1. D. H. Cole and E. C. Priestley, *An Outline of British Military History 1660–1936* (London: Sifton Praed, 1936). Hereafter cited as Cole.

England's position was somewhat tenuous. It roughly resembled that of the Romans occupying the coastal fringe of Spain in 206 B.C. In this case, England was reasonably well established in the East, but, in expanding to the South, West, and North, she collided with numerous



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tribes, some equipped with European weapons and trained by the French. To neutralize these people would require nearly sixty years of intermittent warfare punctuated by innumerable campaigns against the

Hindus and Muslims in Mysore, the Marathas in the West, and their outlaw offshoot, the Pindaris in central India.

Although the British army displayed admirable perseverance, unquestioned courage and even, on occasion, political acumen, it showed remarkably slight tactical ingenuity throughout the pacification process. It remained deficient in cavalry, an enormous disadvantage, and, to fight guerrilla and quasi-guerrilla formations, commanders stubbornly retained heavy formations noticeably at odds with terrain, weather, and enemy.

Had the Indians stuck to Sivaji's guerrilla tactics, the British conquest would have proved far more difficult. A few Indian leaders understood this. One well-known warrior, Hyder Ali, upon being criticized by a British officer for avoiding battle, told him: ". . . Give me the sort of troops that you command, and your wish for battle shall soon be gratified. You will understand my mode of war in time. Shall I risk my cavalry, which cost one thousand rupees each horse, against your cannonballs, that cost twopence? No: I will march your troops till their legs become the size of their bodies. You shall not have a blade of grass, nor a drop of water: I shall hear of you every time your drum beats, but you shall not know where I am once a month. I will give your army battle, but it shall be when I please, not when you desire it."[2]

But pride and French influence persuaded most native leaders to copy European tactics and to accept set-piece battles made generally fatal by superior English discipline and firepower.

Nonetheless, the Indians often profited from excessive British weight and tactical rigidity. In the third Mysore war, for example, Tippu's cavalry scorched Cornwallis' route to prevent him from reaching the Mysore capital of Seringapatam. In the fourth Mysore war, the British advanced ". . . in a vast square, covering an area of twenty square miles." The square protected 120,000 transport bullocks and the ubiquitous camp followers from attack by Tippu's cavalry. This lumbering horde advanced all of five miles a day, but, by meeting the supply problem, it managed to reach the capital, where Tippu, foolishly giving battle, was defeated and killed.[3]

This particular campaign is the more interesting because of the presence of Colonel Arthur Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington. Wellesley was appalled at the snail-like progress of the British army, and when he gained an independent command in the South, he made some radical changes in order to fight the Marathas. He first speeded up his transport by using the trotting bullocks of Mysore and by devising a pontoon train to give him passage over the numerous rivers. He then defied

2. G. N. Wright, *Life and Campaigns of Arthur, Duke of Wellington* (London: Fisher, Son, n.d.), 4 vols.

3. Cole, op. cit.

standard practice by launching a campaign during the monsoon, when neither Europeans nor Indians were supposed to fight. Finally, he used whatever force he commanded in a prompt, rigorous and decisive manner, both to win battles and to avoid battles.

At one point, in pursuing a rebellious rajah, he found himself in difficult semijungle country with a minimum of information concerning his quarry. ". . . I don't think I ever saw a country naturally so strong as this," he wrote, "and to the strength of which so many additions have been made by the natives themselves. Every village is a strong fortification, of which it would require good troops to take possession; and in some cases ten or a dozen of these villages are connected by made or natural defenses of great strength."[4] His force was small, his time limited. Plainly determined to attack—among other measures, he had his troopers cut underbrush from trails in order to prevent ambush—he told villagers he would kill them unless they tore down defenses and cooperated with him. They chose to do so, and with their help he soon captured the rajah and six other rebels, whom he summarily hanged.

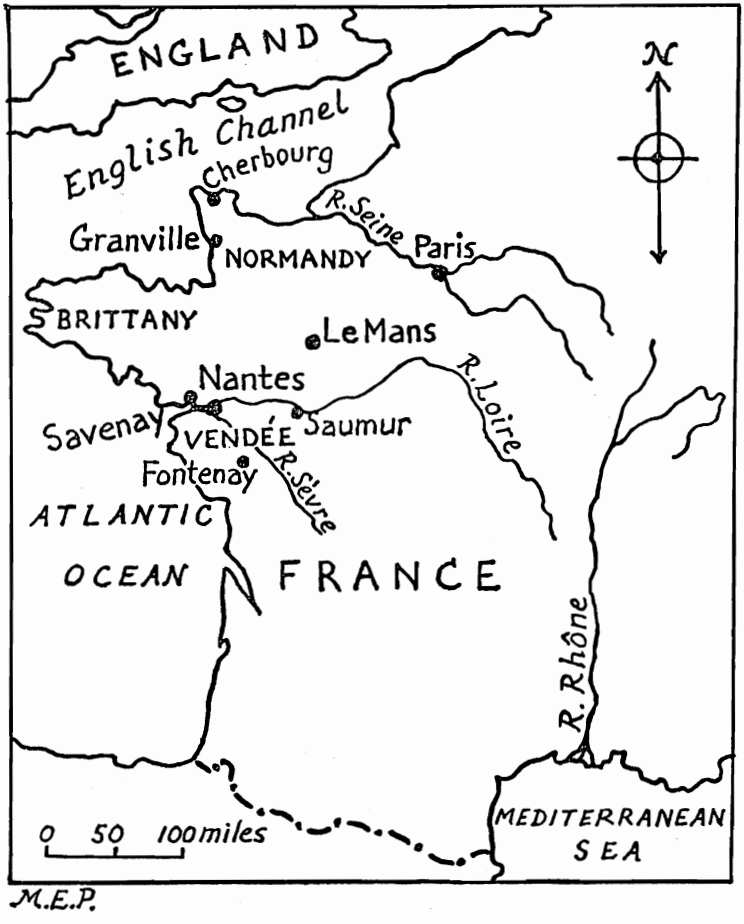
Wellesley's subsequent campaigns in India added a great deal to his knowledge of irregular warfare. This was just as well, for in a few years he would be allied with some of its most able practitioners, Portuguese and Spanish guerrillas.

The French, too, were going to become involved in guerrilla warfare, as a hurtful by-product of the Revolution. In 1793, before Carnot's famous decree called the French nation to arms, republican armies faced a fierce counterrevolution by priest-dominated peasants of Vendée. Finding leaders in local nobles and gentlemen such as Jacques Cathelineau, a linen merchant, these countryfolk picked up scythes, pitchforks, and fowling muskets to win a number of towns from surprised and generally weak republican garrisons. Reinforced with captured arms and fresh volunteers, the inspired irregulars attempted to take Nantes, a defeat in which Cathelineau was killed.

Determined to put down the rebellion, the Convention committed some one hundred thousand troops to the Vendée. Command went to Rossignol, "who was not only a tipsy and dissolute scoundrel, but a stupid and ignorant coward to boot."[5] Generals such as Westermann, l'Échelle, and Kléber carried out a scorched-earth policy until the rebels

4. John Fortescue, *Wellington* (London: Ernest Benn, 1925); see also, Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington—The Years of the Sword* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); Antony Brett-James, *Wellington at War 1794–1815* (London: Macmillan, 1961).

5. J. R. M. MacDonald, "The Terror." In *The Cambridge Modern History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1904), Vol. 8 of 13 vols.; see also L. A. Taylor, *The Tragedy of an Army: La Vendée in 1793* (London: Hutchinson, 1913).



looked out only on "heaps of ashes, death and famine."[6] Weakened further by trying to fight set-piece battles and by dissension among leaders, the force splintered, with some peasants returning to their farms. Some fifty thousand with their wives and children retreated across the Loire into Brittany. Their new commander, the twenty-one-year-old Count Henri de La Rochejacquelein, dramatically told them, "If I retreat, kill me; if I advance, follow me; if I fall, avenge me."[7]

The task of pacifying the Vendée base now fell to a young and able general, Lazare Hoche. As Thiers later described his campaign:

6. Ibid.

7. Percy Cross Standing, *Guerrilla Leaders of the World: From Charette to Delvet* (London: Stanley Paul, 1912).

. . . He devised an ingenious mode of reducing the country without laying it waste, by depriving it of its arms and taking part of its produce for the supply of the Republican army. In the first place he persisted in the establishment of entrenched camps. He then formed a circular line which was supported by the Sèvre and Loire and tended to envelop progressively the whole country. This line was composed of very strong detachments, connected by patrols so as to leave no free space by which an enemy who was at all numerous could pass. These posts were directed to occupy every hamlet and village and to disarm them. To accomplish this they were to seize the cattle which usually grazed together, and the corn stowed away in the barns; they were also to secure the principal inhabitants; they were not to restore the cattle or the corn, not to release the persons taken as hostages, till the peasants should have voluntarily delivered up their arms.[8]

By such measures, what Callwell described as "overawing" rather than "exasperating" the enemy, Hoche effectively eliminated the home base of the revolt.[9]

La Rochejacquelein wanted to remain in Brittany until strong enough to return to the Vendée, but older leaders persuaded the force to march north. After failing to capture the seaport town of Granville, the new leaders recommended withdrawal into Normandy. The peasants wished to go home, however, and marched to the Loire. Kléber and Marceau caught them up at Le Mans and Savenay, where probably fifteen thousand of them perished.

This did not end the rebellion. La Rochejacquelein remained in Brittany with a group of followers allied with Breton rebels who called themselves the *Chouans*—literally "long-eared owls." The republican campaign against the main force had exposed the Vendée to further revolt, which defied even the "infernal columns" of General Turreau.

Royalist leaders made a final attempt to save the Chouan survivors in Brittany by landing reinforcements from England. Poor leadership, combined with intraforce rivalries, doomed this to failure, while a vigorous campaign on the part of Hoche destroyed remaining Chouan forces in detail. By the time fighting ended, the once-rich province had become "a desolate and blackened wilderness."

All told, Hoche estimated one hundred thousand insurgent deaths —about one fifth of the Vendean population.[10]

A series of royalist-peasant outbreaks in Switzerland and Italy followed the Vendée revolt. The reader may remember that, in 1796, the young Bonaparte took command of the ragged army of Italy, which he

8. Ibid.
9. C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars—Their Principles and Practice* (London: HMSO, 1899).
10. Standing, op. cit.

reorganized into a splendid fighting force. Having defeated the Austrians and established the Cisalpine Republic, he expelled the Pope and, with connivance of Roman Jacobins, established a Roman republic under Masséna's governorship. In 1798, Masséna's administration bogged down in extreme corruption and led to a mutiny of French troops, followed by local worker uprisings.[11]

King Ferdinand of Naples anxiously watched these developments. Emboldened by Nelson's presence, Bonaparte's absence in Egypt, and the arrival of the overrated General Mack from Vienna, he stupidly raised an army and marched on Rome. Masséna's replacement, the accomplished General Championnet, soon smashed this effort and followed Mack's retreating army to Naples. The French now had to fight outraged Neapolitan *lazzaroni,* or homeless beggars, who proved as anti-republican as the Vendeans. Despite this assistance, King Ferdinand evacuated his court and twenty million ducats to Palermo.[12]

The French meanwhile continued to fight the ill-armed but determined *lazzaroni,* whom they finally defeated, ". . . as much a triumph of tact as of force. Championnet was one of the few French generals of that period who showed skill in dealing with alien peoples. As the fighting waned, he spoke to the *lazzaroni* in their own tongue, promising freedom for their city, every comfort for its population, and the utmost respect for St. Januarius. The words told with magical force; Thiébault marched with a guard of honor to the shrine of the saint, and himself with politic hypocrisy knelt at the altar. . . ."[13]

In January 1799, Championnet established the Parthenopean Republic, but was soon relieved of command for trying to prevent occupation excesses encouraged by the Directory. Not only did the French exact tremendous indemnities—sixty million francs in the case of Naples—but they continued to plunder, while brooking no resistance: at Stanz, Switzerland, in September 1798, French troops massacred 1,000 men, 102 women, and 25 children.[14] Similar harsh policies turned Piedmontese and Neapolitan peasants against the intruders when armies of the Second Coalition invaded Italy early in 1799. By summer, the French republics in Italy had vanished.

The French did not reappear in the South until 1806, when Masséna reoccupied Naples. The Calabrian peasants rebelled, and, in July, a British army under General Stuart landed from Sicily to defeat the French at the battle of Maida. Stuart withdrew his army, but for the next two

11. Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963).
12. J. H. Rose, "The Second Coalition." In *The Cambridge Modern History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1904), Vol. 8 of 13 vols.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

years the *lazzaroni* fought a guerrilla war that tied up forty thousand French troops.[15]

None of these guerrilla actions seemed to bother Napoleon in the spring of 1807, when he was casting covetous glances at the Iberian Peninsula.

He wanted this area for two reasons: to exploit "latent Spanish resources, naval and economic," of which he held an exaggerated notion, and more important, to further his "continental system," by which he hoped to force Britain from the war by disrupting her trade with Europe.[16] Nelson's earlier victory at Trafalgar, which ended Napoleon's hope of invading England, had forced this shift in strategy. He would bring England to her knees by economic warfare; as he told his brother, King Louis of Holland, "I mean to conquer the sea by the land."[17]

Napoleon anticipated little difficulty in occupying the Iberian Peninsula. Strong militarily, he was also supremely confident. He held only contempt for his Spanish ally and for the decadent Bourbon court: King Charles IV; Queen María Luisa; her favorite, the young, powerful, and greedy Prince Manuel de Godoy; and finally the stupid heir apparent, Prince Ferdinand. Napoleon had long enjoyed Godoy's connivance—among the rewards, he was promised a piece of Portugal—and he was also being courted by Prince Ferdinand and his cabal.[18]

In July 1807, Napoleon sent Junot's army, some fifty thousand troops, across Spain to seize Lisbon and close it to British merchant shipping. As anticipated, Junot crossed Spain without opposition and even managed to insert French troops in the northern garrisons. Napoleon hastened to consolidate his presence by appointing Murat "Lieutenant of the Emperor in Spain." But as Murat led his columns toward Madrid in March 1808, serious riots broke out in Aranjuez. These were the work of Ferdinand's agents, and they caused the fall of hated Godoy and abdication of panic-stricken Charles. But Ferdinand's ambition was checked when Napoleon summoned the royal family to Bayonne, forced Ferdinand to abdicate, and placed his own brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on the throne.

This proved an egregious political error. The people of Spain did not love their monarch, but they did love their country and certainly had no desire to become a French vassal state. The *Madrileños* already had

15. Markham, op. cit.; see also E. M. Lloyd, "The Third Coalition." In *The Cambridge Modern History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1904), Vol. 9 of 13 vols.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Raymond Carr, "Spain and Portugal—1793 to c. 1840." In *The New Cambridge Modern History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), Vol. 9 of 12 vols.

contested Murat's presence. In May, when Ferdinand and his entourage left Madrid, the populace revolted. This was an action of ordinary people, not constituted authority. In Madrid, the Spanish garrison ". . . remained inert or gave that assistance to the French authorities for which Murat publicly thanked them. . . ."[19] When the revolt spread to the provinces, in mid-May, ". . . the captains-general and governors, most of them nominees of Godoy, succumbed to a kind of moral paralysis. . . . They appealed for tranquillity and were ignored, but neither would, nor could use the army against the mobs. . . ."[20] The mobs used extreme violence including murder to force ". . . captains-general and local authorities to arm the people and to accept self-constituted local Juntas . . . [which] all over Spain represented the acceptance of the revolution by the local notables."[21] Initially, almost no army officers joined rebel ranks: ". . . it was the men, and groups of junior officers, particularly [artillery] gunners, in liaison with civilian *meneurs* [ringleaders] who made the decisions which brought the army over to the national cause. . . ."[22]

Despite this confusion, the revolt greatly surprised the French. Murat's soldiers were soon driven across the Ebro River. The news caused great rejoicing in London, where the government decided to send an expeditionary force to Portugal.

Although the French recovered and hastily occupied Portugal with sixty-five thousand troops and Spain with eighty thousand, forces sufficiently strong to neutralize local armies, the occupation from the beginning was uneasy, with ". . . murders, assassinations, wholesale butcheries . . . [occurring[in every city."[23] To this opposition, the French reacted promptly and rigorously. Cavalry columns swept down on disordered peasant bands, sabers flashed in the Spanish sun, people died; the troops tortured and executed, burned homes and farms. The troops restored order in some places. But never for long.

The opening phase would have taken a bystander back twenty centuries, to the war between Romans and Celtiberians. Spanish armies attempting to fight pitched battles, for example Cuesta's force, were generally beaten. Those which took to the hills in small guerrilla bands, such as the somatenes in Catalonia, generally prospered. The French soon claimed the important cities and towns, but this was precarious ownership, maintained by shaky communications. Yet, such was the disor-

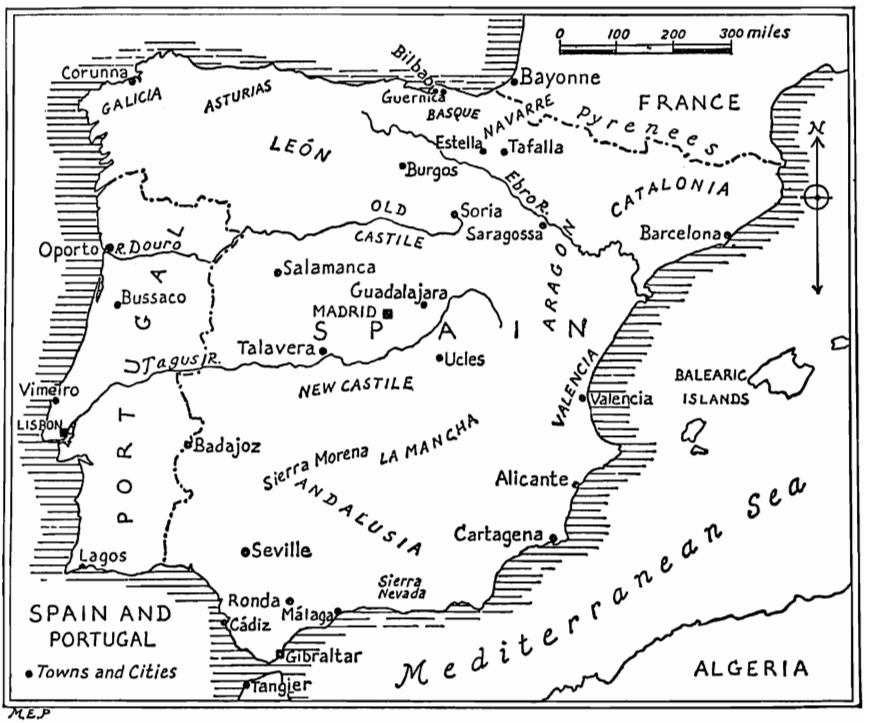
19. E. Christiansen, *The Origins of Military Power in Spain—1800–1854* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

20. Ibid.; see also Charles Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1902), 6 vols.

21. Carr, op. cit.

22. Christiansen, op. cit.

23. Wright, op. cit.; see also R. B. Asprey, "The Peninsular War" and "Wellington at Waterloo," *Army Quarterly*, Vols. 77–78, April and July 1959.



ganized state of the defending armies that the war undoubtedly would have ended in France's favor—but for British intervention.

Wellesley and a small expeditionary force arrived in Portugal in the spring of 1808, their landing screened by local guerrillas. Needing time to rebuild the shattered Portuguese army, Wellington had to move cautiously, a crucial period in which his security depended on accurate intelligence from a friendly population.

The French misinterpreted care as weakness. Junot attacked in August and was beaten at Vimeiro, an important military victory soon converted to a major political defeat by the outrageous Convention of Cintra.[24]

Meanwhile Sir John Moore, the British commander, landed a small

24. Fortescue, op. cit.; see also Oman; Wright; Longford. Two British generals, Burrard and Dalrymple, arrived ahead of the titular commander, Sir John Moore, to negotiate the treaty, which foolishly authorized the French to return to France in British vessels, ". . . incidentally taking with them the loot of Lisbon under the guise of 'private baggage.' " This caused a public outcry in England. A court of inquiry subsequently exonerated Wellesley, who had signed the document under orders. The damage remained, as did army intrigues: the cabals of the Horse Guards continued to plague Wellesley throughout the campaign.

army in Northwest Spain. Napoleon reacted by personally leading in 150,000 troops, which soon shattered the remaining Spanish armies. To give them time to reorganize, Moore struck at a corps of Soult's army, but, with Napoleon threatening his right, he was forced to retreat to Corunna, where he was killed, his army escaping by ship. French arms now reigned supreme—except for the guerrillas.

While the British were fighting in Portugal and Spain and while the regular Spanish armies were being shredded in orthodox operations, explosive nationalism had blown a variety of guerrilla bands into existence. These bands were entirely regional. To lead them, ". . . the priest girded up his black robe, and stuck a pistol in his belt; the student threw aside his books, and grasped the sword; the shepherd forsook his flock; the husbandman his home."[25]

One of the first leaders was Juan Martín Díaz. In 1809, he was thirty-four, a former private of dragoons, illiterate, married, a father, a farmer in Castile. He gathered together a half dozen trusted neighbors, a rude lot badly equipped, a deficiency repaired by the ambush of a few dozen French couriers. In Navarra, a young student, Francisco Javier Mina, collected a small band and armed it similarly. In La Mancha, a doctor emerged as leader: Juan Paladea, soon called El Médico; in Soria, the friar Sapia turned leader; in Catalonia, another doctor, Rovera; in Salamanca, the famous Julián Sánchez arose.

These and others generally confined early operations to interrupting French communications. But small successes bred expansion. Bands multiplied and began attacking convoys and seizing arms and food and also treasure, for the enemy plundered whenever and wherever possible.

The enemy answered by furnishing larger escorts for couriers, by sending out innumerable armed patrols, and by showing virtually no mercy to anyone remotely suspected of aiding the guerrilla effort. Harsh measures only helped the effort. Cruelty answered cruelty; terror escalated, the French in particular practicing a frenzied rapine such as that displayed in the capture of Oporto. During Marshal Soult's assault, swarms of Portuguese civilians were left floundering in a river by a collapsed bridge. The oncoming French battalions cold-bloodedly fired into this mass until ". . . planks were laid on the pile of dead bodies that arose from the river; the French passed over, and carried the batteries of Villa Nova."[26] Not content with victory, the French indulged an orgy of slaughter until some ten thousand Portuguese had been killed. Meanwhile, Portuguese defenders had reacted predictably against French prisoners. As French troops ". . . passed through one of the squares, they beheld a number of their comrades fastened against the wall in an upright position and still alive, with their eyes forced from

25. Wright, op. cit.
26. Ibid.

the sockets, their tongues cut out, and their bodies and limbs mangled. This spectacle lighted up their fury again and the scene of pillage and assassination was renewed, and continued for some hours longer."[27]

Without such provocation, the French at Ucles tortured the civil populace in order to learn the location of hidden treasures; they burnt the men, then ". . . tore the nun from the altar, the wife from her husband's corpse, the virgin from her mother's arms, and they abused those victims of the foulest brutality in a way to which death was much to be preferred." The Spanish authorities publicized this treatment ". . . as the most certain means of establishing an eternal and fixed aversion in the heart of every Spaniard, for the name of France."[28]

To this ghastly air, Wellesley returned in 1809. As had happened previously, he found the people eminently sympathetic and helpful, and this was important, for, once again, he had to be careful while playing for time. But he also had to push the French from Portugal, which he did by beating Soult on the Douro, then beating Victor at Talavera before retiring on Lisbon.

By this time, Wellesley, who had become Viscount Wellington, knew that he could not rely on Spanish armies, which had nearly cost him a defeat at Talavera. In August 1809, he wrote, ". . . the Spanish troops will not fight; they are undisciplined, they have no officers, no provisions, no magazines, no means of any description."[29]

Wellington knew, however, that Portuguese *ordenanzas* and Spanish guerrillas would give the French little peace, and he cunningly exploited this knowledge in his plans. It is not going too far to say that he envisaged his army as a piece of cheese to attract the rodent enemy into a guerrilla trap.

He now secured his Lisbon base by constructing the elaborate fortifications of Torres Vedras: North of Lisbon, three lines in depth stretched from the sea to the Tagus. A British fleet guarded his flanks; he also swept the country in front ". . . as bare as possible; the sides of hills and streams were 'scarped,' roads destroyed, woods cut down and villages razed so that the French could find no cover for an attack." Simultaneously, General Beresford reorganized and trained the Portuguese army until eventually ". . . about forty per cent of Wellington's fighting force consisted of Portuguese inter-brigaded with British. . . ."[30] At the same time, Wellington anticipated future operations by building a large transport of mules, a sensible decision since the French found supply by wagons an onerous process in a nearly roadless country.

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Markham, op. cit.
30. Cole, op. cit.

Considering the pressure from England and from the Regency, Wellington exhibited enormous patience at this time. His preparations lasted nearly a year, *but such was the control of the Spanish and Portuguese countryside by the guerrillas that the French obtained no information as to his activities.* They knew only that guerrilla operations were constantly expanding, a frustrating situation that Napoleon sought to remedy by sending reinforcements and by ordering Masséna's splendid new Army of Portugal to the attack.

Masséna's campaign is a striking example of the arrogance of ignorance. Denied any intercourse with the land, living in a vacuum as it were, he moved to meet an enemy of whom he was totally ignorant. He found Wellington's army in a defensive position outside Bussaco. He learned of Wellington's Portuguese contingent, but, having no notion of Beresford's training program, he dismissed the indigenous troops as so much rabble. He attacked with less than half his force, an effort defeated by about a third of Wellington's army. Wellington was still careful. Why risk his single army attempting to exploit this favorable result, he reasoned, when time could provide a painless victory? Wellington now *retired behind the Torres Vedras defenses.* Masséna, having no idea of their existence, followed him. And while Wellington's army disappeared behind rows and rows of elaborate fortifications to live easily on supplies brought by ship, Masséna's army sat uneasily in a country bereft of provision, with hungry guerrillas constantly nibbling at his communications. The result was inevitable: In March 1810, the starving French army fell back into Spain.

Much of Wellington's tactical success stemmed from this insulating process. Time and again, a French army commander remained in the dark regarding not only Wellington's plans and movements, but also those of other French commanders; time and again, Wellington learned important information from guerrillas. Although he regarded the Spanish army with faintly disguised contempt, he respected the value of sound guerrilla operations; indeed he later promoted Díaz to command of a corps numbering nearly five thousand infantry and cavalry. The Regency, no doubt influenced by Wellington, promoted the elder Mina to full general in command of nearly fourteen thousand infantry and cavalry.

As guerrilla bands gained strength and confidence, their missions increased. So effectively did they interdict French communications that couriers were soon being escorted by "units 300 strong."[31] In some instances, detachment commanders retained replacement drafts with the excuse that the roads were not safe—". . . the number of recruits received at Madrid, Seville, or Salamanca never bore any proper proportion to the total that had crossed the Bidassoa."[32] This naturally

31. C. N. M. Blair, *Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Ministry of Defence, 1957).
32. Oman, op. cit.

exercised a major psychological effect. French commanders soon realized that they owned no more than the ground they occupied, an unsettling thought that the more active guerrilla leaders never let them forget. If the French weakened an outlying garrison, peasants invariably relayed the information to local guerrillas, who then attacked. When, early in the war, French columns were sweeping Navarra in search of the young student Mina and his band, he attacked Tafalla, where he locked the terrified garrison in the castle and departed. In Castile, the wily Díaz, called *El Empecinado* (The Stubborn One), took and held Guadalajara for a day. Militarily these actions were of but slight importance; psychologically they were very important, because they clearly demonstrated that the guerrillas, though greatly outnumbered, held the initiative.

From such actions, the guerrillas progressed to attacking troop formations. In mid-July 1810, a priest, Gerónimo Merino, known as *El Cura,* led an attack against two battalions of French marines en route to reinforce Soult and Masséna. The guerrillas killed thirteen officers and some two hundred men.[33] These attacks increased as bands grew in strength; in autumn of 1810, they were largely responsible for containing three armies of thirty-eight thousand men that Masséna badly needed. Although their total number probably never exceeded twenty thousand, of which only a portion was operational at any one time, they continued to harass and often tie down French forces many times their own size.

By controlling the countryside, guerrillas exercised another important function: they deprived military governors of taxes and food. King Joseph, in Madrid, ". . . could not command a quarter of the sum which he required to pay the ordinary expenses of government. His courtiers and ministers, French and Spanish, failed to receive their salaries, and the Spanish army, which he was busily striving to form, could not be clothed or armed, much less paid."[34] Joseph's natural incompetence already had caused Napoleon to create four autonomous military commands in northern Spain, a decentralization of authority that played into guerrilla hands, besides causing internal army jealousies.

The French fought back in a number of ways, but primarily by outright repression. From start to finish, Masséna's retreat from Portugal repeated the barbarities of Oporto and Ucles. The French impressed peasants as guides and porters, then summarily tortured and shot them; they impaled priests by the throat on sharpened branches of trees and mutilated luckless *ordenanzas,* Portuguese and Spanish recruits, beyond recognition.[35] Sir Thomas Picton, the eccentric British general who, as former governor of Trinidad, was no stranger to torture, witnessed this retreat and wrote a friend, ". . . nothing can exceed the devastation and

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Wright, op. cit.

cruelties committed by the enemy during the whole course of his retreat; setting fire to all the villages, and murdering all the peasantry, for leagues on each flank of his columns. Their atrocities have been such and so numerous, that the name of a Frenchman must be execrated here for ages."[36]

Coercion was integral to the second obvious method of attempting to catch the guerrillas. The usual tactic was the "sweep," which invariably returned empty-handed. Repeated failure naturally proved frustrating. The tactic also wore out men and horses, and, since it involved harsh interrogative methods, it simply widened the gulf between conqueror and peasant.

In attempting to catch Sánchez in Castile in 1809, the French general, Marchand, ". . . selected eight of the principal sheepowners in the district, informed them that a guard should be placed in their houses, their persons closely watched, and, if guerrilla depredations did not totally subside in eight days from that notice, the farmer himself should be held responsible. He declared, also, that alcaldes [mayors], lawyers, priests, and surgeons of every village, should answer with their lives, for the violence committed in their districts by these predatory bands, and that he would burn every house which the inhabitants had abandoned at the approach of the French."[37]

His strong edict almost completely backfired: If any Spaniard in the area had somehow missed French intentions, they were now totally informed; further, Sánchez's answer, a widely disseminated refusal to cease operations, justified almost solely by an appeal to patriotism, significantly broadened his base of support.

Even when the French succeeded in capturing a leader and breaking up a band, they accomplished very little. In 1810, the young student Mina was taken prisoner, but his uncle, Francisco Espoz y Mina, soon rallied the remnants of his band. None of these leaders was gentle, and Francisco, though wellborn, was no exception. In expanding his nephew's band, he ran afoul of one Echeverría, ". . . who was the terror of the villages of Navarre, which he oppressed and plundered in a thousand ways, till they complained to me concerning him. I arrested him at Estella on June 13, 1810, caused him to be shot with three of his principal accomplices, and incorporated his own band (600 foot and 200 horse) with my own men."[38]

Once organized, Francisco extended operations as far afield as Álava and Aragon to contribute enormously to Wellington's operations in Portugal. As Oman points out, French army archives list dozens of officers killed or wounded "in a reconnaissance in Navarre" or "in a skirmish with Mina's bands." At one point, Mina was being hunted by

36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Oman, op. cit.

troops from no less than six major commands, ". . . yet none of the six generals, though they had 18,000 men marching through his special district, succeeded in catching him, or destroying any appreciable fraction of his band."[39]

Mina's survival depended on mercurial operations: ". . . sometimes he was lurking, with seven companions only, in a cave or gorge; at another he would be found with 3,000 men, attacking large convoys, or even surprising one of the blockhouses with which the French tried to cover his whole sphere of activity."[40] Supported by peasants, at times unwillingly, Mina financed his extensive operations by taking stolen treasures from the French, by collecting rents from national and church properties, by fining "bad Spaniards" [those who had co-operated with the French], and by collecting tribute from French customhouses in return for allowing safe passage of imported goods! Mina's operations worked terrible hardships on the land, which the French often scorched in retaliation. But, again, this only strengthened resistance. When the French summarily shot guerrilla prisoners, Mina responded by shooting more French prisoners, an escalation of horror "put to an end by mutual agreement in 1812."[41]

A third method of neutralizing guerrilla operations proved even less effective. This was King Joseph's attempt to raise a counterforce of guerrillas, which he called "Miquelets" after the famed Pyrenean bandits; at the same time, he attempted to form new regiments from Spanish deserters and prisoners, but neither plan worked.[42] The Spanish recruits soon drifted away to rejoin their armies or to fight with the guerrillas.

In desperation Napoleon finally intervened. Sick of squabbling generals and duplicated efforts (for which he was largely responsible), he reorganized his army, eliminating the separate "military governments" in favor of more-centralized command. In 1811, he created the Army of the North, under Marshal Bessières, who enjoyed no better success in counterguerrilla operations than his fellows.

Bessières' later lament paid unwitting homage both to Wellington's strategy and to Spanish guerrillas. Careful study might well have profited commanders of later generations:

> . . . If I concentrate twenty thousand men all communications are lost, and the insurgents will make enormous progress. The coast would be lost as far as Bilbao. We are without resources, because it is only with the greatest pains that the troops can be fed from day to day. The spirit of the population is abominably bad: the retreat of the Army of Portugal had turned their heads. The bands of insurgents grow larger, and recruit themselves actively

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Wright, op. cit.

on every side. . . . The Emperor is deceived about Spain: the pacification of Spain does not depend on a battle with the English, who will accept it or refuse it as they please, and who have Portugal behind them for retreat. Every one knows the vicious system of our operations. Every one allows that we are too widely scattered. We occupy too much territory, we used up our resources without profit and without necessity: we are clinging on to dreams. . . .[43]

43. Oman, op. cit.

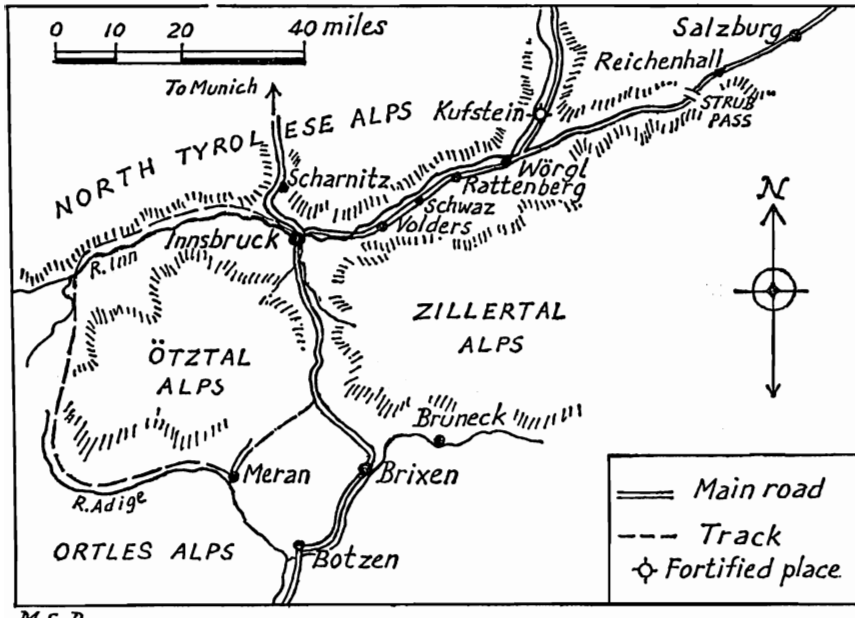
Chapter 10

Hofer's Tyrolean guerrillas fight the French • Frederick the Great's warning • The Pugachev rebellion • Napoleon's invasion of Russia • The "conquest" of Vitebsk • Kutuzov's strategy • Peasant guerrillas • Denis Davydov and the partisans • The French retreat • The final disaster • Prussia's levée en masse

"THE SPANISH ULCER," as Napoleon called it, was not his single excursion in guerrilla warfare. In 1809, he had been forced to leave the peninsular campaign in Soult's hands and return to Paris to face a fresh war with Austria. This centered on Tyrol, traditionally a Habsburg possession, but ceded by Napoleon, in 1806, to the Bavarians.

Tyrolean mountaineers loathed their new masters and, in the spring of 1809, rose in mass against them. This was pure guerrilla warfare, under such capable if flamboyant leaders as Andreas Hofer, an innkeeper; Joseph Speckbacher, a peasant; and Joachim "Redbeard" Haspinger, a Capuchin priest. To fight the Bavarian army in the Tyrol, Hofer called several thousand peasants together and, after invoking patriotism, God and presumably motherhood, he directed: "Up then, and at these Bavarians! Tear your foes, aye, with your teeth, so long as they stand up; but when they kneel pardon them!"[1]

1. Standing, op. cit.



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First blood was drawn against a party of Bavarian engineers attempting to destroy bridges that the Austrian army planned to use. When concealed sharpshooters dispersed this group, the Bavarian commander, General von Wrede, advanced from Innsbruck with a Franco-Bavarian army corps. A young innkeeper, Peter Kemnater, ambushed this force so successfully that it abandoned its guns, which the peasants destroyed. Apparently still not impressed, Von Wrede led a new force toward Brixen, but this was ambushed in a mountain defile where falling rocks and tree trunks merged with accurate fire to decimate the intruders. Simultaneously, Hofer cleared the Passeyr area while Speckbacher won the important town of Innsbruck, a combined effort finally resulting in the capture of the entire Franco-Bavarian force: ". . . all the guns, horses and material of war, the two leading general officers, ten staff-officers, upwards of a hundred lesser officers, 6,000 infantry with seven guns and 800 horses and 1,000 cavalry."[2]

This astounding victory was only temporary. The Austrian army, to which Tyrolean fortunes were tied, was soon beaten by Napoleon. Although the Tyroleans continued to fight magnificently, they met political defeat by the Treaty of Schönbrunn, which re-ceded their country to the Bavarians. Hofer continued to lead a resistance force, but, in December 1809, he was betrayed, captured and, a few months later, shot.

2. Ibid.

Neither "the Spanish ulcer" nor the Tyrolean uprising furnished a warning to Napoleon when it came to invading Russia. This is the more strange because the well-read Napoleon had studied the works of his hero Frederick the Great.

Aware of the Cossack revolt led by Stepan Razin in 1667–71 and mindful of his own painful experiences with guerrillas in Moravia and with Hungarian light horse, Frederick showed a healthy respect for Russian irregular forces in his own writings. Although tending to denigrate the regular Russian army in his earlier writings, Frederick concluded that the Russians nevertheless ". . . are so formidable that no one is able to gain by attacking them, having to cross virtual wastelands to reach them, and there is everything to lose, even in being reduced to a defensive war, if they should come to attack you. What gives them this advantage is the number of Cossacks, Tartars and Kalmuks [irregulars] which they have in their armies; these vagabond hordes of plunderers and incendiaries are capable by their incursions of destroying the most flourishing provinces without the [regular] army even setting foot on them. In order to avoid such devastation, their neighbors treat them with respect."[3]

Frederick was writing of 1740, but subsequent events emphasized the rebellious spirit of the Cossacks. A Cossack leader, Emelyan Pugachev, became the bane of Catherine the Great's existence by leading the major peasant uprising of 1773–74.[4]

Trouble had been brewing for a long time in Russia, the result of increasingly stringent ukases that carried the death sentence to a serf for even questioning his lot. Here and there, serfs did rebel, usually a pathetic effort, an isolated murder of a particularly cruel landlord or greedy tax collector, that met with swift and harsh punishment. Nonetheless, incidents multiplied and finally led to a series of uprisings bloodily put down by the regular army. Nor was unrest settled by Catherine's "liberal" outlook—not surprising, since her "major" reform replaced the death sentence to the complaining serf with whipping and transport to Siberia for life.

The Pugachev rebellion began in the heart of the Yaik Cossack country, in the Urals, and at first aimed toward establishing a separate Cossack state. Justified as this might have been, the movement was cloaked in one of the most bizarre forms in history. To win support, the Cossack leader claimed to be Catherine's assassinated husband, Emperor Peter III, who had returned to lead his people from bondage!

That the swarthy Cossack bore no resemblance, physical or otherwise, to Peter, formerly the Duke of Holstein and latterly an idiot, seemingly did not matter. Ignorant and very superstitious peasants traditionally

3. Frédéric II, op. cit.
4. Maurice Hindus, *The Cossacks* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1945).

had embraced the reincarnative notion.[5] Pugachev himself seems to have made at least a partial transference of personality in that he surrounded himself with all the trappings of an imperial court, even including "ladies-in-waiting" to his Cossack wife. How much of this served dramatic effect is difficult to judge, but his speeches leave no doubt as to their compelling paternalism: "You, such as you are, I enfranchise you and give eternal freedom to your children and grandchildren. . . . You will no longer work for a lord and you will no longer pay taxes; if we find you toiling on behalf of another, we will massacre you all. . . ." To give the movement identity, Pugachev invoked Cossack traditions: the muzhiks were to have ". . . the privilege of being the most faithful slaves of our own crown; we make them a gift of the cross and of their ancient prayers, of the long hair and the beard, of liberty and independence. . . . When we have destroyed their enemies, the guilty nobles, each man will be able to enjoy a life of peace and tranquility which shall endure for hundreds of years."[6]

Thus inspired, the army of serfs swept across Russia, storming army posts and killing nobles, landlords and officers—a reign of terror not to be outdone in Russia until 1917. In the nineteenth century, the Russian writer Pushkin brought Pugachev to life in his short novel *The Captain's Daughter,*[7] in which the interested reader will find an excellent description of a rebel attack on a small garrison. After soldiers threw down their arms, Pugachev hanged the commandant and his principal aides, then held court on the commandant's porch, ". . . the inhabitants . . . taking the oath of allegiance, coming up one at a time, kissing the crucifix, and bowing to the Pretender. The garrison soldiers were there. The regimental tailor, armed with a pair of blunt scissors, cut off their pigtails. . . ."

Pugachev's ragtag bands grew to the impressive figure of fifteen thousand; in the winter of 1774, they stood only 120 miles from Moscow. From the government's viewpoint, the situation was the more serious because the Russian army was busy fighting the Turks.

But now the Russian victory at Shumla freed the army, the beginning of the end for Peter Pugachev. In desperation, he retreated to the Volga, his scorched-earth policy only bringing more misery to once-devoted followers. Betrayed by his own lieutenants in order to save their lives, he was taken to Moscow, exhibited in a cage, and later beheaded.

Not long after this affair, Catherine wrote the French liberal Voltaire that Pugachev ". . . could neither read nor write, but he was an ex-

5. Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955).

6. Zoé Oldenbourg, *Catherine the Great* (London: William Heinemann, 1965); see also M. N. Pokrovsky, *Brief History of Russia* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1933), 2 vols. Tr. D. S. Mirsky.

7. A. S. Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954).

tremely bold and determined man. . . . No one since Tamerlane has done more harm than he has."[8]

To undo the harm, the empress and her ministers invoked a counter-reign of terror in which thousands perished to bring no more than uneasy peace to this troubled land.

Trouble had been brewing between Napoleon and Alexander since 1808, when Alexander expressed his desire to possess Constantinople. The two emperors subsequently clashed over the Polish question and Alexander's trade with England; and the empress dowager of Russia did not help matters by sabotaging Napoleon's marriage to Alexander's sister.[9] Napoleon's temper is evident from a conversation he had with his ambassador to Russia, Armand de Caulaincourt, in the spring of 1811. To Caulaincourt's warning ". . . of the difficulties of the climate, the obstinacy of the Russians and their plan of luring him into the interior by a defensive strategy," Napoleon replied: "Bah! A battle will dispose of the fine resolutions of your friend Alexander and his fortifications of sand. He is false and feeble."[10]

Napoleon nevertheless prepared quite carefully for the pending campaign, which he held to be ". . . the greatest and most difficult enterprise that I have so far attempted." Including allied troops, he collected an army of well over 600,000. Although his strength in Russia never amounted to more than 420,000 to 450,000, his army nevertheless greatly outnumbered the Russian armies.[11]

The Grand Army of 1812, however, was not the polished instrument of earlier campaigns. French soldiers constituted less than half of it; neither allied nor French corps had received enough training, march discipline was poor, the supply system tended to break down, and inadequate facilities existed for sick and wounded. Napoleon also misjudged the attitude of Polish and Russian peasants, who, despite forced requisitions, were supposed to rise in support of the French. Some of these deficiencies might have been corrected, but, by 1812, Napoleon was not in the best physical health and he was totally enslaved by his ego. If all else failed, the Grand Army would march to the beat of his own mystical ambition: ". . . I feel myself driven towards an end that I do not know. As soon as I shall have reached it, as soon as I shall become

8. Oldenbourg, op. cit.

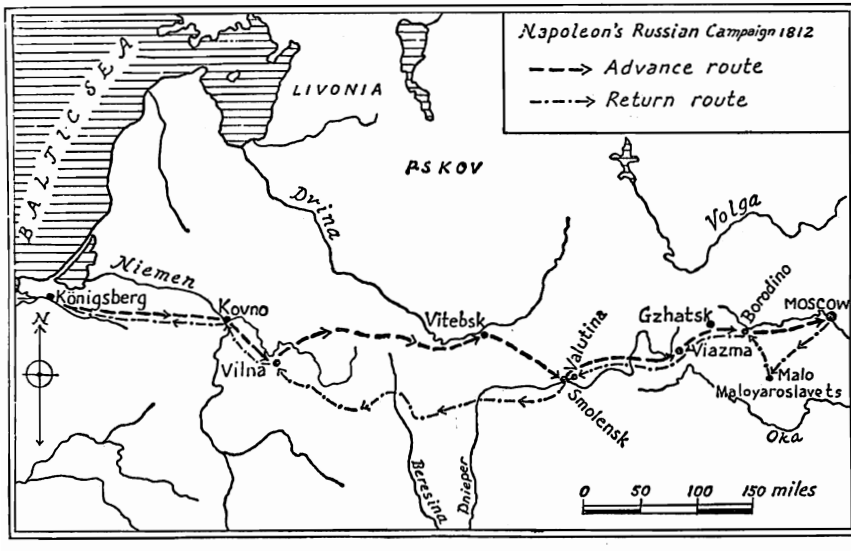
9. E. Stschepkin, "Russia Under Alexander I, and the Invasion of 1812." In *The Cambridge Modern History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1904), Vol. 9 of 13 vols.

10. Markham, op. cit.

11. Ibid.; see also Stschepkin, op. cit.; Philippe-Paul de Ségur, *Napoleon's Russian Campaign* (London: Michael Joseph, 1958). Tr. J. D. Townsend. The figures vary considerably, from Stschepkin's 680,000 (including 500,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry) to Ségur's 617,000, to Markham's 600,000.

unnecessary, an atom will suffice to shatter me. Till then, not all the forces of mankind can do anything against me."[12]

Troubles began to plague the Grand Army almost as soon as its vanguard crossed the Niemen, on June 25, 1812. The unusually fast pace



soon told, and the roads filled with sick and stragglers. This was partly the result of a late spring and very bad weather, partly a supply failure and poor march discipline.

Napoleon's ambassador and counselor, Caulaincourt, later wrote that each soldier had been equipped with ". . . ten pounds of flour to last for five days, bread for four days, biscuit for six days."[13] Some of the younger recruits had stupidly thrown away the burdensome flour ration, an action soon regretted. Caulaincourt continued:

. . . This rapid movement [to Vilna], without stores, exhausted and destroyed all the resources and houses which lay on the way. The advance guard lived quite well, but the rest of the army was dying of hunger. Exhaustion, added to want and the piercingly cold rains at night, caused the death of 10,000 horses. Many of the young Guard died on the road of fatigue, cold and hunger.[14]

12. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1961).
13. Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza, *Memoirs* (London: Cassell, 1935), 2 vols. Ed. Jean Hanoteau, tr. Hamish Miles.
14. Ibid.

General Carl von Clausewitz, who fought on the Russian side in this campaign, wrote that a general, returning from Napoleon's headquarters on a political errand, was astonished ". . . at the state of the route of the French Army, which he found strewn with the carcases of horses, and swarming with sick and stragglers. All prisoners were carefully questioned as to the matter of subsistence; and it was ascertained that already, in the neighborhood of Vitebsk, the horses were obtaining only green forage, and the men, instead of bread, only flour, which they were obliged to cook into soup. . . ."[15]

Caulaincourt noted that ". . . the pillage and disorders of all kinds in which the army had indulged had put the whole countryside to flight." Outside of Vitebsk, ". . . we were in the heart of inhabited Russia . . . we were like a vessel without a compass in the midst of a vast ocean."[16] Napoleon's aide, Ségur, later wrote that when the Emperor's immediate entourage rejoiced at the "conquest" of Vitebsk, he turned sharply on them and cried, "Do you think I have come all this way just to conquer these huts?"[17]

A different policy toward the peasants still might have saved French fortunes. Although Russian landowners ". . . grew much milder in 1812, and tried to appease the peasants," the latter probably would have supported the French. But Napoleon, ". . . rather than abetting peasant separatist movements, crushed them ruthlessly on behalf of the nobility."[18] The peasants replied with a scorched-earth policy that cost the French dearly.

A hot and dry summer complicated matters. In mid-July, a German mercenary, Captain Franz Roeder, noted in his journal, ". . . if the Russians want to send half our army to the dogs by the winter, all they have to do is to make us march hither and thither with the individual units kept continually under arms. Then if they give us a few battles we shall be in a tough situation, so long as they have plenty of light troops."[19] Such was the isolation of the Grand Army, such its dislocation, that toward the end of July the astute Captain Roeder wrote a book of wisdom in a single sentence: "Every victory is a loss to us."[20]

Alexander had outlined Russian strategy as early as the spring of 1811, when he wrote the King of Prussia: ". . . The system which has made Wellington victorious in Spain, and exhausted the French armies,

15. Carl von Clausewitz, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia* (London: John Murray, 1843).
16. Caulaincourt, op. cit.
17. Ségur, op. cit.
18. Eugène Tarlé, *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia, 1812* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1942). Tr. G. M.
19. Franz Roeder, *The Ordeal of Captain Roeder* (London: Methuen, 1960). Tr. and ed. Helen Roeder.
20. Ibid.

is what I intend to follow—avoid pitched battles and organize long lines of communication for retreat, leading to entrenched camps. . . ."[21]

Alexander's own ineptness, a divided high command, and the clamor of nobles for action began to jeopardize this strategy in July. Alexander relinquished supreme command in favor of Barclay de Tolly, who continued to retire until forced to fight a holding action at Smolensk in mid-August. This indecisive battle forced Alexander to replace Tolly with a native son, the sixty-seven-year-old Kutuzov, a veteran campaigner who had fought Napoleon at Austerlitz and greatly respected his abilities.

Kutuzov was old and tired and physically a wreck, but he realized more clearly than the other commanders that time was serving Russia's cause. Unfortunately, he was appointed to the supreme command to give battle. For this purpose, he retired on Borodino, where the two armies met on September 7. In the brief engagement, each side suffered enormous losses; on the following day, Kutuzov began a retreat that would take his armies past Moscow.

Kutuzov was right. Far better to let time and space wear down French regiments, let hunger and sickness do the work of bullets. Fear already was infesting French divisions to compound barbaric behavior of the columns: ". . . the wholesale pillaging by the conquering army, by countless marauders, and sometimes by criminal bands of French deserters, caused the peasants' hatred of the enemy to grow from day to day."[22]

This hatred soon inspired the growth of guerrilla bands. Tarlé has given us the genesis of a partisan detachment. At the end of August, a private in the dragoons, an illiterate named Ermolai Chetvertakov, was taken prisoner but escaped to Basmany, in the South. Here he found one supporter. Killing two French stragglers, they took their uniforms, then killed two French cavalrymen and acquired their horses. These successes helped them recruit forty-seven peasants, an ill-armed band that nonetheless killed twelve French cuirassiers, then a group of fifty-nine French. In time, Chetvertakov's band swelled to over three hundred volunteers operating in the large area around Gzhatsk. Later in the campaign, he led over four thousand peasants against a French battalion supported by artillery and forced it to retreat.[23]

Similar bands sprang up across the land. An infantry private, Stepan Eremenko, taken prisoner at Smolensk, escaped and organized a peasant band of three hundred. A peasant named Ermolai Vasilyev recruited a peasant force of about six hundred armed with rifles taken from the French.

21. Markham, op. cit.
22. Tarlé, op. cit.
23. Ibid.

Although Alexander and his generals, most of whom were landowning noblemen, did not want to arm the peasants, the potential of this new force struck a young lieutenant colonel, Denis Davydov, aide to an army commander, Prince Bagration. A few days before the battle of Borodino, Davydov asked Bagration to help him form small cavalry detachments to work with peasant guerrillas in cutting Napoleon's exposed lines of communication. Bagration persuaded Kutuzov to give Davydov fifty hussars and eighty Cossacks. This was the humble beginning of the Cossack-partisan campaign led by such as Figner, Seslavin, Vadbolsky, and Kudashev, many of whose outstanding exploits were later recorded by Davydov in his pioneer work *The Journal of Partisan Actions.*[24]

Captain Roeder graphically described the reaction of his regiment to a partisan attack in October: ". . . this afternoon the news went round that a few hundred armed peasants and Cossacks, who had their base of operations five leagues [10–15 miles] from here [Viazma] had seized the baggage of the Westphalian regiment and murdered the escort. This threw us into a state of unrest and vigilance." One Major Strecker was sent forth on a punitive expedition, his orders being to scour the countryside by shooting any peasants he encountered and burning all dwellings. Roeder sardonically wrote, ". . . I only hope that he omits at least the final measure for our sakes, in order that we may occasionally find somewhere to spend the night!"[25]

Neither Major Strecker nor other commanders assigned to deal with the harassing problem omitted "the final measure," a shortsighted policy that Napoleon probably approved. Certainly his temper was growing short. He should have reached Moscow with two hundred thousand troops; instead, ninety thousand arrived. According to Caulaincourt, the emperor ". . . attributed all his difficulties simply to the trouble caused by the Cossacks . . . he said he had means of obviating this annoyance by placing detachments of infantry in blockhouses linked in a line of defense, and added that, after giving battle to Kutuzov and driving him further back, he would see to the reorganization of all this."[26]

This countermeasure never appeared. For Napoleon, time was running out. Having gained the nothing of Moscow, he learned too late that the Grand Army, what was left of it, owned exactly what it physically occupied—and this was not enough to even feed it. An unidentified Russian officer described the French presence just prior to the retreat: ". . . Every day the soldiers streamed in thousands from the camps to plunder the city, and many thousand others were scattered throughout the countryside foraging and seeking for bread. Peasants armed with staves lay concealed in the woods and marshes and slew hundreds of

24. Ibid.
25. Roeder, op. cit.
26. Caulaincourt, op. cit.

these marauders every day, and those who escaped the peasants fell into the hands of the Cossacks."[27]

Napoleon's army retreated through land that earlier it had helped scorch. Partisan bands allied with Cossack patrols infested the area to harass columns slowed by hunger and frost and by ponderous baggage trains carrying loot stolen from Moscow. As early as November 6, Ségur wrote: ". . . great numbers of men could be seen wandering over the countryside, either alone or in small groups. These were not cowardly deserters: cold and starvation had detached them from their columns. . . . Now they met only armed civilians or Cossacks who fell upon them with ferocious laughter, wounded them, stripped them of everything they had, and left them to perish naked in the snow. These guerrillas . . . kept abreast of the army on both sides of the road, under cover of the trees. They threw back on the deadly highway the soldiers whom they did not finish off with their spears and axes."[28]

Not far from Moscow, a group of partisans captured one unit of nearly two thousand men. Near Smolensk, Napoleon's vital supply depot, Cossacks and partisans drove off fifteen hundred oxen.[29] Finding no forage in Smolensk, Napoleon had one commissary officer after another put on trial until he learned from Jomini ". . . that a woman Praskovya led a small guerrilla group that attacked and destroyed French foragers."[30]

Kutuzov watched these developments from the south. Pressed to attack by his superiors, he refused. Instead, he shadowed the French army, a "parallel pursuit" that covered 120 miles in fifty days. His own army suffered, but not to the extent of the French—the horses improperly shod for ice-covered roads,[31] soldiers frequently reduced to cannibalism,[32] foragers frustrated by frozen fields, and behind those fields and lurking in woods the whole panoply of impassioned peasants and fierce Cossacks —here was a people's war, as Tolstoy put it, ". . . in all its menacing and majestic power; and troubling itself about no question of anyone's tastes or rules, about no fine distinctions, with stupid simplicity, with perfect consistency, it rose and fell and belabored the French until the whole invading army had been driven out."

No one knows the exact toll. Clausewitz later wrote that of the original force, 552,000 remained in Russia dead or prisoner, along with 167,000 dead horses and some 1,300 captured cannon.[33]

It was a defeat of such proportion that French veterans could not

27. Roeder, op. cit.
28. Ségur, op. cit.
29. Clausewitz, op. cit.
30. Tarlé, op. cit.
31. Markham, op. cit.
32. Tarlé, op. cit.
33. Clausewitz, op. cit.

encompass it when sitting in the village tavern, eyes filled with tears not from smoke alone. The lesson was not altogether ignored when Prussia declared war against Napoleon the following year and proclaimed a *levée en masse:*

". . . Every man not acting in the regular army or *Landwehr* was to support the army by acting against the enemy's communications and rear. The people were to fight to the death and with every means in their power. The enemy was to be harassed, his supplies cut off and his stragglers massacred. No uniforms were to be worn, and on the enemy's approach, after all food stocks had been destroyed, and mills, bridges, and boats burnt, the villages were to be abandoned and refuge sought in the woods and hills."[34]

34. Fuller (*The Conduct of War, 1789–1961*), *supra.*

Chapter 11

Clausewitz and Jomini on guerrilla war • The French land in Algeria • Abd-el-Kader leads the resistance • Clauzel's strategy and defeat • Valée's Great Wall • Bugeaud's tactics • Shamyl and the Caucasus • Guerrilla warfare in Burma, Africa and New Zealand • The Seminole war in Florida • Effects of industrial revolution on guerrilla warfare • The American Civil War • Forrest, Morgan and Mosby • Sheridan's countertactics • Pope's policy

LESSONS offered by Napoleon's tragic experiences with guerrilla warfare went largely unheeded by later military commanders. After 1815, warfare in Europe went into partial eclipse. Napoleon's "total wars" had taken the starch out of Europe, just as had the earlier Hundred Years' War, Thirty Years' War, and Seven Years' War. Worn by twenty years of battles, European states welcomed a political status quo as determined at the Congress of Vienna and maintained by regular standing armies whose autocratic leadership stultified any attempt to expand the organizational and tactical reforms suggested either by the Napoleonic wars or by the technological progress inherent in the Industrial Revolution. Aside from maintaining internal order and fighting occasional conventional campaigns such as Field Marshal Radetzky's victory over the Piedmontese at Novara, in 1849, the great powers, particularly England, confined themselves to waging colonial wars. From 1815 to 1854, no British army even saw service on the Continent.

In this tactically dormant period, the lessons of Bonaparte's campaigns in Spain and Russia were all but ignored. Neither victorious nor defeated generals wanted to credit rabble action, nor did governments wish to give peasants any notion of exalted status. Napoleon later blamed his difficulties in Russia on the Cossacks, not the partisans. Most guerrilla leaders of the period faded to an illiterate obscurity, unhonored and unsung except in peasant folklore.

Although a paucity of qualified military analysts existed, two principal theorists did emerge in the wake of Napoleonic destruction. Clausewitz, in his famous unfinished treatise *On War* (*Vom Kriege*), only touched lightly on partisan warfare, in a short chapter called "Arming the Nation." A "Prussianized Pole," Clausewitz served extensively in the Napoleonic wars but experienced minimum contact with the battlefield—to the extent that the British war historian Sir James Edmonds later wrote that he ". . . seems to have been a courtier rather than a professional soldier."[1] Although recognizing the "new power" of a "people's war," he saw this in terms of a *levée en masse* that favored the defense. Such a war could only be fought under suitable tactical and psychological conditions; moreover, ". . . we must imagine a people-War in combination with a War carried on by a regular Army, and both carried on according to a plan embracing the operations of the whole."[2]

Partisan operations were to be sharply circumscribed. Neither national levies nor armed peasantry were to attack an enemy army: ". . . They must not attempt to crack the nut, they must only gnaw on the surface and the borders. . . ." Although their potential was definitely limited, ". . . still we must admit that armed peasants are not to be driven before us in the same way as a body of soldiers who keep together like a herd of cattle, and usually follow their noses. Armed peasants, on the contrary, when broken, disperse in all directions, for which no formal plan is required; through this circumstance, the march of every small body of troops in a mountainous, thickly wooded, or even broken country, becomes a service of a very dangerous character, for at any moment a combat may arise on the march; if in point of fact no armed bodies have even been seen for some time, yet the same

1. James E. Edmonds, "Jomini and Clausewitz," *Army Quarterly*, April 1951; see also R. A. Leonard, *A Short Guide to Clausewitz on War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1967); Anatol Rapoport (ed.), *Clausewitz on War* (London: Penguin Books, 1968); Peter Paret and John Shy, *Guerrillas in the 1960s* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962); Michael Howard, "Jomini and the Classical Tradition in Military Thought." In *Studies in War and Peace* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1970).

2. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), Vol. 2 of 3 vols. Tr. J. J. Graham.

peasants already driven off by the head of a column, may at any hour make their appearance in its rear."[3]

Clausewitz pictured partisans as "a kind of nebulous vapory essence." They should ". . . never condense into a solid body; otherwise the enemy sends an adequate force against this core, crushes it, and makes a great many prisoners; their courage sinks; every one thinks the main question is decided, any further effort useless, and the arms fall from the hands of the people . . . on the other hand, it is necessary that this mist should collect at some points into denser masses, and form threatening clouds from which now and again a formidable flash of lightning may burst forth. . . ."

The enemy can only guard against small partisan actions by ". . . detaching numerous parties to furnish escorts for convoys, to occupy military stations, defiles, bridges, etc." His larger garrisons in the rear will remain subject to partisan attack; his force as a whole will suffer "a feeling of uneasiness and dread."[4]

One cannot fault this confirmation of the auxiliary-partisan role, and it is a pity that Clausewitz did not expand his thinking. His own experience in partisan warfare was extremely limited, and apparently so was his historical appreciation of the subject. He found partisan warfare ". . . as yet of rare occurrence generally, and . . . but imperfectly treated of by those who have had actual experience for any length of time. . . ." "A People's War in civilized Europe," he held, "is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century":

> . . . It has its advocates and its opponents: the latter either considering it in a political sense as a revolutionary means, a state of anarchy declared lawful, which is as dangerous as a foreign enemy to social order at home; or on military grounds, conceiving that the result is not commensurate with the expenditure of the nation's strength.[5]

Neither Clausewitz's treatment nor his turgid presentation of the subject was apt to arouse much interest in its potential. His incomplete and highly abstruse work was published posthumously in German in 1831. Colonel Graham's English translation did not appear until 1873.[6]

The other leading analyst of the day, General Baron de Jomini, a Swiss officer with considerable battlefield experience in Napoleonic warfare, did not publish his principal study, *A Treatise on the Art of War* (*Précis de l'art de la guerre*), until 1838.[7] As opposed to Clausewitz, who dwelt in Kantian clouds of theory, Jomini realistically (and professionally) analyzed strategy, tactics, and logistics (the word was in cur-

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Edmonds, op. cit.
7. Baron de Jomini, *The Art of War* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1879).

rent use) from the standpoint of both ancient and contemporary campaigns in an attempt to establish basic principles of war. His work won almost immediate popularity in the West; Edmonds has written that it "was studied everywhere" until placed into eclipse by German victories in 1870–71, which signaled the rise of Clausewitzian influence.

Jomini's opening chapter can still be read with profit. In discussing wars of intervention, for example, he wrote:

> . . . When a state intervenes with only a small contingent, in obedience to treaty-stipulations, it is simply an accessory, and has but little voice in the main operations; but when it intervenes as a principal party, and with an imposing force, the case is quite different.

In either instance, ". . . the safety of the army may be endangered by these distant interventions. The counterbalancing advantage is that its own territory cannot then be easily invaded, since the scene of hostilities is so distant; so that what may be a misfortune for the general may be, in a measure, an advantage to the state." Nonetheless, care must be exercised:

> . . . In wars of this character the essentials are to secure a general who is both a statesman and a soldier; to have clear stipulations with the allies as to the part to be taken by each in the principal operations; finally, to agree upon an objective point which shall be in harmony with the common interests. By the neglect of these precautions, the greater number of coalitions have failed, or have maintained a difficult struggle with a power more united but weaker than the allies.

In codifying various types of wars, Jomini introduced a separate category, "Wars of opinion."

> . . . Wars of opinion between two states belong also to the class of wars of intervention; for they result either from doctrines which one party desires to propagate among its neighbors, or from dogmas which it desires to crush, –in both cases leading to intervention. Although originating in religious or political dogmas, these wars are most deplorable; for, like national wars, they enlist the worst passions, and become vindictive, cruel, and terrible.

After pointing out that religion is often ". . . the pretext to obtain political power, and the war is not really one of dogmas," dogma nonetheless ". . . is a powerful ally; for it excites the ardor of the people, and also creates a party. . . . It may, however, happen, as in the Crusades and the wars of Islamism, that the dogma for which the war is waged, instead of friends, finds only bitter enemies in the country invaded; and then the contest becomes fearful."

> . . . The chances of support and resistance in wars of political opinions are about equal. It may be recollected how in 1792 associations of fanatics

thought it possible to propagate throughout Europe the famous declaration of the rights of man, and how governments became justly alarmed, and rushed to arms probably with the intention of only forcing the lava of this volcano back into its crater and there extinguishing it. The means were not fortunate; for war and aggression are inappropriate measures for arresting an evil which lies wholly in the human passions, excited in a temporary paroxysm, of less duration as it is the more violent. Time is the true remedy for all bad passions and for all anarchical doctrines. A civilized nation may bear the yoke of a factious and unrestrained multitude for a short interval; but these storms soon pass away, and reason resumes her sway. To attempt to restrain such a mob by a foreign force is to attempt to restrain the explosion of a mine when the powder has already been ignited: it is far better to await the explosion and afterward fill up the crater than to try to prevent it and to perish in the attempt.

Jomini's personal experience in guerrilla warfare, as opposed to Clausewitz, was considerable, but he still treated the subject cautiously, as though he were Pandora well aware of the disruptive force of winds. "National wars," he thought, "are the most formidable of all."

. . . This name can only be applied to such as are waged against a united people, or a great majority of them, filled with a noble ardor and determined to sustain their independence: then every step is disputed, the army holds only its camp-ground, its supplies can only be obtained at the point of the sword, and its convoys are everywhere threatened or captured.

The spectacle of a spontaneous uprising of a nation is rarely seen; and, though there be in it something grand and noble which commands our admiration, the consequences are so terrible that, for the sake of humanity, we ought to hope never to see it. . . .

This uprising may be produced by the most opposite causes. The serfs may rise in a body at the call of the government, and their masters, affected by a noble love of their sovereign and country, may set them the example and take the command of them; and, similarly, a fanatical people may arm under the appeal of its priests; or a people enthusiastic in its political opinions, or animated by a sacred love of its institutions, may rush to meet the enemy in defense of all it holds dear.

After discussing the advantages of forests and mountains to national wars, and offering examples, many already familiar to us, Jomini, with the French disaster in Spain in mind, wrote:

. . . The difficulties are particularly great when the people are supported by a considerable nucleus of disciplined troops. The invader has only an army: his adversaries have an army, and a people wholly or almost wholly in arms, and making means of resistance out of every thing, each individual of whom conspires against the common enemy; even the non-combatants have an

interest in his ruin and accelerate it by every means in their power. He holds scarcely any ground but that upon which he encamps; outside the limits of his camp every thing is hostile and multiplies a thousandfold the difficulties he meets at every step.

These obstacles become almost insurmountable when the country is difficult. Each armed inhabitant knows the smallest paths and their connections; he finds everywhere a relative or friend who aids him; the commanders also know the country, and, learning immediately the slightest movement on the part of the invader, can adopt the best measures to defeat his projects; while the latter, without information of their movements, and not in a condition to send out detachments to gain it, having no resource but in his bayonets, and certain safety only in the concentration of his columns, is like a blind man: his combinations are failures; and when, after the most carefully-concerted movements and the most rapid and fatiguing marches, he thinks he is about to accomplish his aim and deal a terrible blow, he finds no sign of the enemy but his campfires: so that while, like Don Quixote, he is attacking windmills, his adversary is on his line of communications, destroys the detachments left to guard it, surprises his convoys, his depots, and carries on a war so disastrous for the invader that he must inevitably yield after a time.[8]

Jomini was closer to the mark of guerrilla warfare than Clausewitz, but neither treatise satisfied the immediate military needs of colonial warfare. Neither spoke of changing objectives or of tactics suitable to defeat thousands of mounted natives with a few hundred regular cavalry, or the proper method of controlling hundreds of square miles with under-strength forces. Nowhere in Clausewitz or Jomini is the tactical adaptation suggested that made the "thin red line," the infantry square, the cavalry squadron, or the gunboat as familiar to professional soldiers as the conventional maneuvers of Napoleonic warfare were to another generation. And yet, a year before Clausewitz died and while Jomini was hard at work on the *Précis,* warfare was already pursuing a tangential course that often mocked mere conventional thought and practice.

Before either Clausewitz or Jomini appeared in print, the French became involved in a major colonial campaign in North Africa.

In the early-nineteenth century, Turkey held Algeria in loose hegemony, ruling through a dey of Algiers, whose army frequently had to fight inland Arab-Berber tribes. The dey's relationship with Europe was none too healthy, since his ports traditionally sheltered pirates who preyed on Western shipping. In 1827, the dey insulted the French consul over a commercial matter, and added injury by allegedly striking him with a peacock-feather fly whisk. Three years later, Charles X, needing a diversion for his unhappy regime (soon to end), dispatched an expeditionary force of thirty-five thousand troops, which easily cap-

8. Ibid.

tured Algiers. Marshal Louis de Bourmont announced: ". . . the whole kingdom of Algeria will probably surrender within fifteen days, without our having to fire another shot."[9] With that, he pushed inland to subdue the tribes.

From the beginning, French military behavior left considerable to be desired. A British admiral and student of the period, C. V. Usborne, later wrote:

> . . . To obtain wood for their fires soldiers tore down the doors of houses or cut down fruit trees; they smashed beautiful marble fountains for the pleasure of destruction. They even destroyed aqueducts, which resulted in their own army being short of water. At Blida, taken without resistance on 19 November, 1830, everyone found armed over a large area was shot out of hand. The punitive destruction of crops resulted in scarcity for the army in the following year.[10]

The French expedition caused a famous marabout or holy man, Mahi ed Dine, to proclaim a *jihad,* or holy war, under the military command of his son, Abd-el-Kader.

Sidi-el-Hadji-Abd-el-Kader-Uled-Mahiddin had only a few more years than names. Twenty-four years old, he was a small man ". . . with a long, deadly-pale face, and languishing eyes, an aquiline nose, small, delicate mouth, thin, dark chestnut beard, and slight mustache. He had exquisitely formed hands and feet, which he was continually washing and trimming with a small knife."[11]

Nobly descended from the caliphs of Fatima, the young Mohammedan was generalissimo of several Berber tribes. Upon the outbreak of war, he collected his people in a *smala,* a mobile headquarters of wives, booty, horses, "and a whole army of women and retainers" that at one point numbered sixty thousand, and took to the land.

Abd-el-Kader at first ran rings around ponderous French columns, and might well have driven the French from the land but for one major failing: he could not persuade heterogeneous tribes to join in organized, central government, whose weight he needed to beat the French. The tribes nevertheless fought hard, their motivation being clear in an official report made by the newly appointed Commission on Africa to King Louis Philippe in 1833:

> . . . We [France] have seized private properties with no compensation; we have even forced expropriated proprietors to pay for the demolition of their

9. Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1961); see also Tanya Matthews, *Algerian ABC* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961); Joan Gillespie, *Algeria–Rebellion and Revolution* (London: Ernest Benn, 1960).

10. C. V. Usborne, *The Conquest of Morocco* (London: Stanley Paul, 1936).

11. Standing, op. cit.; see also Félix Ponteil, *L'Éveil des Nationalités et le Mouvement Libéral* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968).

houses. We have profaned mosques and graves. We have sent to their death, on mere hearsay and without trial, people whose guilt is extremely doubtful. We have murdered people carrying safe-conducts; killed off, on a mere suspicion, whole populations who have since been found innocent; we have put on their trial men regarded as holy in their countryside, because they have had the courage to speak up for their unhappy compatriots. . . . We have surpassed in barbarity the barbarians we came to civilize—and we complain of having no success with them.[12]

When the 1834 peace treaty broke down, the king sent a dashing general, Count Bernard Clauzel, to deal with the stubborn tribesmen. Clauzel had fought in Spain under Marmont, but nothing of the experience with Spanish guerrillas brushed off. Recruiting several regiments of Zouave mercenaries, he undertook a series of expeditions that posed but slight threat to highly mobile Algerian forces. Clauzel exaggerated his reports of success and continued to demand more troops. A major defeat while marching on Constantine cost him his job.[13]

French strategy changed in 1836, when General Bugeaud arrived in western Algeria with some reinforcements. Bugeaud, also a veteran of the Spanish wars, had learned something about guerrilla warfare. After intensively training his troops, he outfitted flying columns and dispensed with ponderous baggage trains in favor of mules and camels. A month later, he beat the emir at Sikkah.[14]

General Valée now assumed supreme command and managed to forge a shaky treaty that let France get on with the colonization effort in the occupied area. But, two years later, Abd-el-Kader reopened hostilities. Valée, who commanded a total force of about fifty thousand, hit on a new strategy. As he wrote the Minister of War in Paris:

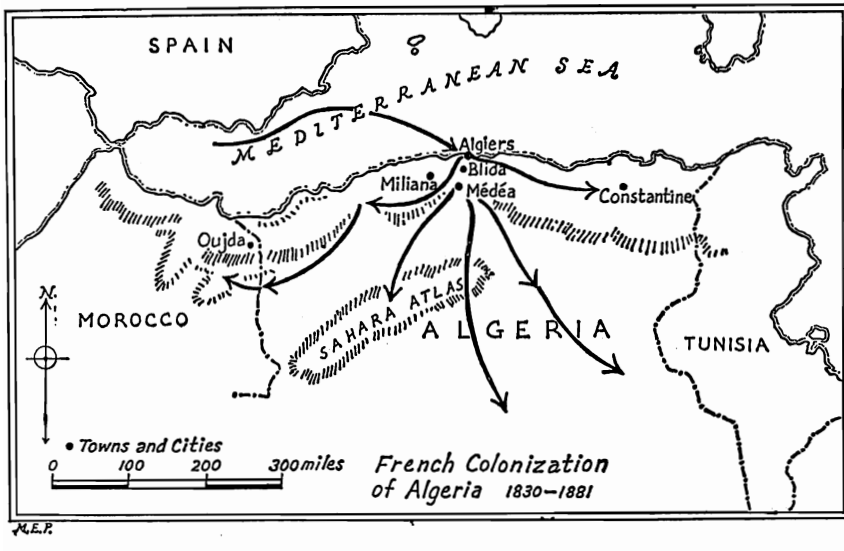
. . . in Africa war must be defensive. The Arab will flee constantly before our columns, allowing them to advance as far as the necessity for revictualling them will permit, and he will then return, giving to their withdrawal the appearance of a reverse. Clever tactics in Africa consist of drawing on the Arabs to fight. With this object one must make permanent works. . . . They will certainly attack them. Our success in a battle on a position chosen beforehand will be certain, and the terror which will follow a defeat will bring about the submission of neighboring tribes.[15]

Before anyone in Paris could object, Valée manned a number of posts, ". . . all of which were invested and their communications cut. Strong columns were required to revictual them, and terrible losses resulted. . . . Disaster followed disaster." Valée also started to construct ". . .

12. Matthews, op. cit.
13. Behr, op. cit.
14. Ponteil, op. cit.
15. Usborne, op. cit.

a continuous obstacle round the occupied zone, irreverently called the Great Wall of China." This was to be 120 miles long, an "impassable" ditch supported by 160 blockhouses.[16]

At this point, General Bugeaud replaced Valée. The fiery Bugeaud took instant exception to the Great Wall theory. He reported to his superiors in Paris: ". . . I estimate that in summer four regiments will not be enough to guard the obstacle which will yield seven or eight hundred casualties through sickness in five months. From the moment it is finished war will be impossible outside it. We must withdraw the garrisons of Médéa and Miliana and shut ourselves up in a pestilential area. The army will thus have dug its own grave."[17]



Bugeaud insisted instead on expanding the flying-column tactic. "Père," or "Father," Bugeaud, as his troops called him, had come from the ranks, which was rare enough in that day, but, even more rare, he understood the value of "the ruse, the raid, and the ambush." To accomplish these, he formed and trained small, fast-moving task forces, ". . . a few battalions of infantry, a couple of squadrons of cavalry, two mountain howitzers, a small transport train on mule and camel back."[18] By increased mobility, he gained contact with the emir's troops, then beat them with disciplined firepower. One of his officers, the dashing Saint-

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.; see also Paul Azan (ed.), *Par l'Épée et par la Charrue—Écrits et Discours de Bugeaud* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).
18. Standing, op. cit.

Arnaud, who later commanded the French army in the Crimea, wrote: ". . . He fights when he wishes, he searches, he pursues the enemy, worries him, and makes him afraid."[19]

Bugeaud's flying columns won a number of important tribal submissions, which the general hastened to exploit with constructive occupation: "The sword only prepared the way for the plough." A mere punitive column advancing into the desert ". . . left no more lasting effect than the wake of a ship in the sea." Bugeaud nonetheless depended more on fear than on persuasion. To bring nomads to heel, he relied chiefly on the *razzia,* or scorched-earth policy, which he ". . . turned into a doctrine of war." Saint-Arnaud wrote: ". . . We have burned everything, destroyed everything. How many women and children have died of cold and fatigue!"[20]

Tribesmen replied in kind, torturing and mutilating captured French soldiers. At times, the French army practiced genocide, as when Colonel Pélissier

> . . . lighted fires at the mouth of a cave in which five hundred men, women and children had taken refuge, and all but ten were asphyxiated. *L'affaire des grottes* reached Paris, and became a scandal, denounced in the French Senate as "the calculated, cold-blooded murder of a defenseless enemy. . . ."[21]

The resultant outcry did not prevent the practice from continuing—the government merely imposed stricter censorship.

Realizing that the emir had to be defeated, Bugeaud continued to aim at the *smala,* the emir's floating political-military headquarters. This was eventually smashed by an attack in the best G. A. Henty tradition. King Louis Philippe's son, the Duc d'Aumale, led a cavalry charge of six hundred tired troopers into the teeth of five thousand surprised Berbers. The natives broke and ran, and the young prince captured four thousand prisoners including the emir's mother, his favorite wife, and vast treasure.[22]

As Bugeaud anticipated, this broke organized resistance. The emir now sought sanctuary in Morocco, where Emperor Abd-er-Rahman began helping him rebuild his force. Without gaining permission from Paris, Bugeaud immediately violated this border sanctuary to meet the Moorish army, some 45,000 horsemen, concentrated at the Isly. Bugeaud's force amounted to 6,500 infantry and 1,500 cavalry. Explaining to his troops, that ". . . they are a mob, while we are an army," he at once attacked, and in August 1844, decisively beat them.[23] The sub-

19. Ibid.
20. Behr, op. cit.
21. Ibid.
22. Callwell, op. cit.
23. Usborne, op. cit.

sequent Treaty of Tangier, signed with the Moroccan sultan, provided a wedge for later French expansion into that country.[24]

Bugeaud now claimed most of Algeria and set about administering it through an Arab Bureau, whose officers ". . . had extensive powers, dealt with military and legal matters, collected taxes and engaged in military intelligence activities." Bugeaud's success brought a new horde of European colonists, and, from 1844 onward, the Europeans grew in power while claiming the best farmlands and other concessions at the expense of the tribes.[25]

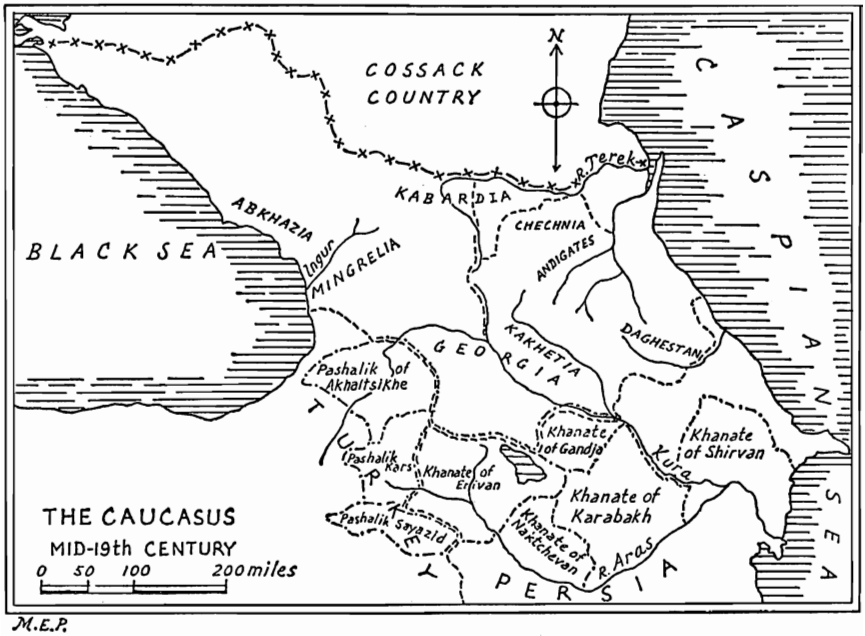
Abd-el-Kader survived three more years as a fugitive. Finally surrendering, he received a handsome pension from the French, who sent him to Damascus, where he died at the age of seventy-six.[26] His capture did not end resistance, particularly in the Kabylie, where uprisings continued until 1881 and even later.

When Abd-el-Kader began fighting the French, a Mohammedan priest or mullah the Tartar Shamyl, evoked a holy war against the Russians. The czar's army was determined to subdue the rugged Caucasus, some three hundred thousand square miles ". . . of mountains, table-lands, rapid and shallow rivers," the home of Lezghians, Georgians, and Chechens, the land of Daghestan, where ". . . they think no more of taking a life than of taking a cup of tea."[27]

The best modern treatment of this fascinating campaign, in the author's opinion, is found in Lesley Branche's entertaining book *The Sabres of Paradise*.[28] To defy the Russian intruder, Shamyl led his people to the mountains. There he easily repulsed the first forces to come after him. Not least of his advantages was superior firepower, gained from smuggled rifles, the Russian troops being armed only with smoothbore weapons. The enemy also suffered from overconfidence. In 1837, the visiting Czar Nicholas asked some assembled chiefs, "Do you know that I have powder enough to blow up all your mountains?" On another occasion, General Veliamonif told the natives that ". . . if the sky were to fall the soldiers of Russia were numerous enough to prop it up on their bayonets."[29]

This surfeit of manpower and powder was just as well. Expedition after expedition returned from the mountains to report heavy losses against the achievement of a few burned villages. Occasionally, concen-

24. Stéphane Bernard, *The Franco-Moroccan Conflict, 1943–1956* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968).
25. Gillespie, op. cit.
26. Standing, op. cit.
27. Ibid.; see also S. F. Platonov, *History of Russia* (London: Macmillan, 1925). Tr. E. Aronsberg.
28. Lesley Branche, *The Sabres of Paradise* (London: John Murray, 1960).
29. Standing, op. cit.



M.E.P.

trated forces supported by artillery surprised the guerrillas, and Shamyl was surrounded and twice just barely escaped.

He soon collected another force, however. To insure replacements, he had divided Daghestan into twenty provinces, ". . . placing each under a *naib,* who was bound to provide two hundred horsemen at his bidding. The male population from fifteen to fifty were armed and drilled, and a postal service and foundry for ordnance established. Schamyl's personal command consisted of a thousand superb cavalry. . . ."[30]

Shamyl was also greatly assisted by France and England prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War, in 1854. In one sense, this aid backfired: armaments included artillery pieces which, in untrained hands of the Tartars, proved of little more than nuisance value. Yet Shamyl's insistence on using and protecting his precious guns led him to use more-conventional tactics and resulted in set-piece battles in which he was defeated. This error, combined with an increase in Russian strength at the end of the Crimean War, eventually caused him to surrender. As with Abd-el-Kader, he received a generous pension. He died while on pilgrimage to Mecca.

30. Ibid.

Not all colonial peoples fought with the tenacity of Algerians and Tartars, and not all leaned so completely on guerrilla tactics.

In the nineteenth century, native leaders came increasingly under Western influence. Competition among European powers in the colonies had led to their aggrandizement by money and arms and to initiation of numerous natives into rites of Western warfare. These developments worked on the pride of the more important princes, many of whose native levies had been scattered by disciplined forces a fraction of the size. With this, came the dawning realization that guerrilla warfare could impede the colonizing process, but could not stop it. Such was the flow of foreign troops and arms and supplies that it did seem as if not only the Russians but the Spanish, French, English and Dutch armies each could prop up the sky "on their bayonets."

Further, to fight guerrilla warfare was not an easy task, as many princes had discovered: to wage it successfully demanded superb leadership and enormous patience, but, even when these were exercised, the necessity of eventually destroying the intruding force remained, and this meant a set-piece battle. Since fighting a battle is infinitely easier than waging a prolonged guerrilla campaign, most native leaders perhaps unconsciously yielded to such contact, generally to their detriment.

An example is the British conquest of Burma. In 1824, Sir Archibald Campbell, commanding a British-Indian force of eleven thousand, captured Rangoon and turned north in pursuit of the Burman leader Bundoola, whose headquarters were at Ava, on the Irrawaddy.

Campbell's columns immediately struck a series of fortified stockades, ". . . successive lines of tree-trunks, planted firmly in the ground and laced together with creepers."[31] These defended obstacles forced British columns to deploy and attack. The Burmese would then float away; the British would have to re-form and finally resume their march.

By such methods, Bundoola more than held his own, but in 1825 he foolishly accepted battle and was killed. At this time, Campbell's once-splendid force *numbered thirteen hundred men fit for duty*. With Bundoola out of the way, however, much of the starch disappeared from Burmese resistance. Once reinforcements arrived, Campbell pushed four hundred miles up the Irrawaddy and, in a final set-piece battle, ended the war in his favor.

Native willingness to stand and fight and even to charge invading forces resulted in hundreds of colonial battles in which firepower and disciplined tactics generally proved superior. The colonizing process continued difficult, however. In Burma, Campbell's original regiments had been practically wiped out, with ". . . six out of every seven men engaged becoming casualties, mainly through sickness."[32] In subjugating Madagascar, the French suffered forty-two hundred deaths in only

31. Cole, op. cit.
32. Ibid.

ten months, the result of trying to construct a road through pestilential terrain rather than resistance offered by the Hovas.

Commanders had to remain constantly alert for tactical tricks, invariably some form of ambush that had to be matched by tactical modifications. In Africa, in 1834, Colonel Harry Smith, a Peninsular veteran, formed fast-moving mounted columns to fight the Kaffirs with tactics based on mobility and surprise. In New Zealand, in 1845, the British under Captain George Grey came up against Maori defenses not unlike those Campbell had encountered in Burma. The Maori fortified stockade, called a *pa,* was built sufficiently well to withstand field-artillery fire, and its defenders were quite well sheltered in pits. When a *pa* began to give way, the Maoris retired. Grey beat this system by bringing up heavy artillery and by outflanking the positions, and, when these tactics brought victory, he converted it to peace, if only temporary, by just, and even compassionate, terms.

Until the enemy could be brought to fight, this type of campaign called for extreme patience and tactical imagination. Sometimes the combination of terrain, disease, and enemy cunning proved too formidable even for regular forces, particularly if they were inexperienced and limited in number. In North America, in 1835, a Seminole Indian ambush of Captain Dade's army column in Florida opened a six-year guerrilla campaign that heavily taxed slim army-navy-marine resources. As Professor Weigley has pointed out, the Army at the time

> . . . was not much better prepared for guerrilla warfare against the Seminoles in Florida than Napoleon's soldiers had been for the guerrillas of Spain. This was true despite experience in fighting forest Indians and the irregular campaigns that Americans themselves had sometimes waged during the Revolution. A historical pattern was beginning to work itself out: occasionally the American Army has had to wage a guerrilla war, but guerrilla warfare is so incongruous to the natural methods and habits of a stable and well-to-do society that the American Army has tended to regard it as abnormal and to forget about it whenever possible.

At first, various generals tried unsuccessfully to bring the Seminoles to battle. Quartermaster General Thomas Jesup grew so frustrated that he resorted to an ugly expedient used two thousand years earlier by the Romans in Spain: He brought Seminole chieftain Osceola to council under a flag of truce and then imprisoned him, an act which ". . . outraged public opinion and Congress, and the effect on the Seminoles seems to have been mainly to infuriate them and stimulate their resistance." Colonel Zachary Taylor fared better. After beating the Indians in a pitched battle, he began a pacification program:

> . . . he divided the entire disaffected region into districts twenty miles square, proposed to establish a stockade and a garrison in each district, and commissioned each district commandant to comb his district on alternate days.

Before this had a chance to work, a disagreement caused Taylor to ask for relief. His successor, Colonel William J. Worth, indulged a punitive campaign, burning crops and dwellings, which he sustained straight through 1841:

> . . . The cost to Worth's own men in fever and dysentery was high, but the method succeeded. The Indians were broken into small bands that barely subsisted, and concerted resistance to United States authority came to an end.[33]

Even where force of arms told and treaties were signed, the pacification process continued. Throughout the century, dissident tribes and nations continued to revolt in Africa, India, and Burma, just as Indian tribes continued to rise in the western part of North America.

But these isolated efforts were increasingly doomed, for, where the native found it difficult if not impossible to repair losses in men and material while maintaining tribal cohesion sufficient to wage war, the Industrial Revolution was constantly increasing the capability of colonizing powers to fight prolonged campaigns. Not only did growing populations furnish manpower necessary to sustain colonial wars, particularly when nations refrained from fighting each other at home, but such technological improvements as the percussion cap and more accurate artillery greatly enhanced the striking power of expeditionary forces against native irregulars.

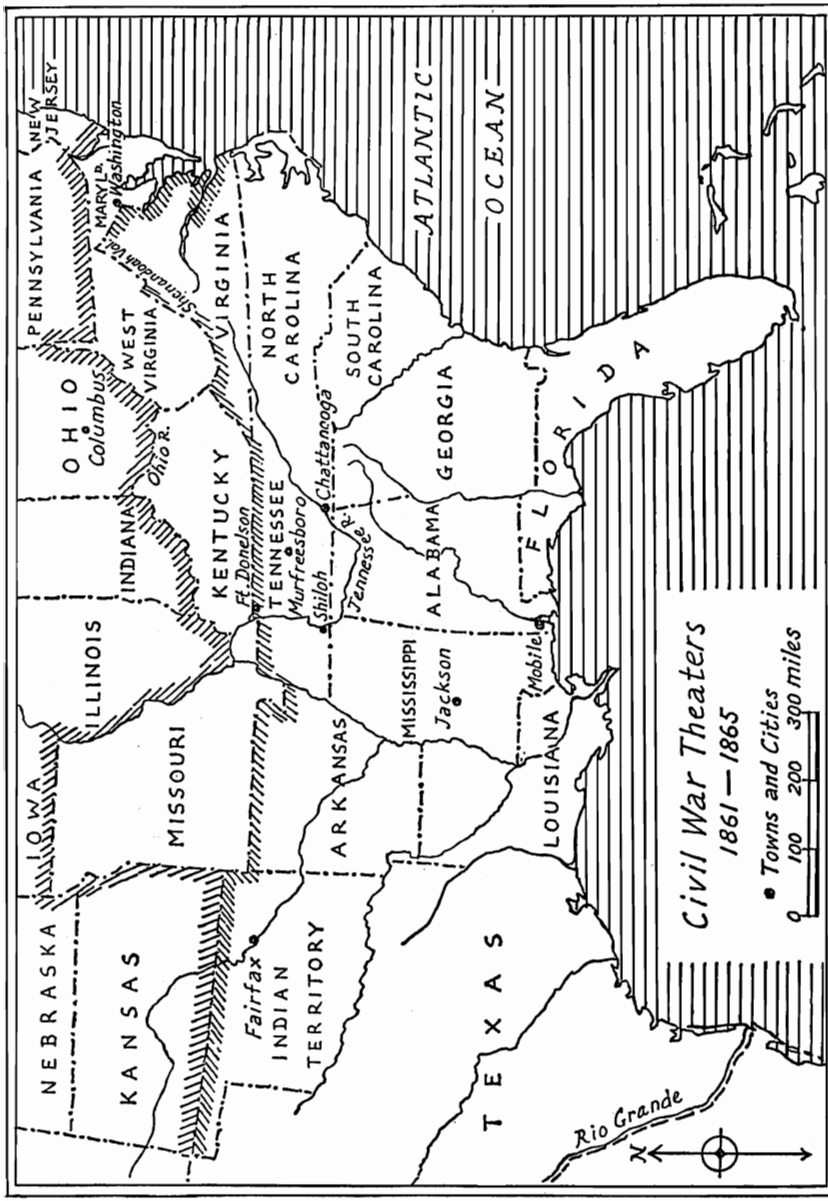
These new weapons scarcely eliminated the guerrilla. By adding weight to war already heavy, they eventually were going to ease his task. If the percussion cap reduced rifle misfires from 40 per cent to 4 per cent, and if the breech-loading rifled artillery piece increased rate and accuracy of fire, they also demanded far more ammunition, which meant increasingly large and vulnerable logistic "tails." If improved agricultural and industrial production could support larger armies fighting in diverse theaters of war, these still had to be moved, controlled and supplied by the railroad and telegraph, which were particularly vulnerable to enemy action.

The American Civil War displayed to the world the awesome influence of technology on war, particularly the killing power of rifle and cannon in defense, but it also produced some lively examples of army vulnerability to partisan warfare.

From the beginning, the war featured definite guerrilla overtones—not unnaturally, since the South was numerically inferior and since the war quickly spread to diverse areas, some highly favorable to guerrilla tactics. Moreover, by environment and temperament, the Southerner naturally inclined to irregular war.

This showed even on the battlefield, where the Confederate soldier's highly individualistic comportment contrasted strongly to formal Union

33. Weigley, op. cit.



ranks. The Confederate, undisciplined but intensely enthusiastic, fought more as an independent skirmisher. As Fuller noted ". . . the Federal soldier was semi-regular and the Confederate semi-guerrilla." The South wisely exploited this capability by allowing such capable if flamboyant

leaders as Forrest, Morgan and Mosby to raise bands of cavalry that operated on the flanks and in the rear of enemy armies—operations invariably aided by local sympathizers.

Morgan and Forrest fought the early part of the war as irregulars attached to General Bragg's army. John Morgan had organized the first band. He was a Confederate officer, a Kentuckian ". . . with a beautiful suit of hair" and an imagination too extensive even for the extensive fields of guerrilla war. Nathan Bedford Forrest, a volunteer who had raised and equipped his own cavalry troop, was a particularly romantic figure, well over six feet tall but very fit, handsome, with penetrating blue eyes and sweeping cavalry mustaches, always incisive, generally impulsive, and occasionally ruthless. His manners at times were charming, but by the end of the war he was said to have killed thirty-two enemy with his own hands; northern generals certainly wanted to kill him, but they nonetheless respected him, and, in the South, Johnston called him the greatest general of the war. Asked the secret of his tactical wizardry, Forrest replied, "I git there fustest with the mostest." What he lacked in grammar, he made up for with charisma. In 1862, when his brigade was trapped in Fort Donelson by Grant's infantry, he snorted at the post commander's suggestion of surrender and instead led his people in a night escape across a freezing river. That spring with perhaps fifteen hundred troopers, he was ready along with Morgan's twenty-five hundred to do Bragg's bidding.

After defeat at Shiloh, Bragg was falling back slowly before Halleck's heavy Army of the Mississippi and Buell's neighboring Army of the Cumberland. Bragg was trying to hold Halleck with the shell of his army while moving its body to Mobile and thence to Chattanooga, from where he could strike into Kentucky. Halleck already was moving slowly—to supply the bulky armies, he was building his own railroad from Columbus. To hinder him further, Bragg now sent Morgan and Forrest on end runs around the northern flanks.

These hard-riding bands fanned across Kentucky and Tennessee. This was the rebel West of the war, and the very ground seethed with hatred of intruding Federals. Earlier, Sherman had been asked to command the Army of the Cumberland, but he was also asked how many men he would require to pacify the area. William Tecumseh Sherman was a realist: "Two hundred thousand," he replied—he not only failed to get the job, but his pessimism caused him to be suspected of treason![34]

And now Morgan and Forrest came to plow the ground of discontent. They found local partisans galore—partisans ready to join their bands, partisans to scout and report enemy dispositions, partisans to

34. Fletcher Pratt, *A Short History of the Civil War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1948).

help them fall on isolated garrisons, burn ammunition and stores, capture prisoners, cut railroad and telegraph lines—in general, make life a festering hell for the confused Northerners.

Forrest's raid culminated in a splendid *coup de guerre,* the capture of Crittenden's reinforced brigade at Murfreesboro, a gigantic bluff in view of Forrest's meager force, but one that worked and allowed him to destroy half a million dollars' worth of Federal supplies as well.

Morgan also prospered. In turning Union defenses upside down, he suffered a hundred casualties but took over a thousand prisoners and, by brisk recruiting among partisans, enlarged his band from nine hundred to two thousand. Grant, who had replaced Halleck, had to pull infantry from his line to serve as railroad guards. Such was the manpower drain that he asked to abandon the railroad, but Halleck, now in Washington, disapproved this. His progress became snaillike; Bragg beat him and Buell to Chattanooga, and the war went on.

Forrest continued screening Bragg's flanks and striking at opportune targets. In December, he bailed Bragg out again by hitting Grant's lines of communication between Jackson and Columbus. After knocking out seven hundred Union cavalry, ". . . he started along the railroad, eating up the line and the small posts that protected it as a robin eats a worm. His flank-guards roamed fearlessly through the countryside, the telegraph wires went down everywhere and Union regiments wandered helplessly in a land of no information, searching for him while he made his way back to the Tennessee [River], the flatboat and eventually to the flanks of Bragg's command. Grant's supply line was ruined, it would take months to rebuild it and for more than a week he had not even telegraphic communication with the north."[35]

In the spring of 1863, Bragg sent Morgan on another raid to throw the Army of the Cumberland off balance. Morgan performed brilliantly, burning, destroying, capturing prisoners, tapping telegraph wires to send false orders to Union commanders, tearing down wires, eluding regiments and divisions sent to get him. So successful were his operations that he disobeyed orders and crossed the Ohio River to fight in Indiana and Ohio. His was a fantastic effort, altogether covering over a thousand miles in twenty-four days. But, as Federal forces and local militias turned out, his casualties grew heavy, his men and mounts tired, and finally he surrendered with the remnants of his band.[36]

A third Confederate officer, a small and wiry man named John Mosby, was more fortunate. Serving under Jeb Stuart as a captain, Mosby took twenty-nine volunteer troopers through enemy lines to General Stoughton's headquarters, north of Fairfax. With incredible audac-

35. Ibid.

36. He later escaped from a prison camp but was killed leading a cavalry charge at Knoxville.

ity, he personally penetrated the general's headquarters, reached his bedroom, awakened him, and told him he was prisoner. To eliminate argument, he added, "Stuart's cavalry are in possession of the place [which in a sense was true] and Stonewall Jackson holds Centreville [not true]." The ensuing dialogue remains an all-time classic in the department of captured West Pointers:

STOUGHTON: "Is [General] Fitzhugh Lee here?"
MOSBY: "Yes."
STOUGHTON: "Then take me to him. We were classmates."

(This order may explain President Lincoln's remark upon being told of the capture of Stoughton and a number of horses: "Well, there won't be any difficulty in making another general, but how am I to replace those horses?"[37])

Based in the Shenandoah Valley and supported by partisans, Mosby continued his whirlwind raids to increasing Federal fury. As opposed to Forrest and Morgan, he kept his band small, but still inflicted enormous damage. In 1864, when Early burned Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, Grant found his excuse to scorch Mosby from the valley; after gaining Lincoln's approval, he ordered two corps to the task, and he told Sheridan: ". . . If you can possibly spare a division of cavalry, send them through Loudoun County to destroy and carry off the crops, animals, negroes, and all men under fifty years of age capable of bearing arms. In this way you will get rid of many of Mosby's men. . . . Give the enemy no rest. Do all the damage to railroads and crops you can. Carry off stock of all descriptions, and negroes, so as to prevent further planting. If the war is to last another year, we want the Shenandoah Valley to remain a barren waste."[38] Although Sheridan promised to ". . . leave them nothing but their eyes to weep with," he still did not capture Mosby, now a colonel with a considerable price on his head.

Passions ran high in this war, the inevitable result of total war encompassing a considerable portion of a great nation. But guerrilla warfare evoked a special and deadly kind of anger. Henderson wrote in his splendid work *Stonewall Jackson* that as early as 1862 Pope ordered that in Virginia ". . . the troops should subsist upon the country, and that the people should be held responsible for all damage done to roads, railways, and telegraphs by guerrillas."[39] When later pillaging and rape brought increased resistance, Pope ordered that every Virginian in Union-held areas must take an oath of allegiance. One of his generals, the German Von Steinwehr, arrested five prominent citizens as hostages ". . . to suffer death in the event of any soldiers being shot by bushwhackers." The Confederate Government replied ". . . by declaring

37. Standing, op. cit.
38. Ibid.
39. G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (London: Longmans, Green, 1961).

that Pope and his officers were not entitled to be considered as soldiers. If captured they were to be imprisoned so long as their orders remained unrepealed; and in the event of any unarmed Confederate citizens being tried and shot, an equal number of Federal prisoners were to be hanged. . . ."[40]

Sherman later wrote in a report to Washington, ". . . Forrest is the devil. There will never be peace in Tennessee until Forrest is dead."[41] Morgan and his band, when captured, in the spring of 1863 were treated harshly, ". . . like felons rather than prisoners of war."[42] At war's end, northern officials talked of arresting Forrest as a war criminal. Sherman's march through Georgia was as much an act of passion as one of necessity: a giant "search-and-destroy" operation that insured the hatred of those searched and destroyed.

Union treatment of guerrillas seems to have been based on Old Testament thinking. Guerrilla prisoners were summarily executed in Grant's command, and probably no Union commander was entirely guiltless in this respect. One of them, General Paine, at wits' end in western Kentucky, actually published this proclamation: "I shall shoot every guerrilla taken in my district, and if your southern brethren retaliate by shooting a Federal soldier, I will walk out five of your rich bankers, and cotton men, and make you kneel down and shoot them. I will do it, so help me God."[43]

40. Ibid.
41. Standing, op. cit.
42. Ibid.
43. Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (London: Hulton, 1959).

Chapter 12

The American army's preference for orthodox warfare • Brussels conference of 1874 • Indian wars in America • General Custer's disaster • Upton's mission to Europe • Influence of Prussian militarism on the American army • Alfred Mahan and American expansionism • Guerrilla wars in Cuba • General Weyler's tactics • McKinley and American intervention

GUERRILLA OPERATIONS in the American Civil War, though striking, were also limited. Raids by irregular bands of horsemen tearing up railroad tracks and cutting telegraph wires did not decide the war. The decision derived from elaborate strategies, from naval blockades and mass movement of large armies, from conventional if changing battlefield tactics, from big battles and enormous casualties.

A professional officer, John Bigelow, may have treated Sherman's Civil War tactics in his textbook *Principles of Strategy*,[1] but military students continued to concentrate on the battles of Shiloh and Gettysburg and Spotsylvania and Fredericksburg in preference to the spectacular raids of Morgan and Forrest and Mosby, which the orthodox officer held as freakish manifestations in a side show of war.

Had the North lost the war, its conventional outlook might have al-

1. John Bigelow, *Principles of Strategy* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1894).

tered; but, since it won, its principals regarded the irregular aspects as unseemly if not obscene. Other powers understood and agreed. In 1874, an international conference in Brussels, solemn in its stupidity and sounding awesomely like Alice's friend the Queen, announced to the wonderland world that guerrillas in order to be recognized as lawful belligerents must answer to a specific commander, wear a distinctive badge, carry arms openly and conform in operations to the laws and customs of war.[2]

While dark-suited diplomats, paunches suitably adorned with heavy gold watch chains, so pondered and decreed, a portion of the American army was fighting rudely clothed Indians who neither could, nor had any wish to, understand diplomatic proceedings in Brussels. These tribes, diverse in location, numbers and combat capability, knew only that their way of life was yielding with each army stockade raised, with each spike pounded into the Union Pacific railroad track, with each white homestead built and ground broken. They protested by force of arms whenever and wherever possible. From 1865 to 1898, the army fought the amazing number of 943 actions against Indians. This military record should have produced a splendid breed of professionals adept in irregular warfare.

And it did.

But on a very small scale and in a sharply circumscribed tactical specialty.

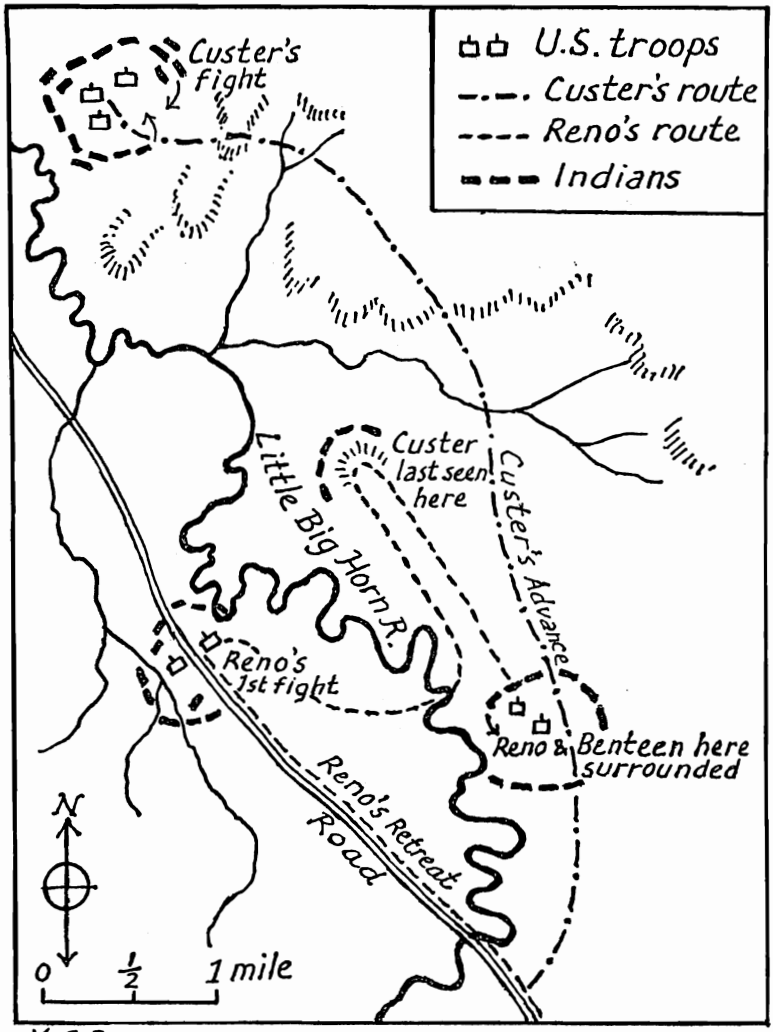
The Civil War army, of over a million men, soon fell to some forty thousand, rose briefly to fifty-seven thousand during Reconstruction, then sank to around twenty-seven thousand, where it remained until the Spanish-American war.[3] Three major territorial areas administering 255 military posts claimed this small force. One of them, the Department of the Missouri, consisted of an expanding line of rude stockades supporting a cavalry troop or two in addition to small infantry garrisons. The Midwest and West still resound with their names: Fort Dodge, Fort Kearney, Fort Carson, Fort Reno—these and others a cumulative glove covering the fist of continental expansion.

But an awkward glove for a very big fist. The tactical problems for these troops in some ways paralleled those faced by other colonizing powers. Protesting Indian tribes rarely acted in concert, and tended to avoid set-piece battles except on their own terms. They preferred guerrilla tactics, an ambush or a hit-and-run raid, usually hideous affairs in which bow and arrow vied with repeating rifle (supplied along with whiskey by traders and renegades) to produce carnage cruelly topped by tomahawk and scalping knife giving vent to primitive frustrations.

Small in numbers, these war bands moved fast, struck hard, and dis-

2. R. B. Asprey, "Guerrilla Warfare." In Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1969, Vol. 10.

3. Weigley, op. cit.



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appeared. Little pattern existed in either their strategy or their tactics. Successful countertactics hinged on intelligence and mobility. To supply the former, the army used friendly Indians; to provide mobility, it depended on horses. Troopers enjoyed the advantage of disciplined fire and movement. They suffered from lack of numbers; from the rugged terrain and vast spaces, which usually precluded an artillery train; and from communication difficulties with other posts, which prevented coordinated action.

As Marshal Bugeaud had discovered in Algeria, the lighter the column the better—but this could be abused, particularly where the commander lacked intelligence. The classic example of how not to fight the Indians occurred in the spring of 1876 during Sheridan's campaign against the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes. Sitting Bull's force was thought to be in the Little Missouri area, and Crazy Horse was somewhere in the Powder River area in Wyoming. General Terry was sent to smoke them out and defeat them. His cavalry consisted of two columns, one commanded by General Crook, one by General Custer. These commanders were to operate in extremely rugged terrain familiar neither to themselves nor to their troopers.

The first warning came in March, when Crazy Horse jumped and badly hurt Crook's force. In June, scouts reported Sitting Bull in the Yellowstone country, somewhere in the valley of the Little Big Horn. Terry now sent Custer's 7th United States Cavalry, a regiment of some seven hundred troopers, into this virtually unknown country against an enemy of unknown strength. Upon approaching Sitting Bull's home grounds, Custer compounded Terry's error by splitting his regiment into a strong advance guard under Major Reno, who was to "charge the village" while Custer's force worked through the hills. Reno ran into an ambush and was badly hurt but managed to survive until Terry's main force arrived. Custer's command, 265 men, was surrounded and slaughtered. The relief force saw their scalped comrades, charged forth in fury —and found space.[4]

Such defeats were rare. The press of civilization, of people and the railroad, increasingly pushed the Indian into barren country, which he would finally forsake for the reservation. Technology might not have given the army superior firepower, but it did offer the means to campaign the year around. As Weigley notes, ". . . thus supported, the Army again and again won its most decisive victories in the winter. Then George Custer won the battle of the Washita; then George Crook and Nelson Miles crushed Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse; then Chief Joseph [of the Nez Percé] vowed to Howard and Miles to fight no more forever."[5] Unlike the European process, which involved military superiority, commercial exploitation and ultimately political failure, the American process depended on military superiority and tribal genocide. In short, the Europeans milched the conquered, the Americans tried to eliminate them.

The Indian wars form a fascinating chapter in American history. They

4. Ibid.; see also Callwell, op. cit., who cited this campaign in his chapter on division of force. Although he held that such division was often necessary in small wars, and practically essential in guerrilla wars, he nonetheless cautioned the commander to be careful when operating independently with limited force and with inadequate knowledge of enemy and terrain.

5. Weigley, op. cit.

also provide splendid examples of minor tactics. If these primarily were *cavalry* tactics, they nonetheless could have been codified and expanded into a significant doctrine that might have altered the growing American preference for European-style warfare.

This may have been in Sherman's mind. The top army commander, at that time called the Commanding General, William Tecumseh Sherman, reigned from 1869 to 1883. Formerly in command of the Division of Missouri, Sherman retained interest in western fighting and, in the mid-seventies, sent a three-man commission to study British colonial campaigns. The prime mover of this body, which traveled first to Asia and India, then to Europe, was a Sherman protégé, a much decorated Civil War veteran named Emory Upton.

A humorless pedant, General Upton already had wrestled with the challenge to orthodoxy posed by technology, specifically the repeating rifle and breech-loading artillery: ". . . a systematic search for means to escape tactical impasse."[6] His new tactics, adopted by the army in 1867, called for a build-up of the skirmish line by fire and movement. This tactical trend had begun a century earlier with the development of Jäger battalions in Europe and light-infantry regiments in the American revolution. It had advanced in the Napoleonic wars—Clausewitz and Jomini both concentrated on the problem—and in the American Civil War. Today's tactics are still based on this notion, which has never totally answered the ascendancy of the defense.

Colonial warfare in Asia did not much impress the orthodox, infantry-oriented Upton, who infinitely preferred European warfare. This was the day of emergent Prussian militarism. Prussia's dramatic victories of 1864, 1866 and 1870–71 signaled a battlefield of breech-loading rifles and artillery, large and carefully organized conscript armies, meticulously planned railway nets and mobilization schedules—all arranged by an omnipotent general staff.

The German system cast a profound influence on Upton. His report, "The Armies of Asia and Europe," recommended ". . . that the United States adopt a modified form of the German cadre army."[7]

Some of Upton's contemporaries already were influenced by Clausewitz, whose massive *On War* was published in English in 1873. Prussian militarism seemed a logical and even enviable extension to Clausewitzian doctrine, a thought pursued by Upton in another work, *The Military Policy of the United States*. This posthumously published work called for war by superior numbers and armament, or weight rather than mobility and its natural corollary, deception. To Upton and his followers, and they were many and impressive, the military road ahead was plain to behold.

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

It was not so plain to either the American people or their Congressional representatives, who held the purse strings. Army budgets remained as penurious after Upton's death as before. When purse strings finally loosened, it was for a reason remote from Upton's thinking, and one he probably would not have welcomed.

The conquest of the American continent was still continuing when a navy captain fatefully influenced a small but powerful group of Americans already inclined toward expansionist thinking. This was Alfred T. Mahan, who in 1890 published a work called *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*.[8]

In this and subsequent works, Mahan argued that Britain's world-power status rested on naval supremacy, by which she controlled the balance of power on the land mass of Eurasia. To complement this strategy, America must continue her present construction of a powerful and modern battle fleet capable of controlling North American waters. Such a fleet would need forward bases, coaling stations, and a supply fleet, all of which called for the co-operation and possible acquisition of certain foreign territories. The effort, besides assuring America her due place among the world's great powers, would pay moral, religious, and economic dividends.[9]

By a spate of magazine articles published during the next seven years, Mahan attempted to convince the reading public that it could not sleep easily until the country had forged Cuba, the Isthmus of Panama (soon to be pierced by a canal), and Hawaii ". . . in a single system vital to American security."[10]

These strategic arguments for limited imperialism impressed a number of important officers, such as George Dewey, and civil officials and politicians, such as Benjamin Tracy, Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt, who each accepted Mahan's theories and influenced, in turn, other important government voices.

But Mahan's arguments impressed other influential circles: American businessmen did not object to the idea of new foreign markets and of competing in Asia and Africa with European powers, though most of them wanted nothing to do with American colonies as such. Men of good works, ministers and missionaries, spoke of the moral and religious responsibility of the strong toward the weak—the old "white man's

8. A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1900); see also *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1783–1812* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1892), 2 vols.; *Sea Power in Its Relations to the War of 1812* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1905), 2 vols.

9. R. W. Leopold, *The Growth of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); see also W. W. Rostow, *The United States in the World Arena* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

10. Leopold, op. cit.

burden" argument. A favorable emotional climate also existed. The glory of nation building had worn thin. Men were bored, frustrated by the economic depression of 1893; they wanted activity, and a foreign excursion did not seem repugnant.

None of these factors alone would have pushed America into an imperialist phase, anyway, beyond the acquisition of Caribbean and Hawaiian bases. But, in 1895, the Cuban insurrection began to form a powerful catalyst.

When the insurrection broke out, the Cleveland administration was having difficulties with England in Venezuela, and Cleveland favored a hands-off policy. But as fighting continued and was dramatically reported by a sensationalist press, public opinion began to swing in favor of the rebels.

The newly elected McKinley at first ignored increasing pressure for intervention. In his inaugural address, he said: ". . . We want no wars of conquest; we must avoid the temptation of territorial aggression."[11]

Unfortunately, McKinley's words rarely impressed the nation's policy makers. The historian S. E. Morison later described McKinley as "a kindly soul in a spineless body."[12] His attempts to cool the situation made little progress. The insurgents, if not winning, were at least holding their own; convinced of eventual American intervention, they were demanding total independence, which the Spanish refused to consider.

The Spanish had only themselves to blame for the contretemps. From time to time, powerful American voices had stressed Cuba's proximity to the United States and called for annexation. Simultaneously, dissident groups backed by wealthy exiles in New York had formed in Cuba to protest against continued Spanish rule. Finally, Madrid should have been warned by the war of 1868, a ten-year insurrection put down only with difficulty and with attendant frowns of disapproval from the Grant and Hayes administrations.

The fighting began when eastern planters rose under Carlos Manuel de Céspedes. Himself a plantation owner, Céspedes freed his slaves and raised the standard of revolt. His force counted less than one hundred fifty irregulars, but within a month had grown to some twelve thousand, who controlled large areas of Oriente province. The Spanish continued to govern principal towns, and, early in 1869, a Spanish force inflicted a severe defeat on guerrillas outside Bayamo, causing perhaps two thousand casualties.[13]

11. Ibid.
12. S. E. Morison, *The Oxford History of the United States 1783–1917* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), Vol. 2 of 3 vols.
13. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). I have relied largely on this comprehensive work in the following brief accounts of the 1865 and 1895 insurrections.

Spanish tactics combined old with new. Although the captain-general, Domingo Dulce, called for moderation, his commanders relied heavily on punitive measures. In the spring of 1869, General Valmaseda ordered

> . . . that in the eastern province all males over fifteen found away from home without cause would be shot. All women and children not living in their houses were to be concentrated in fortified towns. All houses were either to carry a white flag or be burned down (unless occupied by Spanish troops).[14]

Subsequent commanders relied on similar edicts, the guerrillas replied in kind, violence and savagery ruled. To contain the Cubans in the East, the Spanish built a thirty-mile fortified ditch across the narrow neck in Oriente province. Although a guerrilla force breached this on one occasion, it allowed the Spanish a certain control by concentration of force and helped in maintaining communications with town garrisons in Oriente.

Rebel forces raised considerable havoc so long as they used guerrilla tactics, a lesson driven home by Céspedes' nearly disastrous defeat at Bayamo. Their chief disadvantage stemmed from divided counsels: the slave question caused considerable dissension, and leaders also disagreed on whether to attack rich plantations in the West. Arms were in short supply, and although encouraging voices sounded from the United States, the administration made no move to intervene. In time, Spanish weight told. A good many rebel leaders fell or were captured; others grew discouraged. Spanish columns isolated remaining units, which submitted one by one.

The Spanish could scarcely claim victory. The prolonged campaign fought by an army that grew to about seventy thousand men drained countless troop reinforcements from the mother country at a politically awkward time. Spanish deaths amounted to an estimated two hundred and eight thousand, Cuban deaths perhaps fifty thousand. The war cost $300 million, an immense sum, which the Spanish added to the Cuban debt, thus deepening resentment.[15]

The war won Spain only postponement. Perhaps her rule could have survived had she put through reforms leading toward autonomy. But political anarchy at home prevented viable policy abroad. And the war had helped form forces of nationalism that were to explode within a few years. If it claimed the lives of many leaders, it also trained other leaders and gave the people heroes: Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Antonio and José Maceo, Calixto García, José Gómez, Eduardo Machado, Tomás Estrada Palma—names perhaps unfamiliar to North American readers, but names no less glorious for that, and glorious not only to

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

Cubans but to many other Latin Americans, names that thenceforth tripped frequently from persuasive nationalist tongues.

One of the most persuasive belonged to José Martí, founder, in 1892, of the Cuban Revolutionary Party.[16] Scholar and romanticist, lawyer and poet, Martí worked hard to bring on the 1895 insurrection. Killed a few weeks after its outbreak—he was forty-two years old—he in turn became a legendary hero to the next two generations, who marked well his sobering admonition: ". . . Anyone is a criminal who promotes an avoidable war; and so is he who does not promote an inevitable civil war."

The war of 1895 began in spring of that year with rebel landings from Costa Rica and Santo Domingo. The Spanish doubled their forces to thirty-two thousand, commanded by the hero of Morocco, General Martínez Campos. By June, the Spanish build-up had reached over fifty thousand, a force opposed by six to eight thousand rebels operating mainly in Oriente province, where ". . . all classes openly or secretly backed the rebellion—even sometimes members of the Civil Guard."[17]

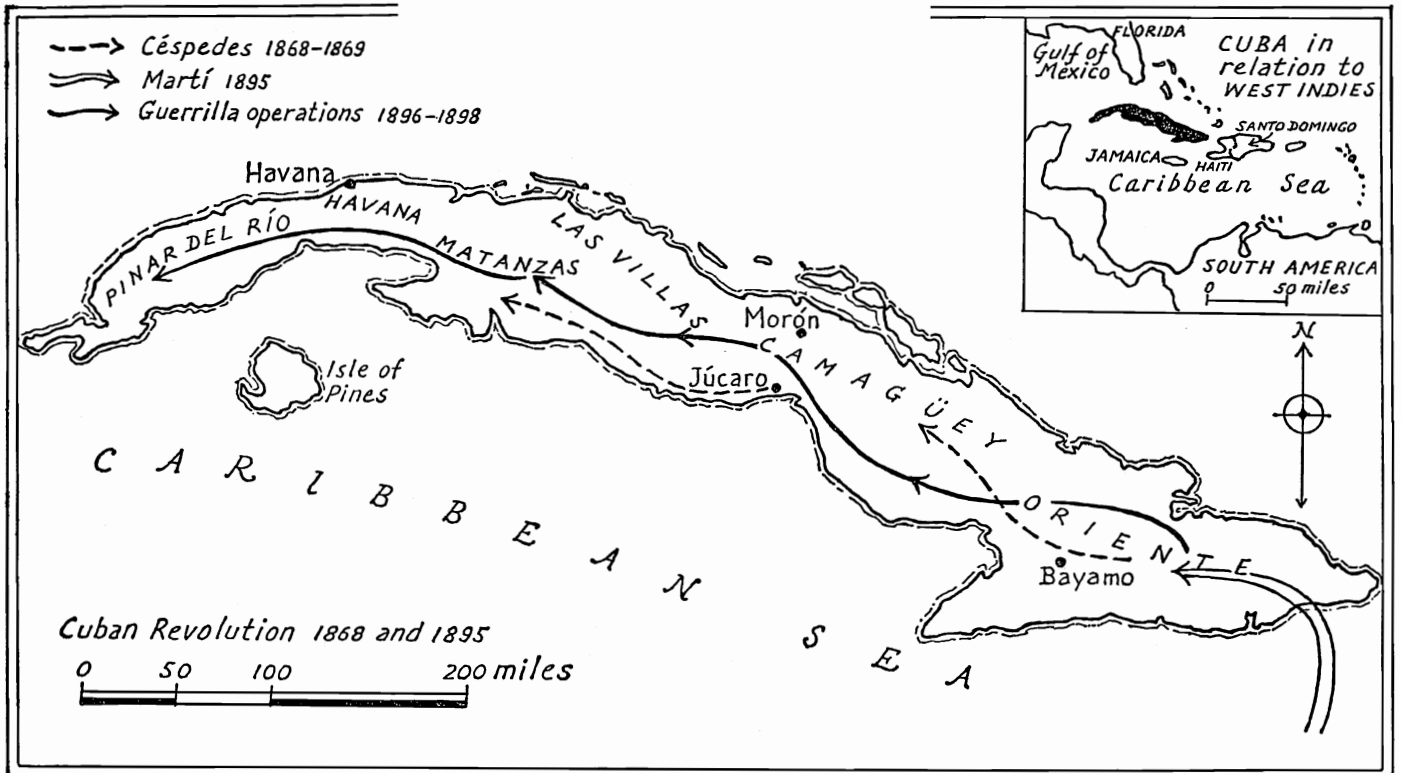
Martínez Campos accurately defined the problem to his prime minister in the same month: Spain was faced with a rebellion of major proportions. Ruthless measures were called for; he himself did not feel able to implement them and recommended General Weyler for the job. He warned, however:

> . . . Even if we win in the field and suppress the rebels, since the country wishes to have neither an amnesty for our enemies nor an extermination of them, my loyal and sincere opinion is that, with reforms or without reforms, before twelve years we shall have another war.[18]

Martínez Campos retained command until early in 1896. The rebels meanwhile consolidated control of much of Oriente province. As in the earlier rebellion, the Spanish continued to govern important towns; unlike in the earlier rebellion, forceful guerrilla leaders, Máximo Gómez and José Maceo, carried war to the western provinces:

> . . . Gómez and Maceo . . . with 500 infantry and over 1,000 cavalrymen, broke out of the old line of *trochas* from Júcaro to Morón, outmanoeuvring the Spaniards by sheer speed, working in many, often ill-coordinated bands, concentrating on the destruction of property, usually ordering the inhabitants out of their houses before they were burned and their possessions looted. The rebels rode onwards to a good tune, the *Himno Invasor* . . . the banners of liberty flying, living off the land, creating an inextinguishable legend.[19]

16. Manuel Urrutia Lleó, *Fidel Castro and Company, Inc.: Communist Tyranny in Cuba* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).
17. Thomas, op. cit.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.


Céspedes 1868–1869
Martí 1895
Guerrilla operations 1896–1898
Havana
HAVANA
PINAR DEL RÍO
MATANZAS
LAS VILLAS
Moron
CAMAGÜEY
Júcaro
ORIENTE
Bayamo
Isle of Pines
CARIBBEAN SEA
Cuban Revolution 1868 and 1895
0 50 100 200 miles
CUBA in relation to WEST INDIES
FLORIDA
Gulf of Mexico
SANTO DOMINGO
JAMAICA
HAITI
Caribbean Sea
SOUTH AMERICA
0 50 miles
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By the end of the year, Maceo was approaching the Havana area, while other guerrilla commanders controlled significant portions of the middle provinces. Young Winston Churchill, fighting as a volunteer with the Spanish army in Las Villas province, later wrote: ". . . The Cuban rebels give themselves the name of heroes and only are boastful and braggarts. . . . They neither fight bravely nor do they use their weapons effectively. . . . Their army, consisting to a large extent of coloured men, is an undisciplined rabble."[20]

When the undisciplined rabble continued to ravage the island, Martínez Campos resigned in favor of the more ruthless General Weyler:

> . . . Severe, single-minded and ruthless, he was intelligent and serious, responding not only to his orders but to the type of warfare which had already been imposed on him by his opponents. He had been Spanish military attaché in Washington during the American Civil War, and much admired Sherman. He was puritanical in private habits, being fully able to satisfy his hunger in the field with a lump of bread, a tin of sardines and a pitcher of wine. He habitually slept on the mattress of a private soldier. He never smoked nor took hard liquor. . . .[21]

When Weyler arrived, Maceo's guerrillas were tearing up the westernmost province while Gómez was holding Havana in virtual siege. Weyler's first dispatch outlined the pessimistic situation:

> . . . in the capital itself there were conspiracies . . . munitions of various types were in and out, and . . . all respect for authority had vanished. There was public muttering everywhere against Spain, everywhere criticism and complaint. . . . [Our] various columns, formed of isolated contingents from different corps and commanded by officers unknown to them, had no spirit and they were only fed irregularly. There was such anarchy that the officers, passing by one military post, would leave behind some men and pick up new ones. The troops had to cover an immense number of farms and villages . . . so that when one contingent was attacked by the enemy, it lacked any positive reinforcement and so was constrained to watch the canefields burning in front of them. Finally, the ease with which guerrillas and volunteer forces could be formed [on the Spanish side], granting ranks as Captain or Major to any who ask, produced . . . a great lack of unity in the command, many of them shortly afterwards giving up and passing over to the enemy with arms and ammunition. . . . And as in the headquarters there was inadequate intelligence about all this, it will be realized that the work awaiting me was hard and laborious.[22]

20. Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill* (London: William Heinemann, 1966), Vol. 1 of 2 vols. In an earlier dispatch to the *Saturday Review*, he wrote: ". . . The insurgents gain adherents continually. There is no doubt that they possess the sympathy of the entire population."
21. Thomas, op. cit.
22. Ibid.

An able general, Weyler quickly adapted to the tactical challenge. He began to divide the island into operational spheres—the first of a series of measures that would become only too familiar in future counterinsurgency campaigns. Like Scipio Africanus in Spain in 137 B.C., like Bugeaud in Algeria in 1836, Weyler attempted to regain tactical mobility by reorganizing cavalry and infantry and by eliminating remote outposts. He also recruited militias for town defense and organized units of Cuban counterguerrillas, ". . . these being often much more feared than the Spaniards by the rebels."[23] To deny rebels support and allow his columns unfettered maneuver, he herded thousands of Cubans into "fortified towns" and "military areas," which often proved little more than concentration camps. He ordered all the people of the eastern provinces to register, and he gave his area commanders emergency powers including that of summary execution.

These measures, invoked during 1896 and 1897, worked variously, but definitely helped to check guerrilla operations, particularly in the West. That they did not give Weyler "victory" is explained by several factors. Weyler's army, though well armed and fairly well organized, was not the best: its officers, in part, were venal and corrupt, its men illiterate and often uncaring. A British observer in Cuba at the time, Lieutenant Barnes of the 4th Hussars, later made a comprehensive and penetrating analysis of the Spanish failure. The main problem, Barnes noted, was

> . . . the intense hostility of the inhabitants. They could get no good information of the rebel movements, while the rebels were never in doubt about theirs. An insurgent was distinguished from the peaceful cultivator only by his badge which could be speedily removed, and by his rifle which was easily hidden. Hence the Government forces, whether in garrison or operating in the country, were closely surrounded by an impalpable circle of fierce enemies who murdered stragglers, intercepted messages, burned stores, and maintained a continual observation.[24]

In addition, poor roads hindered Spanish mobility, while smallpox, malaria and yellow fever ". . . filled the hospitals and drained the fighting units." But, as Barnes pointed out to his superiors,

> . . . all these are obstacles to success rather than causes of failure—these latter must be looked for in the tactics and conduct of the Spanish forces. There was a complete absence of any general plan. Columns moved about haphazard in the woods, fighting the enemy where they found them and returning with their wounded to the towns when they were weary of wandering. Their method of warfare was essentially defensive. They held great numbers of towns and villages with strong garrisons. They defended, or tried to defend, long lines of communication with a multitude of small block-

23. Ibid.
24. Callwell, op. cit.

houses. They tried to treat the rebels as though they were merely agrarian rioters and to subdue the revolt by quartering troops all over the country. The movement was on a scale far exceeding the scope of such remedies; it was a war, and this the Spanish Government would never recognize. Over all the petty incidents of guerrilla skirmishing, the frequent executions and the stern reprisals threw a darker shade.[25]

In time, Weyler corrected some of the tactical deficiencies, and his various measures succeeded in "compartmenting" operations with attendant gains such as the death of José Maceo in Pinar del Río. Nonetheless his dissatisfaction was evident in his orders of December 1896:

. . . I observe that the columns operating in Havana and Matanzas provinces, instead of camping in places or mountains frequented by the enemy, go nightly to the towns or mills in their zone to sleep. This has grave consequences for the operations, since it makes it easier for the enemy to know the route which the columns will take the next day, and also their number and morale. At the same time, the soldiers are more tired: . . . for these reasons, please arrange that all columns of both provinces, when setting out for operations, take with them three days' worth of rations and four of biscuits; with these, and with the cattle that abound in these provinces, it is easy to sustain the forces for six days in operations, camping on the mountains and at crossroads being able from the encampments to send picked troops swiftly for reconnaissance for four kilometres around, while the encampment is being prepared. In this way the enemy will be kept in a constant state of uneasiness. . . . My aim is that during my stay in Pinar del Río there should not remain a place or a mountain which will not have been crossed by the responsible column, while all really suspicious places will have been camped in.[26]

Spanish excesses disturbed the American public as much as rebel successes thrilled it. Such was the exaggerated and bellicose tone of the day's yellow press—mainly the Hearst, Dana, and Pulitzer papers fed in part by Estrada Palma's group in New York—that McKinley increasingly found it difficult to steer a neutral course.

Hope of a Spanish-Cuban solution meanwhile was growing increasingly dim. By early 1897, Weyler was reporting the western provinces pacified and rebels on the run in Las Villas. Although his *trochas* had impeded and in some cases broken rebel communications and although considerable quarrels were rending the rebel camp, the guerrillas were far from defeated, particularly in Oriente province. Spain had sent an estimated two hundred thousand soldiers to Cuba (of whom tens of thousands died, most from disease), the Philippines were draining more troops and money, and the climate of America was turning increas-

25. Ibid.
26. Thomas, op. cit.

ingly in favor of intervention. In the spring of 1897, a new government in Madrid tried to mollify Cuba's powerful neighbor by promising the Cubans autonomy (but not independence) and by recalling Weyler, now notorious as "the Butcher" because of the high mortality rate among the four hundred thousand hapless natives penned in concentration camps.[27]

These steps proved too little and too late. In fairness to more lurid press accounts, Spanish promises of reform were halfhearted, nor did the Madrid government respond favorably to McKinley's offer to purchase Cuba for $300 million. A case also existed for intervention on humanitarian grounds, and, by 1898, the humanitarian appeal had broadened in America. By 1898, the strategic, economic, moral, religious and emotional influences of a young and in some respects greedy nation had fused to form a powerful interventionist voice whose cry caused President McKinley to send a battleship, USS *Maine,* to Havana.

The dispatch of the *Maine* was not a bellicose act. When its sinking under circumstances still obscure led to war with Spain, General Upton's professional military Utopia was not even around the corner. The American army numbered around twenty-five thousand, its infantry and cavalry were reasonably well trained in minor tactics, it had adopted the excellent Krag-Jörgensen rifle; but its organization was appallingly bad, its artillery deficient, many of its senior officers were Civil War veterans. Professor Arthur Schlesinger (the elder) later wrote: ". . . Politics entered into the appointment of officers; and mismanagement, lack of plans, and general confusion interfered seriously with the mobilization, provisioning, and transport of troops."[28]

In April 1898, Congress authorized an increase in regular-army strength to nearly sixty-five thousand and also authorized calling up volunteer and state-militia units. By the end of the war, in August, army strength topped 270,000, twice the number desired by harassed army planners, who lacked camps, uniforms, weapons, and machinery to provide them.[29] Confusion prevailed at all levels, severe epidemics broke out, and the press did not help matters by pointing out raucously and consistently manifold errors that in some instances reached scandalous proportions. Despite such hindrances, General Shafter's expeditionary force finally landed in Cuba, Teddy Roosevelt scampered up San Juan Hill, the enormous but demoralized Spanish garrison surrendered, and the army settled down to a relatively quiet occupation.

Meanwhile, however, acting on secret and prearranged instructions earlier transmitted by Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roose-

27. Leopold, op. cit.
28. A. M. Schlesinger, *Political and Social History of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).
29. Morison, op. cit.

velt, Commodore Dewey had sailed his squadron of six warships secretly from Hong Kong. Early on May 1, he slipped into Manila Bay, sank the Spanish fleet, and besieged the city. To exploit his gains, he requested a landing force of five thousand men. Responding favorably, President McKinley ordered the War Department to furnish an expeditionary force that would complete ". . . the reduction of Spanish power in that quarter" and give ". . . order and security to the islands while in the possession of the United States. . . ."[30]

These orders were to open a new chapter in American arms—one undreamed of by General Emory Upton and his army disciples of the orthodox battlefield.

30. G. F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952).

Chapter 13

Spanish rule of the Philippines • Rizal and the 1896 insurrection • Aguinaldo's rise • Dewey's victory at Manila Bay • The American problem • General Merritt's expeditionary force • The American attitude • The Treaty of Paris • Outbreak of insurrection

THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS offered a slightly more complicated situation than Cuba. Toward the end of the century, this enormous archipelago supported a population of nearly 7 million. Spanish rule, particularly the "paternal authority" of friars, had enslaved natives for nearly four hundred years. The warlike Moros had challenged this dismal state of affairs since the beginning of the eighteenth century—sporadic revolts put down with almost unbelievable harshness.[1] Resistance spread in the nineteenth century, and, in 1896, a major revolt broke out, largely the work of Dr. José Rizal backed by a terrorist society, the Katipunan, or Patriots' League.

Rizal was almost unique in the islands: at thirty-five, he was traveled and educated, ". . . a poet, philosopher, surgeon, and an artist," and was the author of a popular protest novel, *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch

1. Rafael Altamura, *A History of Spain* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1949).

Me Not).[2] Rizal's revolt triggered a reign of terror under a new governor, General Polavieja, described by an English observer as ". . . an amazing personage, who has never won a battle and never failed to lose one."[3]

Polavieja's troops summarily executed Rizal and hundreds of his followers, but the Katipunan remained intact and revolt spread throughout Luzon. It was not pretty, but hatred never is. The Catholic Church, responsible for much of the misery, proved a particular target. In the village of Imus, ". . . thirteen friars fell into their [native] hands. One was killed by being gradually cut to pieces. Another was set afire, after being saturated with petroleum; still another was pierced through the length of his body by a bamboo split then doused in oil while alive and turned over a moderate fire."[4]

Isolated bestiality does not make a successful revolution. Polavieja's successor, General Primo de Rivera, soon exploited the rebels' willingness to fight pitched battles. Badly armed and with little formal military training, they invariably lost. The revolution could well have been doomed had not a natural leader come to the fore.

Don Emilio Aguinaldo was a Filipino Trotsky. The son of landowning parents in Cavite province, the twenty-nine-year-old rebel was a mixture of Chinese and Tagalog blood. He had studied law in Manila without gaining a degree; in a predominantly Catholic country, he was a Mason; he was said to have been mild and soft-spoken, yet, for years, he had exercised a charisma that placed him among the young leaders of the revolution.

In August 1896, he personally led a successful assault against the garrison in his home town. By October, ". . . he had become the accepted military commander of the revolution." Showing exceptional administrative ability, he organized a Central Revolutionary Committee and a Filipino Congress, which established a shadow government. In 1897, Aguinaldo was elected president and generalissimo. When a disgruntled associate began a splinter movement, Aguinaldo had him arrested, court-martialed, and shot.[5]

During the next year, the movement survived a series of vicissitudes that demonstrated the perfidy of the new Spanish governor, General Primo de Rivera, to Aguinaldo and the revolutionary junta. Rolling with the punches, Aguinaldo and his principal lieutenants fled to Hong Kong, where they received limited aid from the U. S. Navy (through Com-

2. Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother* (New York: Doubleday, 1961). I have relied heavily on this lively, detailed and very well written book in this and the following chapter.

3. H. B. Clarke, *Modern Spain 1815–1898* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1906).

4. Wolff, op. cit.

5. Ibid.

modore Dewey) and also from the U. S. State Department (through Consul Wildman).

After Dewey's victory at Manila Bay, in early May, the revolutionary junta returned to Luzon. By late spring of 1898, Aguinaldo and his military commander, General Luna, boasted an army of nearly thirty thousand. With the bulk of Spanish forces contained in Manila, and with Dewey's fleet in control of harbors and sea, the rebels proclaimed the Visayan Republic and published a declaration of independence.

Aguinaldo's words no doubt flowed from the heart, but his mind also was at work. He was already disturbed by what appeared to be America's contradictory attitude. Only the previous December, in a warm-up speech for war with Spain, President McKinley had said of Cuba: ". . . I speak not of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression." In Aguinaldo's mind, this principle would apply to the Philippines. But neither Dewey nor Wildman had seemed wildly enthusiastic about supporting the rebel movement, and they all but ignored the Filipino declaration of independence.

Aguinaldo was a realist, however. He needed American help: Dewey's fleet, troops for the assault of Manila, loans to get his government organized. Knowing that he was going to receive American help, whether or not solicited, he told his people by proclamation:

> . . . Compatriots! Divine Providence is about to place independence within our reach. . . . The Americans, not from mercenary motives, but for the sake of humanity and the lamentations of so many persecuted people, have considered it opportune to extend their protecting mantle to our beloved country. . . . At the present moment an American squadron is preparing to sail for the Philippines. . . . There where you see the American flag flying, assemble in numbers; they are our redeemers![6]

Redeemers or conquerors?

A large portion of the American populace no doubt regarded themselves as redeemers who would establish organized government, as in Cuba—and get out.

These were not the sentiments, however, of a strong and influential expansionist group who expanded Mahan's doctrines to fit the new situation—with Mahan's full concurrence, may it be said. With the annexation of Hawaii assured, they raised their sights to the Philippines, arguing that Filipinos could not govern themselves. If America were not to assume the task, then the inevitable anarchic vacuum would be filled either by Japan, particularly dangerous in view of recent victory over China, or by England, Germany, Russia, or France. America, too, needed overseas trade, and here was a splendid opportunity to anchor

6. Ibid.

in new territory—a base from which to nibble at the crumbling Chinese pie.

To some Americans, it seemed as if God were extending America's lease on manifest destiny; to others, a mystic element entered. Shortly before the outbreak of war, the Washington *Post* told its readers:

> . . . A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength . . . ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle. It means an Imperial policy, the Republic, renascent, taking her place with the armed nations.[7]

The executive instrument essential to planting the American flag in the Philippines, the American army's expeditionary force, was not the sharpest ever forged. Command went to Major General Wesley Merritt, a sixty-two-year-old seasoned campaigner: he had served as a young general with enormous distinction in the Civil War, a reputation enhanced by service in the Indian wars. Now heavy, with white, wavy hair and hard gray eyes, he was also something of a realist. Looking at his two regiments of regulars, the 14th and the 23rd Infantry, supported by a few artillery batteries, he complained in mid-May to President McKinley that such a force would prove insufficient ". . . when the work to be done consists of conquering a territory 7,000 miles from our base, defended by a regularly trained and acclimated army of from 10,000 to 25,000 men [the Spanish] and inhabited by 14 millions [sic] of people, the majority of whom will regard us with the intense hatred both of race and religion."[8]

Although Merritt's force eventually was fleshed out to eighty-five hundred with National Guard and volunteer units, these reinforcements had to be armed with the old Springfield .45 caliber rifle, a single-shot monster whose black powder puffed like a locomotive over the firer's head. Other essentials remained in short supply, nor were matters remedied upon arrival in the Philippines at Camp Dewey, a former peanut farm:

> . . . The heat was oppressive and rain kept falling. At times the trenches were filled with two feet of water, and soon the men's shoes were ruined. Their heavy khaki uniforms were a nuisance; they perspired constantly, the loss of body salts induced chronic fatigue. Prickly heat broke out, inflamed by scratching and rubbing. Within a week the first cases of dysentery, malaria, cholera and dengue fever showed up at sick call.[9]

7. S. E. Morison and H. S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), Vol. 2 of 2 vols.
8. Wolff, op. cit.
9. Ibid.

Merritt and his generals slowly overcame these initial difficulties. In August, Major General Elwell Otis arrived with reinforcements that nearly doubled American strength. Merritt meanwhile was moving his army alongside Filipino units for the cardboard assault of Manila, which fell in August.

This victory failed to repair deteriorating American-Filipino relations. Considering the state of the 1898 world, and particularly the Great Power concept, perhaps an amicable relationship was impossible. Strategic and economic arguments for outright annexation were strong, and Spanish efforts to send a relief force and the rude behavior of a German task force in Manila Bay reinforced them.

But overriding these arguments was a paternalism that must have brought bile to Aguinaldo's throat. Nowhere is this better expressed than in an early report of the Philippine Commission, a presidentially-appointed body headed by Jacob Schurman, which concluded:

> . . . lack of [Filipino] education and political experience, combined with their racial and linguistic diversities, disqualify them, in spite of their mental gifts and domestic virtues, to undertake the task of governing the archipelago at the present time. The most that can be expected of them is to cooperate with the Americans in the administration of general affairs . . . and to undertake, subject to American control or guidance (as may be found necessary), the administration of provincial and municipal affairs. . . .
>
> Should our power by any fatality be withdrawn, the commission believe that the government of the Philippines would speedily lapse into anarchy, which would excuse, if it did not necessitate, the intervention of other powers and the eventual division of the islands among them. Only through American occupation, therefore, is the idea of a free, self-governing, and united Philippines Commonwealth at all conceivable. And the indispensable need from the Filipino point of view of maintaining American sovereignty over the archipelago is recognized by all intelligent Filipinos and even by those insurgents who desire an American protectorate. The latter, it is true, would take the revenues and leave us the responsibilities. . . .[10]

The Commission's arguments had certain merits. Spanish rule had deprived most people of formal education. The Commission reported that Spanish regulations provided one male and one female teacher for each five thousand inhabitants—". . . this wretchedly inadequate provision was never carried out."

But the Commission, peering from Olympian heights of Western political behavior, failed to recognize either the volatility or the pride of these "backward" peoples, a volatility and pride dangerously compressed by four centuries of misrule. Spanish excesses had filled Filipino hearts

10. *Report of the Philippines Commission to the President* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1900).

with hatred. An officer of Dewey's squadron had earlier written home: ". . . But the more we knew the Filipino the more we got to know what hatred is. . . . Their hatred of the Spaniard was the accumulation of the hatred of their forefathers for generations, added to their own."[11]

Hatred is a nebulous emotion but is inextricably related to pride. In the eyes of most Westerners, pride and poverty are poles apart; and, all too often, we assume that a poor man *ipso facto* lacks pride, particularly if his skin is not white. The American soldier of 1898 proved true to this philosophy. An army major in an official report noted, ". . . almost without exception, soldiers and also many officers refer to the natives in their presence as 'niggers' and natives are beginning to understand what the word 'nigger' means."[12]

Top American officials, Dewey and Merritt and Otis, added to mounting antagonism by cavalier treatment of Aguinaldo and his officials, whose protests over the continuing arrival of American reinforcements were insolently brushed aside. As American presence mounted and American intentions became clear, tentacles of native ill feeling began to leave the Spanish corpse to quiver about the newcomers. Aguinaldo meanwhile emphasized Filipino intentions by convening a congress that, in September 1898, wrote a constitution for the new republic.

American officials remained unimpressed and successfully communicated their negative attitude to Washington and to influential portions of the American public. Imperialist feeling was now running high despite fulminations of the Anti-Imperialist League, whose members included some of the most respected men in the nation. To suggested alternatives, for example a protectorate role similar to that proclaimed for Cuba, or limited acquisition, say the island of Luzon alone, the expansionists turned a deaf ear.

In October, the American Government opened negotiations with Spain in Paris. Needless to say, neither Aguinaldo nor his representatives were invited to participate. In November, they learned that the Treaty of Paris granted the United States control of the Philippines, the Sulus, and Guam in return for a payment of $20 million to Spain.

Considerable soul-searching accompanied the ratification process, but the necessary Senate majority was won.[13] President McKinley, who before Dewey's victory confessed he ". . . could not have told where those

11. Wolff, op. cit.
12. Ibid.
13. Morison and Commager, op. cit. Senator Lodge called it ". . . the hardest fight I have ever known." The victory raised a storm of protest from liberal elements. Mark Twain's letter "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" charged ". . . McKinley with 'playing the European game' of imperialism, and suggested that Old Glory should now have 'the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross bones.'"

darned islands were within two thousand miles," bowed to the inevitable. As he later told a group of visiting clergymen:

. . . The truth is I didn't want the Philippines, and when they came to us, as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do with them. . . . I thought first we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands, perhaps, also. I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) That we could not turn them over to France [!] or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) That we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) That there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize [!] them, and by God's grace to do the best we could by them . . . and then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly. . . .[14]

McKinley awakened to a nightmare. The treaty, which struck Aguinaldo like a thunderbolt, only intensified Filipino aspirations to independence. To the leaders, it was now clear that war was imminent, war of a kind suggested by preliminary native operations: by rifles smuggled from Manila in coffins supposedly carrying the dead; by orders for secret attacks against American installations in Manila.

That winter, the cloud of ill feeling continued to swell. Soon it enveloped Manila and hung over the two armies, the one now facing the other. On February 4, 1899, an American sentry fired on and killed a Filipino soldier. Firing opened along the line. The Philippine Insurrection was on.

14. C. S. Olcott, *William McKinley* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), Vol. 2 of 2 vols.

Chapter 14

American victories in the Philippines • Otis' optimism • MacArthur's expedition • American reverses • Mr. Bass tells the truth • Enemy tactics • American countertactics • MacArthur's pacification program • Frederick Funston and the capture of Aguinaldo • Taft establishes civil rule • The Samar massacre • General "Roaring Jake" Smith: "I want no prisoners . . ." • General Bell's "solution" • Taft's countersolution • End of insurrection • The tally sheet

THE INSURRECTION should have ended quickly. But so should the rebellion of 1896, once the Spanish killed José Rizal and sent the native army to the hills. In 1899, the Americans incontestably won the first battle, a two-day orthodox infantry attack supported by naval gunfire. This action cost 59 American lives and 278 wounded; the insurgents lost from two to five thousand dead, their army fleeing to the north. Aguinaldo's guerrilla plans for Manila came to nought thanks to American army precautions. The New York *Times* informed its readers, ". . . It is not likely that Aguinaldo himself will exhibit much staying power. . . . It seems probable that after one or two collisions the insurgent army will break up."[1]

General Otis agreed. When a peace emissary arrived from Aguinaldo's headquarters, Judge Florentine Torres, to suggest a cease-fire, Otis

1. Wolff, op. cit.

". . . sternly replied that the fighting having once begun must go on to the grim end." Three days later, Otis cabled Washington, ". . . His [Aguinaldo's] influence throughout this section destroyed. Now applies for cessation of hostilities and conference. Have declined to answer."[2]

Or, rather, he answered by conventional military tactics, which he felt certain would result in the capture of Luna's army and the end of the insurrection. These involved sending out task forces to find, fix and destroy. On an island the size of Ohio, they found little, fixed virtually nothing, but destroyed numerous villages. That spring, MacArthur's brigade captured the rebel capital of Malolos at a cost of nearly 550 casualties, but one capital was as good as another to the rebels. Luna's army dispersed, drifted north, and re-formed.

By spring, the war was going badly for the Americans. Otis increasingly resembled Job facing one disaster after another. His restless soldiers liked nothing about the Philippines—not the weather, the people, the tinned-salmon rations—nothing. He had already lost a large number of volunteers whose terms had expired, sick bays and hospitals overflowed with patients, impatient generals were carping at his halting tactics and, even worse, American correspondents were beginning to fathom insurgency warfare.

In June, the American journal *Harper's Weekly* published a dispatch that its respected correspondent, Mr. Bass, had smuggled to Hong Kong. Influential American readers learned that

> . . . since the fourth of February various expeditions have taken place, principally in the island of Luzon. These expeditions resulted in our taking from the insurgent government certain territory. Some of this territory we have occupied; the rest we have returned to the insurgents in a more or less mutilated condition, depending on whether the policy of the hour was to carry on a bitter war against a barbarous enemy, or to bring enlightenment to an ignorant people, deceived as to our motives.[3]

After stating that the American outlook ". . . is blacker now than it has been since the beginning of the war," Mr. Bass offered some reasons: ". . . First, the whole population of the islands sympathizes with the insurgents; only those natives whose immediate self-interest requires it are friendly to us. . . ." The in-again-out-again policy was ridiculous:

> . . . The insurgents came back to Pasig, and their first act was to hang the *presidente* for treason in surrendering to the Americans. Presidents do not surrender towns to us any more. When we returned to Pasig we found the place well fortified, and we suffered some loss in retaking it. This process might go on indefinitely. . . . These expeditions, lacking the purpose of hold-

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

ing the land conquered, alienate the population already hostile, encourage insurgents, teach them true methods of fighting, and exhaust our men.

As for Otis' tactics:

. . . To chase barefooted insurgents with water-buffalo carts as a wagon-train may be simply ridiculous; but to load volunteers down with two hundred rounds of ammunition and one day's rations, and to put on their heads felt hats used by no other army in the world in the tropics, in order to trot these same soldiers in the broiling sun over a country without roads, is positively criminal. Out of as strong and robust an army as ever wore shoe leather, there are five thousand men in the general hospital. . . .

The press soon suffered a surfeit of copy. In June, a rebel force ambushed four thousand Americans and cut them to ribbons. That summer, the rebels began discarding uniforms, the better to pursue guerrilla tactics. Ambushes became common, and so did the question: Who is the enemy? Lieutenant Colonel J. T. Wickman, commanding the 26th Infantry of U. S. Volunteers, later explained some of the tactical problems to enthralled senators:

. . . In November, 1899, at Jaro, a large flag of truce was used to entice officers into ambush. By order of the commander all persons displayed white flags in the country where our troops operated. This was not for protection, but to give warning to insurgents to hide their guns and disguise themselves. Privates Dugan, Hayes and Tracy, of Company F, were murdered by the town authorities at Calinoz. Private Nolan, at Dingle, was tied up by the ladies while in a stupor; the insurgents were sent for and cut his throat with a sangut. The body of Corporal Donehy, of Company D, was dug up, burned, and mutilated at Dumangas. Private O'Hearn, captured by apparently friendly people near Leon, was tied to a tree, burned for four hours with a slow fire, and finally slashed up. Lieutenant Max Wagner was assassinated on the road to Pototan, October 1, by insurgents disguised in American uniform. . . .[4]

To these and other atrocities, the Americans retaliated by using the "water cure" on natives reluctant to talk: four or five gallons of water were forced down a man's throat, then squeezed out by kneeling on his stomach.[5] If he lived, he usually talked. The guerrillas retaliated by more torturing and mutilating. Americans responded by burning villages and killing indiscriminately. The sick figure rose; morale declined. Otis initiated heavy censorship of news dispatches and was heard to say

4. *Hearings Before the Commission on the Philippines of the United States Senate in Relation to Affairs in the Philippine Islands* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1902), Vol. 2 of 2 vols.

5. Ibid. (Vols. 1 and 2).

it was ". . . as though the AP were in the pay of the Filipino junta in Hong Kong." Eleven correspondents mailed a dispatch from that crown colony:

> . . . We believe that, owing to official dispatches from Manila made public in Washington, the people of the United States have not received a correct impression of the situation in the Philippines, but that these dispatches have presented an ultra-optimistic view that is not shared by the general officers in the field.[6]

Otis now resolved to end the war. He had over forty-five thousand troops, with more en route, and, in September, he ordered a three-division operation designed to clear northern Luzon and capture Aguinaldo. Of the three columns, Lawton's fared the worst. Such was the terrain and the rain that the cavalry often averaged only a mile a day! Supply wagons became hopelessly mired. After five weeks, the troops

> . . . had been on half-rations for two weeks. Wallowing through the hip-deep muck, lugging a ten-pound rifle and a belt filled with ammunition, drenched to the skin and with their feet becoming heavier with mud at each step, the infantry became discouraged. Some men simply cried, others slipped down in the mud and refused to rise. Threats and appeals by the officers were of no avail. Only a promise of food in the next town and the fear that if they remained behind they would be butchered by marauding bands of insurgents forced some to their feet to struggle on.[7]

Lawton's cavalry finally broke loose by abandoning wagons and living off the land. This column, under Colonel Young, fell on Aguinaldo's rear guard near San Pedro and captured his mother and son. Aguinaldo and his guerrillas escaped—not surprising, since in six weeks Lawton's task force had covered only 120 miles.

With the rebels underground, the war lost any semblance of orthodoxy—excepting Otis' tactics. These consisted in fanning a series of outposts out from Manila, a serious drain on his forces, which now numbered around sixty thousand. Incredibly he seemed to think that he was winning. In a popular magazine of the day, *Leslie's Weekly,* he stated, ". . . You asked me to say when the war in the Philippines will be over. . . . The war in the Philippines is already over . . . all we have to do now is protect Filipinos against themselves. . . . There will be no more real fighting . . . little skirmishes which amount to nothing." In December 1899, he cabled Washington no less than four times that the war was over![8]

6. Wolff, op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

His commanders, or some of them, were growing more realistic. General Lawton described the insurgents as ". . . the bravest men I have ever seen." General Arthur MacArthur noted, ". . . wherever throughout the archipelago there is a group of the insurgent army, it is a fact beyond dispute that all the contiguous towns contribute to the maintenance thereof. . . . Intimidation has undoubtedly accomplished much to this end; but fear as the only motive is hardly sufficient to account for the united and apparently spontaneous action of several millions of people."[9]

As Otis pushed outposts farther and farther from the capital, and as punitive expeditions began seeking out neighboring islands, resistance increased. Supply lines became favorite targets. Sometimes guerrillas simply blocked paths and trails by interwoven vines, sometimes they "mined" them by burying sharp bamboo sticks. Rebels constantly cut telegraph lines; villagers stole rifles and ammunition; small bands fell on garrisons or ambushed supply parties. In the first thirteen months, the army reported 1,026 engagements, with 245 Americans killed, 490 wounded and 118 captured, versus 3,854 rebels killed, 1,193 wounded, 6,572 captured.[10]

In an election year, pacification was moving much too slowly for McKinley's pleasure. In May 1900, he replaced Otis with MacArthur, whose force now numbered seventy thousand. MacArthur continued the old and tried something of the new. At first, nothing worked. An amnesty program brought in only some five thousand people to swear allegiance to the flag—the American flag; a rifle-recovery program, thirty pesos per weapon, produced an insulting 140 pieces. He continued sending punitive expeditions to other islands, which he blockaded with gunboats; he bribed island chiefs, who took the money but could not stop the fighting.

MacArthur wanted to impose much stricter measures, but his hands were tied by the bitter autumn elections in America. Imperialism was a major theme. Aguinaldo, seeing a Democratic victory as his only hope, called for general escalation of resistance in order to keep the issue in American headlines.

The Republican victory came as a terrible blow to the insurgent cause: MacArthur received another seventy-five thousand soldiers and, at the end of the year, placed the islands under martial law. Mass arrests and imprisonment followed. For the first time, the insurgent cause faltered. A native Federal Party, pledged to accept American sovereignty, began to grow in popularity. A few dissident tribes already had come over to the American side, and, for some time, troop commanders had been using native irregulars. In February 1901, Congress authorized

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

MacArthur to recruit ". . . a body of native troops, not exceeding 12,000, called 'Scouts' "—these to consist initially of thirty to fifty companies of one hundred men each, commanded by American officers.[11]

The scouts played an integral role in the first real break in the war. Among dispatches taken from a captured courier was one from Aguinaldo ordering a distant guerrilla chief to send him four hundred troops at once. According to the courier, Aguinaldo was operating in northeastern Luzon, in the mountains of Isabela province. The man who learned this information was Frederick Funston, a thirty-six-year-old brigadier of volunteers, a rugged, brave and intelligent redhead. Funston at once decided to exploit this valuable intelligence by an imaginative, courageous and deceptive plan that hopefully would allow him to attack enemy political-military leadership.

With some difficulty, he persuaded seniors to allow him to disguise eighty-one Maccabebe scouts as *insurrecto* replacements responding to Aguinaldo's orders. Funston and four volunteer officers disguised as prisoners accompanied the draft. After a hazardous march of over a hundred miles, this extraordinary party penetrated Aguinaldo's inner sanctum, took him prisoner, and returned to American territory—one of the most successful *ruses de guerre* of all times. Aguinaldo subsequently swore allegiance to the American flag and issued a proclamation of surrender.

The second break in the war came soon after Aguinaldo's capture. In early July 1901, President McKinley appointed William Howard Taft to be chairman of the second Philippines Commission and also civilian governor of the islands. By this time, the President was thoroughly disillusioned with God's advice. When the portly judge told McKinley that he did not approve of American policy and did not want the Philippines, the President is said to have replied, "Neither do I, but that isn't the question. We've got them."[12]

McKinley furnished his new governor some powerful arms and armor. MacArthur's replacement, General Adna Chaffee, became subordinate to Taft's civil control. To insure Taft's authority, he was given control of every penny of American money spent in the Philippines, including that paid to officers and men of the army, navy, and marines!

So armed, Taft set about the immense task of establishing viable civil government.

Neither Aguinaldo's capture nor Taft's appointment ended the fighting, but rebel operations now began to resemble writhing ganglia of a headless body. Increasingly desperate, the southern rebels turned to outright bestiality such as the massacre of an army infantry company, Company C of the 9th Infantry, at Balangiga, on the island of Samar.

11. *Fifth Annual Report of the Philippines Commission—1904* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1905), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.
12. Olcott, op. cit.

Although this massacre succeeded primarily because of the company's lax security precautions, the army commander exacted swift retribution, choosing as his instrument a combat-experienced and very tough marine, Major L. W. T. Waller, of Boxer Rebellion fame. Waller reported with his punitive force to an army officer, Brigadier General "Roaring Jake" Smith, who told him, ". . . I want no prisoners, I want you to burn and kill; the more you burn and kill, the better it will please me."[13] Waller sensibly confined operations to seeking out the guerrilla camp and destroying it along with some insurgents.

An army general, Brigadier General Bell, employed extremely harsh tactics in cleaning out Malvar's guerrilla band on a neighboring island:

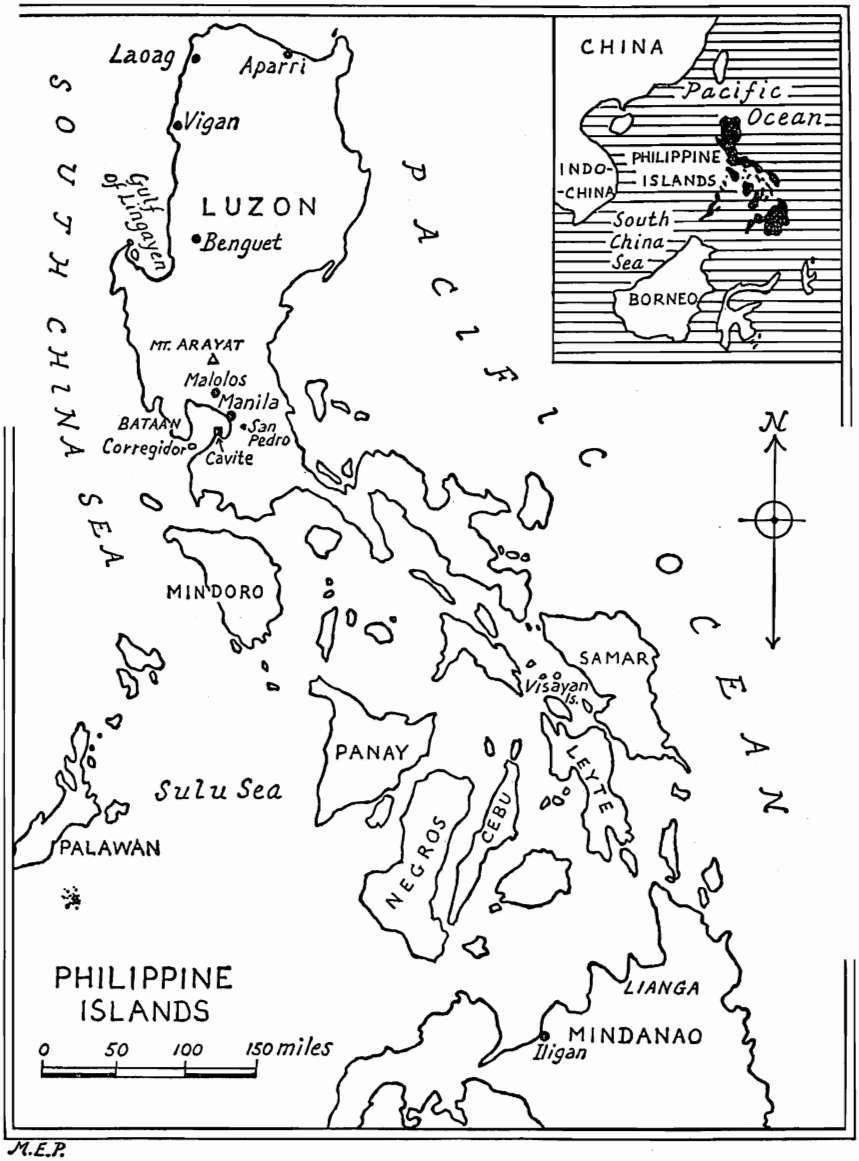
> . . . there were to be no more neutrals; inhabitants were to be classified as active (not passive) friends or enemies. The latter, regardless of age or sex, were to be killed or captured. Everyone had to live within designated military zones and nowhere else. The municipal police were disarmed. Outside the concentration zones all food supplies were to be confiscated or destroyed. An eight p.m. curfew went into effect. Any Filipino found on the streets after that hour was to be shot on sight. Whenever an American soldier was killed, a native prisoner would be chosen by lot and executed. Native houses in the vicinity of telegraph lines cut by the insurrectos would be burned.[14]

This program certainly would have been approved by "Butcher" Weyler, the Spanish general in Cuba whose excesses were a major reason for America going to war. Early in 1902, Bell personally led a campaign that resulted in Malvar's capture. Bell later codified the experience into a universal that undoubtedly influenced his fellows: ". . . To combat such a population," Bell wrote, "it is necessary to make the state of war as insupportable as possible . . . by keeping the minds of the people in such a state of anxiety and apprehension that living under such conditions will soon become unbearable. Little should be said. The less said the better. Let acts, not words, convey the intention."[15]

Bell's conclusions by no means stood at odds with the opinion of a good many Western colonizers. He forgot to state, however, that inept relocation methods resulted in mass epidemics, which claimed over fifty thousand native lives. How many innocent natives were shot is not known. A witness of Bell's methods, a young lieutenant and later judge, James Blount, wrote, ". . . The American soldier in officially sanctioned wrath is a thing so ugly and dangerous that it would take a Kipling to describe him."[16]

Fortunately for the American cause, Taft already was insisting on

13. R. B. Asprey, "Waller of Samar," *Marine Corps Gazette*, May and June 1961.
14. Wolff, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.



M.E.P.

a humane approach; indeed, he forced Chaffee to court-martial Waller for executing some native guides whom Waller had found treacherous, and when the court-martial revealed General Smith's punitive instructions to the marine major, he forced the court-martial of Smith.[17]

17. Asprey, op. cit.

Taft had at once recognized the need to win native support. Using forceful diplomacy, he persuaded the Vatican to sell America 410,000 acres of prime farmland for over $7 million, then sold land parcels to the natives on easy terms. He also laid the groundwork for a vast civil-affairs program, which was to continue for many years. To start the necessary educational program, he caused one thousand American teachers to be recruited and brought over to the islands.

Taft also de-emphasized, as rapidly as possible, the military role in suppressing the insurrection. He relied instead on civil government buttressed by a constabulary police force and the growing Philippine Scouts. In 1903, Taft reported:

> . . . this arrangement presents some anomalies which seem greater to the military commander than to the civil government; but however unsymmetrical the union of the two forces under a constabulary officer may seem to be, it has had the immense advantage of enabling the civil government, with native troops, to suppress disorder. It is of the utmost political importance that the regular soldiery, under a command more or less independent of the civil government, should not be called in to suppress disorders and to maintain the authority of the civil government until all the forces of natives, whether constabulary or scouts, should be used for this purpose. . . . In this country it is politically most important that Filipinos should suppress Filipino disturbances and arrest Filipino outlaws.[18]

After Aguinaldo's renunciation of revolt, Taft treated remaining resistance groups as *ladrones,* or outlaws, which some of them were. Although they were offered full amnesty if they surrendered, the "bandolerismo statute," of late 1902, promised either death or imprisonment for not less than twenty years ". . . for any person proved to be a member of a *ladrone* band (of three or more) . . . and any person aiding a member of such a band. . . ."[19]

To counter the natural advantage of the country to either guerrilla or outlaw, Taft authorized ". . . the provincial governors to withdraw the outlying barrios of towns to their respective centers of population and, in a sense, to reconcentrate the residents of the outlying barrios. . . ." Taft went on:

> So effective is this system against *ladrones,* if carried on properly, and so comparatively easy is it for the people in this country, without great suffering or inconvenience, to move from one part of the country to another, erecting temporary houses of light material, that in Tayabas, which at one time was much afflicted with ladrones under a man named Rios . . . who has now expiated his crimes on the gallows, the so-called reconcentration

18. *Report of the Philippines Commission (1900–1903)* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904).
19. Ibid.

was used voluntarily by the towns that were invaded by Rios and carried to a successful conclusion before the central authorities were advised of the methods pursued.[20]

By 1903, Taft had given at least some native populations an incentive to protect either what they had or what they believed the future was to offer them. By such methods, Taft slowly won over the bulk of the population. Although sporadic revolts would continue until 1916, by mid-1902 the major insurrection was over.

The final figures were grim: more than four thousand Americans dead (thousands would later die from tropical diseases), thousands wounded; the insurrectos lost about twenty thousand killed; civilian deaths were estimated at two hundred thousand.

The end of the affair came as a great relief to the American people, but it left numerous citizens disturbed. Senator Hoar, an outspoken opponent of imperialism, addressed his colleagues:

. . . What has been the practical statesmanship which comes from your ideals and sentimentalities? You have wasted six hundred millions of treasure. You have sacrificed nearly ten thousand American lives, the flower of our youth. You have devastated provinces. You have slain uncounted thousands of the people you desire to benefit. You have established re-concentration camps. Your generals are coming home from their harvest, bringing their sheaves with them, in the shape of other thousands of sick and wounded and insane. . . . Your practical statesmanship has succeeded in converting a [grateful] people . . . into sullen and irreconcilable enemies, possessed of a hatred which centuries cannot eradicate.[21]

20. Ibid.
21. Wolff, op. cit.

Chapter 15

Small-war characteristics • Importance of leadership • Technology and increased weight • British, Russian and French failures • General Gordon and military blackmail • Charles Callwell's classic work: Small Wars

THE LESSONS derived from American experience in the Philippines made no great impact on military thinking of the day. In consolidating and expanding overseas empires, European powers had fought scores of campaigns, literally hundreds of battles, that in part or whole foreshadowed the American campaign. The army of each of these countries had faced similar situations, had made the same errors, had suffered but finally survived. Not only had this process happened to these armies, but it continued to happen—each military generation seemed determined to repeat past errors.

Nor was this altogether obtuseness.

For one thing, one small war rarely resembled another: each generally produced specific challenges that had to be met with specific and sometimes highly unorthodox tactical modifications. The colonizing giants of the time, Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands, supported armies that were too diversified in make-up and interest, too independent in

operational responsibility, and too widely separated geographically in an age of limited communications for a healthy exchange of information.

Most colonial forces had begun as "company" armies, and only slowly reverted to crown control, but even they tended to remain closed shops, with their own standards and traditions, and showing very little interest in operations elsewhere—an insularity displayed simultaneously by American frontier forces and still displayed by remote garrisons today. In India, two armies existed side by side: the Indian army and the British army, the latter looking down on the former as decidedly inferior and able to teach it nothing. The combined experience of the two forces offered rich lessons in irregular warfare, but these were comfortably ignored by British forces elsewhere.

For another thing, colonial powers were spoiled: Military successes had far outweighed disasters, and it is a seeming axiom in war that only losers want to know why.

Major reasons for this military prosperity have been mentioned earlier: In brief, science and wisdom ruled over superstition and ignorance. The tendency of native forces to indulge charges and set-piece battles against smaller but well-armed and disciplined forces grew as the century waned. Time after time, small colonial armies smashed native hordes ten and twenty times their size.

Good leadership continued to play a vital role in the process. Despite certain civil failures, British military reverses must be laid in essence to poor generals. Conversely, successes stemmed in part from leaders such as "Fagin" Napier and Hugh Rose and Horatio Kitchener, each of whom fought and beat vast native armies; in the case of the French, Gallieni and Lyautey each conducted extremely successful pacification campaigns, which we shall examine shortly.

At the same time, a lack of native leadership often aided the Europeans. After the battle of the Sobraon, in 1846, for example, an Indian officer commented on the narrow margin of the British victory: ". . . The Khalsa fought as no man ever did in India before, but it was evident that their leaders knew not how to manage an army; when they had decided advantages in their hands they failed to make any use of them; their cavalry never came near the battlefield that I ever heard of. . . ."[1] The three major leaders of the Indian Mutiny, Nana Sahib, Tantia Topi and the Rani of Jhansi, were repeatedly beaten in set-piece battles.

Technology also continued important, with the edge going to European powers but scarcely to the exclusion of natives, whose weapons increasingly improved and frequently included artillery. Tactical employment of weapons was something else again, and here technology favored the disciplined force, particularly in the defense. With each progression

1. Cole, op. cit.

in the rifle—the Minié to the Enfield to the Snider to the Martini-Henry to the magazine rifle adopted in 1889, the Lee-Metford—speed, range, accuracy, and impact improved, just as it did with embryonic automatic weapons, the Gardner and the Gatling, and with artillery, first the breechloader in 1886, then the quick-firing gun in 1891.

These improvements, as was earlier the case, proved a mixed blessing because again they added weight to columns already heavy. Sir William Lockhart's 1897 expedition south of the Khyber numbered ". . . 35,000 troops with 20,000 more on their lines of communication."[2] But now natives were armed, at least in part, with breech-loading rifles, and the wormlike columns provided first-rate targets. European tactics of halting, dismounting, off-loading mountain guns, and deploying, usually to find nothing, was tiring, time-consuming, and frustrating.[3] The 1897 expedition showed beyond doubt ". . . that much more flexible tactics and more powerful artillery must be utilized, since as regards weapons the tribesmen were fighting on level terms and with the country very much in their favor."[4]

Long before 1897, some native forces had displayed disturbing ability to survive for a surprising length of time after strong points were overrun and armies dispersed. The British had the devil's own time in running down leaders of the Indian Mutiny, and one wonders what would have happened had Tantia Topi chosen to wage guerrilla warfare from the outset, or even midway through the campaign.

But other factors joined with tribesmen and terrain to complicate the problem, to tarnish, as it were, the sterling series of tactical successes. Some very serious reverses—for example, the opening phase of the first Afghan war, of 1839–42, the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the opening disasters of the Zulu war at Isandlhwana and Rorke's Drift, the Russian setbacks against the Turkomans, the costly and inconclusive first Boer war, of 1881, the early French disasters on Madagascar, Gordon's demise at Khartoum—dotted these decades of colonial campaigns.

The British were badly mauled in the first Afghan war not only because of civil failure to appreciate military problems—the entire expedition was strategically ludicrous—but also because of a failure in arms. As two modern British officer-historians, Cole and Priestley, concluded:

> . . . The tragedy of Kabul [where General Elphinstone and his garrison were treacherously slaughtered] must be regarded as the penalty of overconfidence resulting from previous success. British arms had been so con-

2. Ibid.

3. Nor were more suitable tactics ever devised. The latter-day Indian campaigns so well described in Robert Henriques' splendid novel *No Arms, No Armour* and in John Masters' exciting novels must have closely resembled the Victorian campaigns.

4. Cole, op. cit.

sistently triumphant against overwhelming odds that it had come to be thought that imbecile plans, senile generals, too few British troops, a preposterous baggage-train and indifferent arms hardly mattered.[5]

The tragedy of the Indian Mutiny stemmed also from overconfidence, since a number of measures could have been taken against this contingency. A series of minor mutinies already had suggested trouble, and considering the ratio of armed native to armed European, 300,000:40,000, the East India Company should have been on guard. Moreover, its conquest of Upper Burma in 1852 raised the ratio in favor of the native, and if, in the event, the culprits were Bengalese, still the Bengalese constituted about two thirds of the company's army. Finally, the Crimean war (1854–55) further weakened Britain's military posture in India, both in numbers and reputation, which added to the mutinous climate. Britain should now have learned, just as France should have learned from the Seven Years' War, the danger of conventional European wars to the colonial presence.

Gordon's stand at Khartoum taught a corollary lesson. His presence in the Sudan was a direct result of Britain's annexation of Egypt, in 1882, an act that had been forced on Gladstone. Although he did not want Egypt, once he had it he could not give it back. As if it did not constitute a sufficient problem, he inherited the chaos of the Sudan. Wanting to withdraw entirely from this vast territory, he assigned General Gordon the operational task without realizing the extent of Gordon's emotional involvement in the country. Gordon, like Napoleon, had a private arrangement with Destiny and was in no mind to be put off by the best interests of the British Government. By refusing to evacuate Khartoum, he indulged in a military blackmail for which he paid with his life, but only after greatly embarrassing his country.

Colonial forces of other countries similarly erred. In Algeria, the French for years failed to understand the tactical problem and wasted innumerable lives and treasure in attempting to apply false solutions. Initial French failures at Madagascar stemmed from poor intelligence, which caused Duchesne to waste thousands of lives trying to build an unnecessary road into the interior.

In general, the lessons of these and other setbacks (as well as those of most victories) seemed to make but fleeting impression on senior military minds. Details of each campaign were recorded (some inaccurately), and a few commentators appeared in print from time to time. General Skobeleff wrote at length of his 1880 campaign; the French officers later wrote of their campaigns.[6] We also find mention in con-

5. Ibid.

6. General Skobeleff, *Siege and Assault of Denghil-Tépé* (London: HMSO, 1881). Tr. J. J. Leverson; General Gallieni, *La Pacification de Madagascar (Opérations d'Octobre 1896 à Mars 1899)* (Paris: Librairie Militaire R. Chapelot,

temporary military literature of the occasional work such as Captain Peach's *Handbook of Tactics—Savage Warfare.*[7]

Until 1896, however, little codification of either strategy or tactics existed for this complicated period of irregular warfare. If the young officer studied anything more than various drill manuals, it was likely to be a standard work such as Brigadier General Clery's *Minor Tactics,* which slavishly preached the 1866 and 1870 orthodox battle doctrine.[8]

In 1896, in London, a work of a much different nature was published by a young major: Charles Callwell's *Small Wars—Their Principles and Practice.*[9]

Callwell wrote from considerable experience. A regular British officer of the Royal Field Artillery, he was also a scholar and linguist. He had fought in the second Afghan war, in India, and in 1881 had participated in the final operations against the Transvaal Boers, in Africa. Transferred to the Staff College in 1885, the twenty-six-year-old captain submitted an essay, "Small Wars," which won a gold medal from the Royal United Service Institution. During subsequent tours of duty in Intelligence and as an observer of the Greek-Turkish war, he published works on the armies of Romania, Turkey, and the minor Balkan states as well as one with the intriguing title *Hints on Reconnaissances in Little Known Countries.*[10] Meanwhile his essay on small wars had caused so much comment that he expanded it into what became the official textbook on the subject.[11]

1900); H. Lyautey, "Du rôle social de l'officier" and "Der rôle colonial de l'Armée," *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1891 and 1900). The extensive correspondence of the French officers, much of it concerning professional matters, has been largely preserved and published. See, for example, H. Deschamps and P. Chauvet, *Gallieni Pacificateur* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949); P. B. Gheusi, *Gallieni et Madagascar* (Paris: Éditions du Petit Parisien, n.d.); H. Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin* (Paris: Éditions Nationales, 1928), 2 vols.; H. Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar (1894–1899)* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1933, 3rd Edition); H. Lyautey, *Lettres du Sud de Madagascar (1900–1902)* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1935); Pierre Lyautey, *Lyautey L'Africain—Textes et Lettres du Maréchal Lyautey présentés par Pierre Lyautey* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1953), 4 vols.; etc.

7. Callwell, op. cit.

8. C. F. Clery, *Minor Tactics* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1887). Clery's experience as chief of staff of the Egypt Army does not seem to have altered his orthodox tactical views in the slightest.

9. Callwell, *supra* (1896). He followed this with revised editions in 1899 and 1903.

10. These are official publications, short and dull: 1888, *The Armed Strength of Roumania;* 1890, *Hints on Reconnaissances in Little Known Countries;* 1891, *Handbook of the Armies of the Minor Balkan States;* 1892, *Handbook of the Turkish Army;* all published in London by HMSO.

11. Dictionary of National Biography 1922–30 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937). After distinguished service in the Boer war, Callwell continued to publish military work, sometimes of a critical, sometimes of a frivolous, nature,

In the opening pages of *Small Wars,* Callwell took pains to pacify the orthodox military reader. He did not wish to quarrel with ". . . the system of regular warfare of today. Certain rules of conduct exist which are universally accepted. Strategy and tactics alike are in great campaigns governed, in most respects, by a code from which it is perilous to depart."

So far, so good.

But contiguous to orthodox wars are small wars. A small war ". . . may be said to include all campaigns other than those where both the opposing sides consist of regular troops. It comprises the expeditions against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers, campaigns undertaken to suppress rebellions and guerrilla warfare in all parts of the world where organized armies are struggling against opponents who will not meet them in the open field. . . ."

. . . Why are the European nations involved in small wars? Small wars are a heritage of extended empire, a certain epilogue to encroachments into lands beyond the confines of existing civilization, and this has been so from early ages to the present time. Conquerors of old, penetrating into the unknown, encountered races with strange and unconventional military methods and trod them down, seizing their territory; revolts and insurrections followed, disputes and quarrels with tribes on the borders of the districts overcome supervened, out of the original campaign of conquest sprang further wars, and all were vexatious, desultory, and harassing. And the history of these operations repeats itself in the small wars of today.

The great nation which seeks expansion in remote quarters of the globe must accept the consequences. Small wars dog the footsteps of the pioneer of civilization in regions afar off. The trader heralds almost as a matter of course the coming of the soldier, and commercial enterprise in the end generally leads to conquest. Foreign possessions bring military responsibilities in their train which lead to petty warfare. Spain and Portugal in the age of maritime discovery found that it was so, and Great Britain, France and Russia experience it now.

Callwell sounded like a latter-day combination of Sun Tzu, the emperors Maurice and Leo, and Marshal de Saxe. In establishing what a small war is and why it came about, he continued:

. . . The conditions of small wars are so diversified, the enemy's mode of fighting is often so peculiar, the theaters of operations present such singular features, that irregular warfare must generally be carried out on a method totally different from the stereotyped system. The art of war, as generally

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which earned him service enemies. Passed over for promotion to general, he retired in 1909. Recalled to duty in 1914, he served with distinction, winning promotion to major general and a knighthood. He retired after the war and died in 1928, shortly after editing Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson's diaries.

understood, must be modified to suit the circumstances of each particular case. The conduct of small wars is in fact in certain respects an art by itself, diverging widely from what is adapted to the conditions of regular warfare, but not so widely that there are not in all its branches points which permit comparisons to be established.

The young officer offered three broad classes of small wars: campaigns of conquest or annexation; campaigns for the suppression of insurrections or lawlessness, or for the settlement of conquered or annexed territory; campaigns undertaken to wipe out an insult, to avenge a wrong, or to overthrow a dangerous enemy.

Not only did small wars differ from regular warfare, but often from each other. In several hundred somewhat prolix pages, Callwell examined major differences from strategic and tactical viewpoints, expounding at length on problems of staff and command, intelligence, communications, supply, and general operations in a host of small-war environments. He followed this with detailed chapters on offensive and defensive tactics in a variety of terrain, pursuits and retreats, feints, surprises-raids-ambushes, night attacks, fighting in hill and bush country, guerrilla warfare. He illustrated critical analyses with campaign episodes, some of which I have cited previously in this book. Throughout this pioneering work, he often demanded extreme tactical modifications, citing verse, chapter, and text of British and European military failures as proof of his conclusions.

Callwell differentiated between small wars and guerrilla wars, but pointed out that they share many common characteristics. In introducing his section on tactics, he presciently wrote:

> . . . The military forces of today are complicated organisms which the stress of combat tends to disturb, the more elaborate the machinery the more liable it is to be thrown out of gear by rough handling or by sudden shock; it is owing to this indeed that the art of war has assumed so definite a shape. But irregular warriors have not so highly sensitive a tactical system, they are prepared to disperse should the fates prove unpropitious, and each fighting man enjoys individual independence. In these small wars, in fact, the enemy does not offer an intricate organization as an object for the commander of the regular troops to direct his energies against.

Rather than despising the savage, Callwell continued, his words echoing Bouquet's sage advice of a previous century (see Chapter 7), the orthodox must remember that

> . . . irregular warriors are generally warriors not by training but by nature. The fighting instincts of the regular soldier are, in spite of his training and his military calling, dormant till he goes on active service. He lives in a land with a settled social system, where life is secure and where the rights of prop-

erty are protected by laws which are obeyed . . . [the savage] acquires a military sagacity and skill in the use of such weapons as he has at his command which the trained soldier never can aspire to. The one trusts to his own wits in the hour of danger, the other looks to his superior for guidance. And so it comes about that, leaving actual courage and also of course arms out of account, the regular troops are individually inferior to their opponents in these wars. They do not possess the same fertility of military resource, they have not the same instinctive capacity for contriving ambushes and for carrying out surprises, they are amateurs while their adversaries are professional fighting men.

The individual assumes an even greater role in guerrilla warfare, which depends so much on small-unit action and on over-all charismatic leadership:

. . . No one today remembers who led the Khalsa armies at Sobraon or the Beluchis in Scinde, but Abd-el-Kader and the Circassian Schamyl figure among the great soldiers of the age. Charette and Andreas Hofer still live in history, not as patriots only but also as masters of one form of the art of war. And Tantia Topi owes his reputation not to Kalpi and Cawnpore but to the months when, with a dwindling following and bound to a declining cause, he kept the field while the British hunted him in vain.

Of the entire *genre* of small wars, from the orthodox commander's viewpoint guerrilla war is the worst *species:*

. . . Guerrilla warfare is what the regular armies always have to dread, and when this is directed by a leader with a genius for war, an effective campaign becomes well-nigh impossible. . . .

After proving this disturbing point with historical examples, Callwell offered some hope for the resolute and energetic orthodox commander, but he warned that

. . . The guerrilla mode of war must in fact be met by an abnormal system of strategy and tactics. The great principle which forms the basis of the art of war remains—the combination of initiative with energy; but this is applied in a special form. The utmost vigor and decision must be displayed in harassing the enemy and in giving him no rest; the hostile bands may elude the regular detachments, but their villages and flocks remain. The theater of war must be sub-divided into sections, each to be dealt with by a given force or by a given aggregate of separate detachments. Defensive posts must be established where supplies can be collected, whither raided cattle can be brought, and which form independent bases. To each such base must be attached one or more mobile, self-contained columns, organized to be ready to move out at a moment's notice, and equipped so as to penetrate to any part of the district told off to it and to return, certain of supplies for the task.

Callwell emphasized the necessity for good intelligence exploited by mobility. He favored the "flying column" of either horse or foot, or both, a tactical formation introduced by Hoche in the Vendée and used with such success by Bugeaud in Algeria, the British in Afghanistan and Burma, and the Americans against the Red Indians. He warned, however, that

> . . . in no class of warfare is the need of self-reliant subordinate officers so urgent as in operations of this nature, and the lack of such may spoil the best matured combinations of the chief.

Despite the gold medal and official recognition, Callwell's work did not cause a *volte-face* in British military thinking. The time was not ripe for a young man to hold school on his elders—has it ever been?—and indeed Callwell's professional career suffered because of his disturbing and generally accurate conclusions. Although his work failed by omission in that he insufficiently stressed the political task of pacification campaigns, it nonetheless should have been studied and respected by military commanders throughout the empire.

Instead, his teachings apparently failed to reach home, at least in such quarters as British garrisons in Burma and South Africa. The pacification of Upper Burma (1885–90) demonstrated the validity of many of Callwell's teachings. So did the second Boer war, which started in 1899, a turbulent three years in which various British generals managed to commit just about every past error pointed out by Callwell. Ironically, the young author himself served with distinction in this unhappy war—in 1903 he published a revised edition of his work that incorporated the newest lessons.

Chapter 16

British operations in Burma • Thibaw's guerrillas • General White's tactics • Sir Charles Crosthwaite's police • The first Boer war • The second Boer war • Conventional opening battles • Buller's errors • Roberts and Kitchener take over • Pretoria falls • Guerrilla war begins • De La Rey's and Jan Smuts's commandos • Kitchener's new tactics • British victory • The cost

THE FIRST BURMA WAR (1820) established the British presence in three important provinces; the second war (1852) extended British control and placed a co-operative ruler, Mindon Min, on the throne of Upper Burma. Mindon's death, in 1878, ended a relatively quiescent period that witnessed extensive commercial exploitation of the country by British companies.

Mindon's son, Thibaw, was not a strong ruler. Controlled by a reactionary palace group working through Queen Supayalat, Thibaw terminated most of Mindon's reforms and also began quarreling with British commercial interests. When the king opened negotiations with France in 1883, the British Government grew thoroughly alarmed; the quarrel continuing, in 1885 a British military expedition occupied Mandalay and deported Thibaw and his queen. A few months later, Britain annexed Upper Burma and its tributary states and made the entire country a province of the Indian Empire.

The British expedition under General Prendergast had overcome organized resistance with little difficulty. But the British did not capture Thibaw's army, which dispersed with many of the soldiers forming guerrilla bands to carry on the war. The ease with which the larger of these groups gave way to a further British military effort at first caused the interlopers to underestimate the pacification task. They did not realize the extent of the rebellion or its deep-seated nature. Preferring to blame brigands, or dacoits, they failed to understand that spontaneous risings were not alone ". . . led by officers of various grades of the disbanded royal armies" but also by ". . . village headmen, former officials in the service of the king, princes of the blood, and even Buddhist monks. . . ."[1]

To pacify and administer its newest acquisition, the British divided the vast area of some 160,000 square miles into fourteen (later seventeen) districts, each headed by a deputy commissioner ". . . with a British police officer to assist him and such armed force of police, as could be assigned to him. . . ." In the early months, the onus of pacification, however, fell on a Burma Field Force of about fourteen thousand troops commanded by Major General George White.[2] Only six months after formal annexation, White outlined the military problem in a report to superiors in India:

> . . . These bands are freebooters, pillaging wherever they go, but usually reserving the refinement of their cruelty for those who have taken office under us or part with us. Flying columns arrive too late to save the village. The villagers, having cause to recognize that we were too far off to protect them, lose confidence in our power and throw in their lot with the insurgents. They make terms with the leaders and baffle pursuit of those leaders by roundabout guidance or systematic silence. In a country itself one vast military obstacle, the seizure of the leaders of the rebellion, though of paramount importance, thus becomes a source of greatest difficulty.[3]

White attempted to solve the problem by establishing a network of 141 military posts, the weakest consisting of forty riflemen. Patrols of not less than ten men theoretically maintained the peace; if a post could not suppress a local rising, strategically placed garrisons supplied reinforcements. Difficult terrain necessarily limited reaction time as well as operational radius of patrols; where possible, troops traveled by a new type of river boat, ". . . a very light-draught paddle-wheeler, with

1. Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); see also Maung Htin Aung, *The Stricken Peacock—Anglo-Burmese Relations 1752–1948* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965).

2. Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912).

3. Ibid.

simple machinery and fair speed, with accommodation for half a company of rifles and a couple of officers. . . ."[4]

Although the post system hurt guerrilla operations, it did not stop them. The chief commissioner of Burma from 1887 to 1890, Sir Charles Crosthwaite, later wrote that ". . . when the soldiers passed on, the power of the British Government went with them, and the villagers fell back under the rule of the guerrilla leaders and their gangs." Moreover, troops often remained ignorant of conditions in their immediate areas; districts reported to be "quite peaceful" or "comparatively settled," Crosthwaite wrote, ". . . were often altogether in the hands of hostile bands. They were reported quiet because we could hear no noise. We were outsiders. . . ." The posts also bred an unhealthy reliance on fixed force:

> . . . It was found necessary from the first to restrain firmly the tendency of the local officials to fritter away the strength of the force in small posts. The moment anything occurred they wanted to clap down a post on the disturbed spot; and if this had been allowed to go on unchecked there would not have been a man left to form a movable column or even to send out a patrol of sufficient strength.[5]

Although the military phase proved necessary, Crosthwaite concluded:

> . . . The people might be held down in this way, but not governed. Something more was necessary. The difficulties were to be overcome rather by the vigorous administration of civil government than by the employment of military detachments scattered over the country. A sufficient force of armed police at the disposal of the civil officers was therefore a necessity.[6]

Crosthwaite's answer was to recruit what eventually amounted to fifteen thousand military police from India. Replacing military posts as rapidly as possible with police protection, he relied on troops for special operations against particularly troublesome areas and also to carry out an extensive village resettlement program—a shifting in some cases of entire villages in order to deprive guerrillas of support. Although he reported a greatly improved situation by mid-1888, he had come under some fire for harsh methods of pacification. He himself later complained of

> . . . the demands from the Secretary of State for information, which came through the Government of India, [and] wasted a great deal of time. Members of Parliament who cannot force themselves into notice in other ways, take up a subject like Burma, of which no one knows anything, and asks

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

[sic] questions which the Secretary of State has to answer. . . . Correspondents of newspapers, not so much perhaps out of malice—although that is not quite unknown—as from the necessities of their profession are greedy for sensational news. They know that the English public prefer to think that their servants abroad are either fools or scoundrels. If everything is reported to be going well and the officers to be doing their duty, few will credit it, and none will be interested in it. But hint vaguely at dark intrigues or horrible atrocities, ears are cocked at once, and the newspaper boys sweep in the pence.[7]

A modern Burmese historian, Professor Maung Htin Aung, would soundly have defended the British press in its attempts to uncover sordid facts of pacification. Professor Htin Aung has written that Crosthwaite was a ruthless administrator responsible for thousands of civil deaths. By singling out for persecution families ". . . who had supplied the headmen of villages for several generations," Crosthwaite hoped to destroy any threat from natural leaders.

Alas, he accomplished this in part but some survived. If Sir Charles hoped to break the Burmese spirit, he must have been a disappointed man. Sporadic resistance continued for years and so did Burmese desire for independence. People suffered and died, but the survivors, as Htin Aung wrote, ". . . quietly built little pagodas on the sites of the executions and kept alive the spirit of nationalism. . . ."[8]

The second Boer war had been brewing for nearly twenty years. The failure of the 1899 Bloemfontein conference, followed by Jameson's ill-prompted raid, merely heightened existing tensions to bring war in October.

That the Boers could fight and fight well was already proved by the first Boer war, of 1881, when mounted settlers had run rings around Sir George Colley's small British army. The colonizing process, and particularly the Kaffir wars, had produced a nation in arms with a commando system that enabled the country to ". . . put every male of fighting age into the field."[9] Few would dispute the Boer's mastery of rifle or horse. His fighting spirit was obvious. President Kruger, in his truculent exchanges with Rhodes and his South Africa Company and with the Cape government, had left no doubt of his determination to fight, and he had emphasized his attitude by importing modern arms including large cannon from Germany.

In October 1899, Kruger mustered a total force of about fifty thou-

7. Ibid.
8. Htin Aung, op. cit.
9. Cole, op. cit.; see also L. S. Amery (ed.), *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1902), Vol. 2 (1902) of 5 vols.

sand, mostly mounted men thoroughly at home in the vast land. Against this impressive force, Sir Redvers Buller commanded a dispersed British army of about twenty thousand supported by some ten thousand ancillaries—colonials, volunteers, and police.[10]

Although Buller would soon gain substantial reinforcements, Kruger held the initiative. Instead of invading Cape Colony, which was perfectly possible, and which might have resulted in a speedy Boer victory, Kruger attacked British forces immediately at hand. In short order, his commandos invested British garrisons at Ladysmith, in the Northeast, and Mafeking and Kimberley, in the Northwest. These moves, Kruger reasoned, would bring the British north, where he could fight them on his own terms.

Buller reacted predictably: One column, under Sir William Gatacre, moved up the center railway toward Bloemfontein; another column, under Lord Methuen, marched along the western railway toward Kimberley; a final column, under his own command, headed for the Tugela River toward Ladysmith. In addition, Sir John French's first-rate cavalry force was operating in the Northwest, but, by now, both troopers and mounts were tiring.

Buller's greatest enemy was space. His base ports, Cape Town and Durban, lay hundreds of miles apart; Pretoria, capital of the Transvaal, was eight hundred miles from Cape Town. Buller's columns had to cross an area the size of France and Germany. Lack of animal transport and almost no roads tied infantry to single-line railroads. Lack of communications and distance between railways caused Buller to forfeit tactical control. Lack of training and dubious command procedures caused columns to proceed without flank or frontal security. Lack of maps caused commanders to use guides, who generally proved unreliable.

By mid-December, each of the columns was badly mauled and had stopped short of its goal. The press lumped these initial reverses together in the eye-catching term "Black Week"—it was, but it stemmed from the neglect of years.[11]

Early in 1900, however, a remarkable command team arrived to repair matters: Field Marshal Lord Roberts, veteran of forty-one years of Indian fighting, a man who respected his enemy before beating him; his chief of staff, Major General Lord Kitchener, hero of Omdurman, until recently Sirdar of the Egypt Army, not yet fifty years old, a cold, blue-eyed taskmaster who trampled on tradition when necessary to get things done, a hard man who slaughtered the Dervishes in the Sudan, then contemplated having the Mahdi's skull made into a drinking cup.

Roberts, at sixty-eight years of age, was a small, one-eyed, peppery,

10. Ibid. See also E. S. May, *A Retrospect on the South African War* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1901). The author is particularly interesting on the artillery's role.

11. Amery, op. cit. (Vol. 3, 1905).

and able soldier who, just as important, was familiar with war in large theaters and with the particular military problem on hand. Upon disembarking in Africa, he learned that his son had just been killed in the Tugela fighting. With his one good eye, he wept briefly, then turned to the military problem: he would bring the war to Kruger, no doubting that, but scarcely on Kruger's terms. Roberts would use the supply umbilical of the western railway as far as the Modder River, but here he would wean his army in favor of animal transport and turn to advance on Bloemfontein, his interim base for a final advance to Pretoria.

To organize enough transport and to mount colonials into a semblance of a cavalry division required a month of hard and frustrating work, as Kitchener wrote to a friend:

> . . . We are getting along a little bit, but we have not a single saddle for love or money; all our water-bottles are so small as to be useless. It was exactly the same in the Sudan, when I had to fit out the whole of the British troops with water-bottles which they had to pay for. Not a single emergency ration, so the men have to fight all day on empty stomachs. I could go on, but what is the use? I am afraid I rather disgust the old red-tape heads of departments. They are very polite, but after a bit present me with a volume of their printed regulations generally dated about 1870 and intended for Aldershot maneuvers, and are quite hurt when I do not agree to their printed rot.[12]

Roberts pushed north in early February, an approach march undetected by Cronjé at Magersfontein. Cronjé paid dearly for ignorance. With Roberts temporarily indisposed, Kitchener took over and lightning struck. Cronjé, surprised and outflanked by French's cavalry, ran due east, his retreat impeded by a train of heavy supply wagons that he stubbornly refused to abandon. Once French had entered Kimberley and cleared the British flank, Kitchener sent him after Cronjé, who was struggling to cross the Modder River at Paardeberg. Still refusing to sacrifice his train—De Wet's commando was supposed to be rushing to his aid—he was caught and forced to surrender.

Despite this happy turn of events, Kitchener and Roberts still had problems: enteric fever, caused by bad water, was sweeping through the ranks; French had lost hundreds of horses; supply was short; and De Wet's considerable commando was somewhere in the area. Roberts nonetheless pushed east toward Bloemfontein. De Wet delayed him but was not strong enough to stop him, and in mid-March the British force reached the important capital.

Roberts was extremely short of supply by now; he ". . . had no cavalry, no mounted infantry and no artillery with horses in effective condition." Enteric fever continued its violent course and he had to clear Boer

12. George Arthur, *Life of Lord Kitchener* (London: Macmillan, 1920), Vol. 1 of 3 vols.

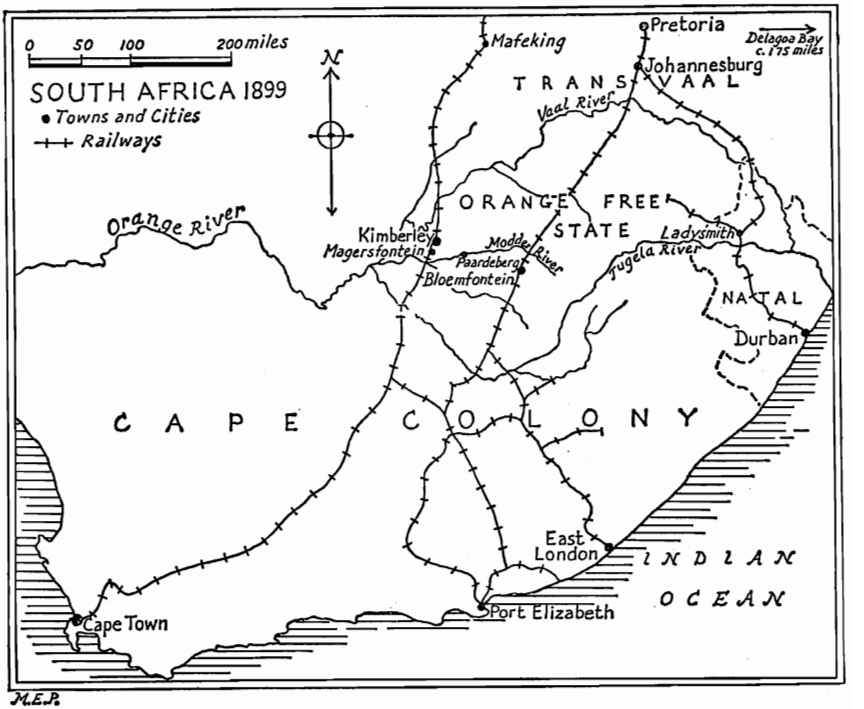
partisans from his right flank. He took seven weeks to put matters to his satisfaction before advancing north along the railway toward Pretoria.

His campaign now began to resemble Halleck's and Grant's march through Tennessee with Forrest and Morgan tearing at their lines of communication. As fast as Roberts' soldiers repaired the tracks, Boer guerrillas tore them up. Out of seventy-five thousand troops, Roberts was forced to use nearly half guarding his single line of communications! And these were none too many. Upon reaching Johannesburg, he cabled the War Office that his troops ". . . were living from hand to mouth," the result of short supply. But now his strategic goal, Pretoria, was in sight. After a brief halt, he continued his push on this capital and, after a final battle, entered it in early June.

In Roberts' mind, his march, by ending organized Boer government, should have ended the war. President Kruger was on the run—indeed he soon sailed for Europe in a futile attempt to find helpful allies.

What Roberts failed to realize was a slow but certain change in Boer leadership that had been going on since Cronjé's disaster at Paardeberg.

Younger commanders such as Christiaan de Wet and Louis Botha



had long since realized the futility of trying to fight European-style war against heavy British columns. Turning increasingly to guerrilla warfare, they had been joined by such natural leaders as De La Rey and Jan Smuts.

These and other leaders were now based, albeit tenuously, east of Pretoria, in the Delagoa Bay area. To them, Kruger's departure mattered but little—his command already was fragmented, the commandos having fought more or less separately for months. Their commandos were not only intact, but could still tap human and material resources to keep on fighting until the British tired and offered a fair peace. Some of the more fanatic held to a never-surrender policy, but it is probably fair to say that the majority were pragmatists in this sense. In any event, theirs was the decision to keep fighting, and to it De Wet added a powerful spice by very nearly capturing Lord Kitchener.

Considering the situation, the Boers acted boldly. Once in Pretoria, Roberts quickly made good his losses. Reinforcements, both human and material, began to pour in. While Kitchener and French flailed flying columns about the countryside in mostly useless attempts against the guerrillas, Roberts consolidated his command over the towns and, in September 1900, formally annexed the Transvaal. In November, after stating that in his opinion the war was virtually over, he left for London to become commander-in-chief of the British army.

Roberts was unduly optimistic. Far from being over, the war was heating up. Living off the land, the Boer commandos, sometimes separately and sometimes in harmony, continued to strike throughout the Transvaal and the Free State, blowing bridges, pulling up railway tracks and derailing trains, falling on isolated garrisons, burning stores, destroying convoys—all in mocking denial of the British claim to victory.

Kitchener reacted vigorously, first by jury-rigging a mounted force built around French's cavalry, then by starting to turn the entire vast territory into an armed camp—a British camp. Kitchener knew that ultimately he would win, and so, probably, did the Boers. As early as February 1901, Louis Botha approached him through an intermediary, which led to a meeting in late February. Both men were realists. Botha wanted Boer independence in return for peace, a hopeless demand which Kitchener rejected out of hand, as Botha knew he would. Botha then named less severe demands and the two soon reached a healthy general agreement. Kitchener subsequently notified the Secretary of State: ". . . L. Botha is a quiet, capable man, and I have no doubt carries considerable weight with the burghers; he will be, I should think, a valuable assistance to the future good of the country in an official capacity." Kitchener found nothing onerous in Botha's proposed terms: ". . . It seems a pity that the war should go on for the points raised by

Botha, which appear to me all capable of adjustment."[13] Arrogant in its ignorance and in its power, the British Government in the form of Sir Arther Milner caviled over giving amnesty to the Cape Colony rebels, a debatable refusal to one of Botha's major demands. Stalemate ensued, and, toward the end of March, Botha dropped further negotiations.

Kitchener's hopes for an early peace thus dashed, he turned again to the military problem. Lacking necessary intelligence and essential mobility, his approach tended toward the defensive, his lines of communication now becoming his paramount concern. To guard these, he divided the territory into specific military areas. To each he assigned large numbers of his ever-increasing army to build a series of blockhouses, at first along the railway and on vital bridges. These structures consisted of ". . . two skins of corrugated iron nailed on to wooden frames, the space between being filled up with gravel and earth." Each housed one non-commissioned officer and seven men; it was supported by its neighbor, generally a thousand yards removed, to which in time it became linked by barbed wire.[14]

During 1901, the area of operations grew into a labyrinth of such blockhouses. At the end of 1901, Kitchener's new chief of staff, Ian Hamilton, wrote to Lord Roberts:

> . . . Although I had read much of blockhouses, I never could have imagined such a gigantic system of fortifications, barriers, traps and garrisons as actually exists. This forms the principal characteristic of the present operations, supplying them with a solid backbone and involving permanent loss of territory to the enemy, which former operations did not.[15]

Kitchener supported this system with a force of about 240,000, an illusory figure greatly reduced by sickness: in June 1901, the net fighting strength stood ". . . at under 164,000 men."[16] Passive defense—blockhouse garrisons, base garrisons, railway guards, depot cadre and the like—required 100,000 men. Active defense in the form of mounted "flying columns" used the rest. Kitchener sent these columns on "drives" of the increasingly segregated areas. Such drives sometimes involved

13. H. de Watteville, *Lord Kitchener* (London: Blackie & Son, 1939). Although Botha could not guarantee acceptance of any agreement by his fellows, the opportunity to end the war should have been more fully explored; had it proved successful, it would have prevented enormous suffering and expense.

14. Amery, op. cit. (Vol. 5, 1907). Eventually these were replaced by octagonal, umbrella-roofed structures more cheaply constructed from prefabricated corrugated iron sheets, the invention of a Major Rice; ". . . ordinary barbed wire was used at first, but the Boers became such adepts at cutting it that a quarter-inch unannealed steel wire, specially manufactured in England, had to be substituted."

15. Arthur, op. cit. (Vol. 2).

16. Ibid.

a single column or less, sometimes five or six columns, ". . . with as many as five thousand mounted men abreast."[17]

Kitchener did not expect great bags of prisoners. He had had enormous experience in this type of warfare both in Egypt and Africa: in July 1901, he wrote the Secretary of State, ". . . these flying columns, on extended operations in this vast country, only in great measure beat the air, as the mobile Boers clear off the moment they hear of the columns being sometimes twenty miles away."

Kitchener wanted to keep the commandos off balance and out of touch with each other. To deprive them of hearing of the columns, he began to clear key areas of people, moving women and children into concentration camps, where he kept them despite a fearful outcry from home. To deprive commandos of livelihood, food, and mounts, Kitchener burned farms in the best Sherman tradition. He also deported Boer prisoners—some twenty-four thousand—to overseas camps.[18]

Kitchener suffered any number of setbacks. He was not at all pleased with his army. He thought its discipline was dreadful, and he could not understand the insouciance of younger officers who showed a near camaraderie to the enemy instead of treating them like dervishes. The difficulty stemmed in large part from an essentially defensive army composed largely of non-professionals with little patience for the frustrations inherent in attrition warfare. Kitchener did his best to impose disciplined behavior, but as late as March 1902, command laxity resulted in Methuen's column being ambushed. Kitchener wrote: ". . . I am having one officer tried for the loss of the convoy, and six officers tried for Methuen's disaster. These trials probably will result in other trials, as we get at the truth."[19]

At this stage, Kitchener was becoming increasingly pessimistic and even unsure of himself. On one occasion, he wrote Lord Roberts, ". . . I wish those who say that the war should be over would come out and show us how to do it."[20] And in March 1902, only weeks before the Boer capitulation, he wrote apropos of the Methuen disaster, ". . . The dark days are on us again."

The dark days were about to lighten. The Boers, reduced to some twenty thousand men, lacked food, mounts, medicine. Continual hardship, desertions, pursuit had flagged once-ebullient spirits. Peace seemed inevitable and, considering various amnesty statements of the enemy, even enviable. They quit in the spring of 1902.

From 1899 to 1902, the Boers had put 90,000 men in the field. Of these, they lost an estimated 4,000 killed, thousands more wounded and taken prisoner; poor sanitary conditions in the concentration camps

17. De Watteville, op. cit.; see also Amery, op. cit.
18. Cole, op. cit.
19. Arthur, op. cit.
20. Ibid.

accounted for perhaps 20,000 civilian deaths. The British army, which altogether mustered 450,000 men, lost 6,000 killed in action, over 20,000 wounded, and about 16,000 dead from wounds and disease. The war cost England over £200 million, not to mention the investment necessary to rebuild the ravaged country.[21]

21. Cole, op. cit.; see also Amery, op. cit. (Vol. 7, 1909), for a breakdown of the figures.

Chapter 17

Hubert Lyautey • His background • Gallieni's tactics against Indochinese "pirates" • Origin of the tache d'huile *concept • Gallieni's influence on Lyautey • Pacification of Madagascar •* Tache d'huile *tactics in Algeria • Pacification of Morocco • Lyautey: success or failure?*

MAJOR CALLWELL laid far more stress on military problems of colonization than on political problems, a priority natural for a professional soldier. He did not seem to realize that a solution of the political problem, either in whole or in part, could have diminished or eliminated the military problem—an interesting fact uncovered by the more successful commanders of the colonial era.

The French general Hubert Lyautey ranks as one of these. Born and bred a royalist, Lyautey was a devout Roman Catholic who became interested in social reform while a student at St. Cyr. Intensely bright, he pursued this interest during early, prosaic postings. As a squadron commander at St. Germain in 1887, he startled fellow officers by showing concern for the mental welfare of his troops: ". . . he arranged a large room supplied with tables, a library, lamps, where the men found books, games, a billiard-table, writing-paper. . . ."[1] His continued interest in

1. André Maurois, *Marshal Lyautey* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1931). Tr. H. Miles. I have relied extensively on this work, but see also an authorized

social welfare brought him into contact with some of the leading French intellectuals, and he soon began to publish controversial articles in the better journals.

Writing in 1889–91, Lyautey thought he saw in the French officer corps of some twenty thousand a potential social force that could bring about necessary reforms. Internal changes in the corps were first necessary: He argued, for example, that an officer must know his men better than his horses, which was not usually the case. Provided the officer acquired a social conscience, however, he could indoctrinate conscripts with essential principles of patriotism and nationalism necessary for a renascence that ultimately would repair the humiliating 1870 defeat by the Prussians.[2] Although the thirty-seven-year-old major conceived this activity within the traditional monarchist-church framework, his ideas created a mild sensation and marked him in some quarters as a socialist and revolutionary. To save his career, sympathetic seniors posted him to Indochina.[3] (See map, Chapter 45.)

Lyautey arrived in Saigon in 1894. The French already had staked claim to most of Indochina: Cochin China had been a colony since 1862, and Annam a protectorate since 1885. The governor-general, De Lanessan, ruled these areas with a philosophy that he explained to Lyautey on a train trip to Hanoi:

> . . . In every country there are existing frameworks. The great mistake for European people coming there as conquerors is to destroy these frameworks. Bereft of its armature, the country falls into anarchy. One must govern *with* the mandarin and not *against* the mandarin. The European cannot substitute himself numerically; but he can control. Therefore, don't disturb any tradition, don't change any custom. In every society there exists a ruling class, born to rule, without which nothing can be done. Enlist that class in our interests.[4]

Although the French had managed to pacify the southern areas and most of the Tonkin Delta by this time (see Chapter 42), De Lanessan's rule did not cover the northern provinces of Tonkin, ceded by China to France by the treaty of Tientsin and ". . . declared Military Territories, administered by superior French officers, who had to deal with the pirates infesting these regions."[5]

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biography: Sonia E. Howe, *Lyautey of Morocco* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1931); and previously cited correspondence.

2. Peter W. Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria—The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

3. Maurois, op. cit.

4. Ibid.

5. Howe, op. cit.

As Joseph Buttinger has pointed out in his comprehensive two-volume work *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled,* the pirates were often nationalists fighting for independence, a fact overlooked, perhaps intentionally, by most French officials:

. . . the French, totally mistaken about the nature of their enemy and the difficulties of pacifying a nation as old as the Vietnamese, relied exclusively on brute force. "We had at this time no idea," wrote a witness of conquest and pacification, "of the importance and quality of these Vietnamese bands; our first columns merely traversed the country without occupying it; they were putting, a little too indifferently, steel and fire into every village where they met the slightest trace of resistance." The commanders of these columns, who equated spreading terror with creating order, turned more peasants into partisans than the mandarins who agitated for armed resistance. . . .
. . . [The French] subscribed to the principle of "collective responsibility," which meant summary executions of noncombatants, "the last expedient in all wars against partisans by regular troops that cannot touch their opponents." De Lanessan and others described what this principle meant in practice: "Every village that has given refuge to a band of guerrillas or not reported their passage is declared responsible and guilty. Consequently, the chief of the village and two or three principal inhabitants are beheaded, and the village itself is set on fire and razed to the ground." Prisoners, of course, as Captain Gosselin reports in his revealing book, were always shot, "on orders from above." Severe repression worked the inevitable result: . . . even the meek among the people, and certainly the terror-stricken, hated the French, and no man of honor among the leaders cooperated with them as long as the partisans continued their fight. "Those who collaborated with us," says a historian of this and later periods of trouble, "succumb to the lure of money, or even worse to unrestrained and unscrupulous ambition. Nobility of soul, disinterestedness, and courage are to be found in the opposition. Against this coalition of moral forces nothing can be done."

The tactical result was equally inevitable:

. . . The official military history of Indochina again and again tells how the troops engaged in hunting down the guerrillas, although numerically strong, well equipped, and often well led, missed their objective wherever the French had no friends. . . . "A column is helpless against these brigands, who, at the approach of our troops, disperse in the villages, where, thanks to the complicity of the population and probably the indigenous officials, they cannot be found. . . . Moreover, our troops are paralyzed by an absolute lack of information. The commanders of our posts do not have the money to buy informants." The enemy, on the other hand, got all the information he needed without having to pay. "As soon as a patrol starts out, the pirates are warned, while we," wrote one official historian, "walk in a hostile country as though blind."

A few outstanding and experienced French officers had questioned first, and then begun changing, this policy. Colonels such as Servière, Vallière, Pennequin, and Gallieni had recognized the political element of the problem:

. . . These men combined military with psychological action, apart from being the first to take advantage of the country's peculiar geographical circumstances. This they did by the application of measures valid to this day as a condition of success against guerrilla warfare: They counteracted the support, or even merely the sympathy, of the people toward the guerrillas through social, economic, and political measures designed to elicit equal if not greater support.[6]

As temporary chief of staff in Hanoi, Commandant Lyautey was soon conferring with the commander of the effort, the forty-four-year-old Colonel Gallieni, who had made his colonizing reputation in the Senegal and Sudan. Gallieni at once impressed the new arrival, both with the scope of the pacification problem and his solution. As Gallieni later wrote:

. . . The tactics of the pirates were to retire into the most hidden places of the great thickets of the forest, there to organize their defenses in such a way as to compel their assailants to approach very close over open ground, and then to take them unawares between crossfires, at the very moment when the numerous obstacles arranged all around and outside the principal defenses had to be overcome.

Gallieni relied on surprise and mobility—a system of converging mobile columns—to attack these various strongholds, but this was only part of the answer. As he explained to Lyautey: ". . . Piracy is not a necessary historical fact. It is the result of an economic condition. It can be fought by prosperity." Although superior discipline, firepower and mobile tactics could in time subdue the pirates, military success meant ". . . *nothing* unless combined with a simultaneous work of organization—roads, telegraphs, markets, crops—so that with the pacification there flowed forward, like a pool of oil, a great belt of civilization."[7]

Gallieni did not realize it, but he had fashioned a strategic device used by the ancient Greeks, the *epiteichismos,*

. . . which meant the fortification of some place or region to put pressure upon an enemy. . . . In the first stage of the Peloponnesian war the enterprising Athenian general, Demosthenes, occupied a position on the west coast of the Peloponnesus, which led indirectly to the capture of a force of

6. Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.
7. Maurois, op. cit.

Spartans, and directly, and more permanently, to producing a place of secure refuge for Spartan helots who wished to escape from being Spartan serfs . . .[8]

Gallieni's radical approach appealed enormously to the socially aware Lyautey. The two hit it off so well that Gallieni arranged for the young major to become his chief of staff. In subsequently submitting a plan of campaign to the governor-general, Lyautey showed the extent of Gallieni's influence on his thinking:

. . . It should not be overlooked that the pirate is a plant which will grow only in certain soils, and that the surest method is to make the soil uncongenial to him. . . . Similarly with regard to territory given over to brigandage: armed occupation, with or without fighting, is as the ploughshare; the establishment of a military cordon fences it and isolates it definitely, if an internal frontier is in question; and finally the organization and reconstitution of the population, its arming, the setting-up of markets and various cultivations, the driving of roads, are all as the sowing of the good grain, and render the conquered region impervious to brigandage.[9]

A year later, Lyautey continued this policy in Madagascar, where he was summoned by Gallieni, the new resident-general. Having decided to govern *against* the mandarin, Gallieni had stirred up the Hovas and now had a revolt on his hands. He assigned Lyautey to the command of an area ruled by a Hova rebel, a former royal governor, Rabezavana. Lyautey reverted to the methods of Tonkin: he used mobile converging columns to deprive the rebel force of herds and food supply; simultaneously he pinched off bits of territory while showing the people the advantages of coming over to his side, where they would be protected and allowed to earn a good living. Deprived of support, Rabezavana surrendered within a month. Lyautey not only treated him with utmost courtesy, but to the astonishment of all, placed him in charge of the region which he had formerly ruled—where he served loyally and well.[10]

This experience confirmed much of Lyautey's earlier thinking. In an article published during this period, "The Colonial Rule of the Army," he described the pacifying process as ". . . an organization on the march." He continued:

. . . Military command and territorial command ought to be joined in the same hands. When the high military officer is also the territorial administrator, his thoughts, when he captures a brigand's den, are of the trading-post he will set up after his success—and his capture will be on different lines.[11]

8. Adcock, op. cit.
9. Maurois, op. cit.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

In other words, he will not search and destroy—he will conquer, preserve, and build.

After playing a major role in pacifying Madagascar, Lyautey returned to France to command a hussar regiment prior to retiring from the army. At this point, he happened to meet the new Governor-General of Algeria, Jonnart, who complained about the army's failure to stop guerrilla raids of rebels based in eastern Morocco. Impressed with Lyautey's comments, Jonnart persuaded the minister of war to send the colonel to take command of the turbulent southern Oran area. (See map, Chapter 28.)

The job carried promotion to brigadier general, but Lyautey found a cool reception by his superior at Oran, who did not relish an "outsider" challenging his theretofore supreme control. The fifty-nine-year-old Lyautey, in turn, found little to admire. At Aïn-Sefra, he discovered that artillery and transport remained under the Oran commander's control, which meant slow reaction to raids.

But the tactical villain remained bulk and weight, just as it had in the British army in Africa and the American army in the Philippines. At Lyautey's request, a light column paraded before him. Noting the men's high laced boots, haversacks laden as if for a campaign of six months, vast convoys for men who could feed on a handful of dates, the tall general turned to the local commander and asked: "What do you call a *heavy* column in this country?"[12]

Lyautey reported back to Jonnart in Algiers and told him he would take the job only under certain conditions:

> . . . I want to have my territory as a whole. I want to have under my orders not only all the military services, but also all the political services, the intelligence officers, everything. . . . And then, in case of urgency, I want to be able to have direct telegraphic communication with the Minister of War, without having to do so by way of the Oran division . . . if you desire the pacification of southern Oran, this is essential.[13]

Jonnart agreed, undoubtedly to his Oran commander's fury. He made a wise decision, however, for Lyautey was one of the few senior officers in the French army who was temperamentally and professionally suited for the task.

Lyautey's immediate problem centered on the old Algerian rebel Bou-Amama, who was allied with a young Moroccan, Bou-Hamara, a conjurer turned pretender to the sultan and called the Rogui. They operated from a Moroccan sanctuary, the Tafilelt, which they kept under submission while their bands swept across the border to raid French outposts and Algerian tribal settlements. Success had greatly emboldened

12. Ibid.; see also C. V. Usborne, op. cit.
13. Maurois, op. cit.

them: they had attacked a convoy in which Jonnart himself was traveling, and in the previous year a *harka* of some four thousand warriors had invested the French military post at Taghit. Although the French army was authorized to pursue the guerrillas inside Morocco, their slow columns rarely ran down the fast-moving bands, and they were forbidden to build permanent outposts on the other side of the border.

Lyautey was not as anxious as his predecessors to mount punitive expeditions, and he also scornfully rejected the string of small border outposts that failed to prevent rebel incursions. Instead he began to apply his *tache d'huile* technique: winning separate tribes by offering them protection under the French flag, then providing social services ranging from medical clinics to markets—a ". . . military-political pacification and occupation . . . the gradual advance on a wide front instead of a single deep (column) penetration."[14] He used light columns to break up enemy concentrations and to meet subsequent threats, ". . . but the emphasis lay on the *tache d'huile* or oil-spot technique—a methodical, necessarily slow expansion of French control."[15]

This reads rather tamely today, but, at the time, many of its aspects were quite revolutionary. Not far to the south, in German East Africa for example, the white man ruled with the *kiboko*—". . . a whip made of hippopotamus hide, and most white men, women and even children, as well as every *akida* [Arab or Muslim-educated overseer], carried one and used it. It was not as much an instrument of punishment or discipline but of terrorism, and it was used everywhere to turn the native into cringing animals ready to do everything their masters demanded of them. . . ."[16] Such treatment caused the unsuccessful Maji-Maji rebellion of 1905, which in turn led to brutal reprisals: ". . . according to an official German estimate, 120,000 natives out of about 2,000,000 were killed and thousands more died from starvation caused by troops laying waste the country. Only now did German policy begin to change with the introduction of schools and mission stations."[17]

In Algeria, Lyautey was trying to avoid such difficulties and still ac-

14. Paret, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Leonard Mosley, *Duel for Kilimanjaro* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963).
17. Ibid.; see also Charles Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa 1914–1916* (London: HMSO, 1941), Vol. 1: ". . . the Maji-Maji rebellion was so named from the Swahili word *maji,* meaning water. The tribes were incited by medicine men to believe that possession of a certain medicine rendered a warrior invulnerable to bullets, which would turn to water. The revolt was in several respects an astonishing example of fanatical native mass-psychology, successfully worked up against Europeans on the basis of this belief. . . . The revolt was finally quelled by extensive and merciless destruction of crops and villages, with consequent famine and disease, the number who died in the rising and as a result of it being estimated at over 100,000."

complish his mission, by using the army not as an instrument of repression but as a positive social force, "the organization on the march." This was an extremely clever concept, a sort of imperialist infiltration in that his showplaces of civilization, by attracting other tribes to the fold, undermined the solidarity and authority of rebel chieftains.

To accomplish this, Lyautey relied strongly on intelligence, on propaganda, on the correct behavior of his troops and, above all, on his own charisma. He took a great deal of trouble cementing relationships with tribal authorities. The extent of his involvement can be seen from an incident soon after he assumed command. Ordered by Paris to evacuate Berguent, a water point his troops had seized inside the Moroccan border, he cabled a protest to the minister of war and concluded:

> . . . Moreover, having personally pledged myself to populations in the name of France that we should not abandon them and would protect them, and having thus brought them to rally to us and recover security and trades unknown for seven years past, I could not honorably proceed myself to this step; and if it is maintained, I respectfully request to be immediately relieved from my command in such a way that I may appear solely responsible with regard to the inhabitants, and so that they may realize that it is I alone who have improperly pledged the word of the French Government, and, seeing me disowned, can suspect only myself and not the honor of the Government of the Republic.[18]

As it turned out, Jonnart's successful diplomacy solved the crisis by allowing Lyautey's troops to retain the post.* By year's end, he had consolidated the area, which he protected by several large forts that supported strong but mobile patrols.

Lyautey's success came at a good time for his career. France was about to expand into Morocco, the result of a deal with England that gave the latter a free hand in Egypt.

Morocco in 1904 was a heterogeneous collection of Arabic tribes tied into a loose federation linguistically by Arabic language, spiritually by Islamic religion. This vast area fell under titular rule of a sultan whose practical control extended as far as his troops, or about 20 per cent of the country. Scores of fierce Berber tribes held the rugged mountainous country in semianarchy manifested by frequent intertribal blood feuds and massive revolts against the sultan's government.

Lyautey already had neutralized some of these dissident tribes when he was promoted to the Oran command, in 1906, and charged with the protection of the entire Algerian-Moroccan border. In 1907, he extended

18. Maurois, op. cit.

* This example of military blackmail is reminiscent of Gordon at Khartoum. In this case it was quite unnecessary, since, a few months later, the 1904 treaty with England gave France carte blanche in the area.

operations into eastern Morocco by occupying Oujda. Three years later, he had created

. . . a real buffer state [which] now covered our Algerian frontier, and thrust back the zone of insecurity by several hundreds of kilometres. The populations were already acquiring a taste for ordered life, less costly than anarchy, the kaids for regular administration, more fruitful than the petti-fogging of former times, the Maghzen for the well-gathered revenues of a country which had never recognized its authority. . . . The policing of the wide territories had cost France but little: 4,000 men had been enough in the Oujda area, 1,600 on the Haut-Guir. Further, the Shereefian troops [of Morocco] and budget were gradually to replace the soldiers and money of France. Rarely had a soldier conquered with so little expense. . . .[19]

In 1910, General Lyautey, married now to a colonel's widow, returned to France to command an army corps at Rennes. But the treaty of Fez caused serious revolts in French Morocco, and in 1911 Lyautey was sent to Rabat as resident-general.

Lyautey was now nearly seventy, but advancing years seemed only to give him added energy. After putting down the revolts, he turned to administering French Morocco. As was his wont, he upheld the authority of tribal leaders,

. . . and all local customs and local religious practices were preserved intact. Wherever French troops went . . . they immediately taught the local people better methods of agriculture, showed them how to grow more and better crops, dug better water holes, built hospitals, and set up market-places where prices were low and where the items offered for sale were diversified as never before. . . . Lyautey built railroads, highways, and schools. He improved the land, put people to work, and opened mines. Both the modern metropolis of Casablanca, one of Africa's largest and finest cities, and the busy town of Kenitra [renamed Port Lyautey] were Lyautey's creations.[20]

Although Lyautey did not hesitate to employ military force when necessary—in 1912, he sent Colonel Mangin to crush a revolt in Marrakesh—he believed in applying it in limited amounts. When Mangin exceeded himself in the 1913 fighting in the Middle Atlas massif, Lyautey relieved him of command. And when expansionists in Paris urged him to invade "independent" Morocco, he wrote:

. . . This country ought not to be handled with force alone. The rational method—the only one, the proper one, and also the one for which I myself was chosen rather than anyone else—is the constant interplay of force with politics. I should be very careful about attacking regions which are "asleep,"

19. Maurois, op. cit., quoting Britsch.
20. David Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1969).

which are lying still, which are waiting and questioning, which would burst into flames if I entered them, at the cost of many men and much trouble, whereas, once all the neighboring regions are dealt with, these others will find themselves isolated and will fall into our hands by themselves. . . .[21]

At the outbreak of World War I, the Ministry of War ordered Lyautey to evacuate the interior of Morocco and occupy a few coastal enclaves while sending the bulk of his troops to France. Arguing that evacuation would bring rebellion, Lyautey persuaded the government to hold the interior with *minimum* forces. By judicious use of territorials, Lyautey prevented serious revolt and even managed to increase the territory under his control during the war.

Lyautey's pacification formula produced short-term gains for long-term losses. Among its numerous built-in booby traps, it represented one man's idea rather than a national ideal. Essentially a totalitarian concept, it could be and subsequently was subverted by the dictates of other colonial administrators materially far more greedy and politically far more myopic than Lyautey.

Lyautey himself was a one-man show, a prima donna in the Gordon tradition. Dramatic and flamboyant, something of a mystic, he was married to ideals that the majority of his countrymen had long since divorced. Like kings before him, he was convinced that he knew better than his government, and in some instances he probably did. At times, the Third Republic seemed like no government, and Lyautey was not alone among prominent officials in refusing obeisance to its oft-changing and oft-contradictory ministerial decrees.

This attitude can be defended if not carried too far. The fractious nature of French politics, particularly in the first decade of this century, increased the responsibility of French officials. To carry on sometimes required intelligent disobedience of orders. Most successful leaders in history at some point have risked their careers by intelligent disobedience. When disobedience, intelligent or otherwise, becomes habit, however, it turns to mutiny, and then anarchy is the result.

Lyautey was by no means alone in exploiting the turbulent political scene to gain immense operational freedom. From Gallieni and Jonnart he learned not to respect the state but to outwit it. By the time he rose to prominence, a lack of control already had spelled a loss of discipline sufficient to allow the growth of unhealthy autonomy in the French colonial empire. Lloyd George recognized this when he referred to Lyautey as "that prince of pro-consuls."[22] He could have referred similarly to other French governors-general and he would have been

21. Maurois, op. cit.
22. Usborne, op. cit.

correct—in the early part of the century, France already was becoming a prisoner of her empire.

Lyautey aided this pernicious trend. Although he preached a careful admixture of civil and military effort in administering colonial areas, in practice the military officer absorbed civil responsibility, thus giving rise to the unhappy system of the *officier-administrateur,* which called for ". . . 'special' officers trained and interested in political, social and economic affairs." As Professor Peter Paret has pointed out, this concept was fundamental to a philosophy that we shall come to later, that of the *guerre révolutionnaire,* familiar to Indochina, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and one that contained the seeds of its own destruction.[23]

This perhaps was the inevitable result of refusing the notion of political growth. Lyautey did not believe that colonies would ultimately emerge as independent, self-governing nations. In Morocco he allowed numerous *colons* to purchase large and choice land tracts at low prices and to work them with minimum-wage labor. His administration made little attempt to train Moroccan administrators or even to develop a stabilizing middle class. By allowing tribal chiefs to retain authority, he insured continued misery of millions, and by supporting a weak and inefficient sultan, he laid the groundwork for the catastrophic Rif rebellion in neighboring Spanish Morocco.

In the main, these were also his country's errors, and they were not confined to France. Lyautey's success in keeping the peace merely compounded rather than solved them. Although he paid lip service to political necessities, he never forgot that the rifle, the French rifle, ruled. Along with most of his fellow humans, he was a slave to the policy of the now. Lyautey refused the past, he blessed the present, he denied the future.

He wrote his own epitaph unknowingly many years before he died. This was in Algeria, after he had ridden around his neat bivouacs wishing his splendid legionaries, his spahis, Zouaves, his Chasseurs d'Afrique, and his *tirailleurs* a happy year. Flushed from his tour of power, he returned to his desk to write a friend. After an almost orgiastic description of troop esprit in the neatly formed camps, he added: ". . . I don't give a damn for the morrow—the present is enough for me."[24]

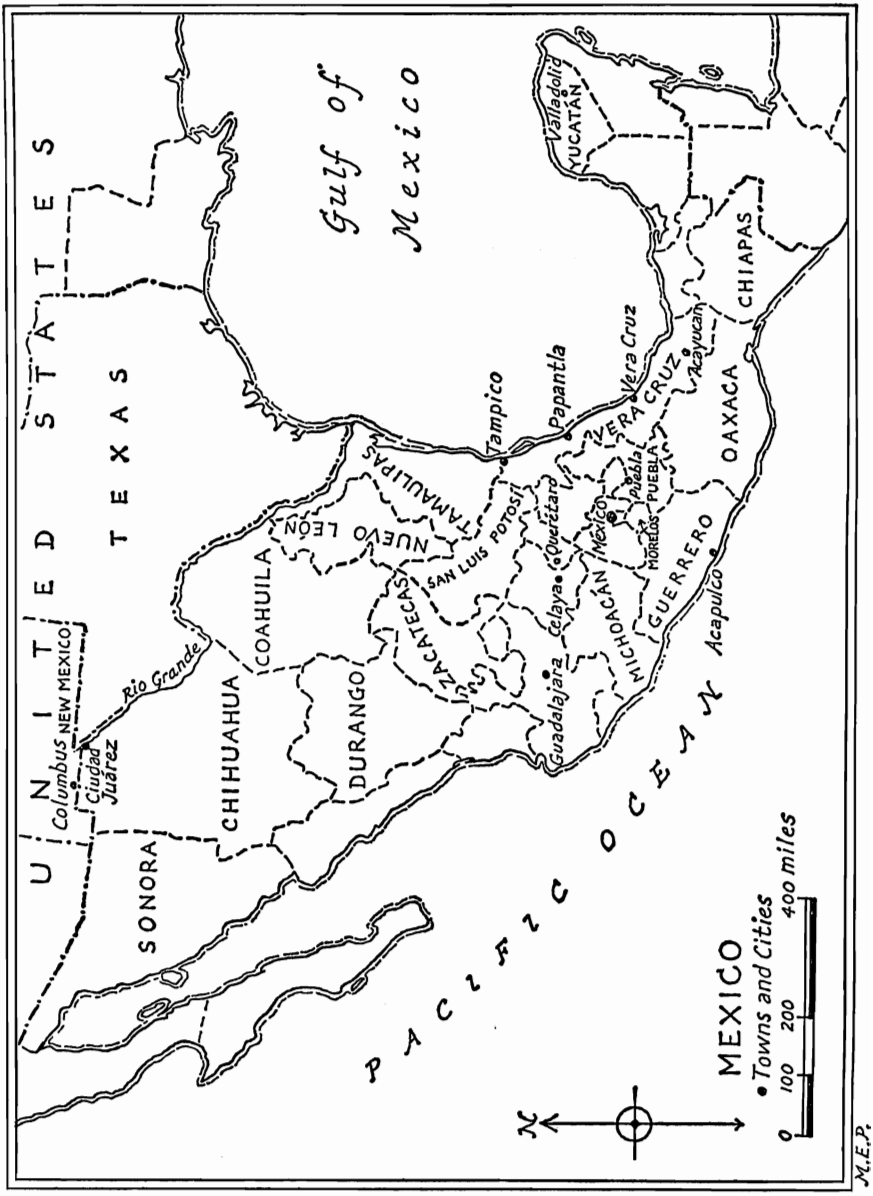
23. Paret, op. cit.
24. Maurois, op. cit.

Chapter 18

Background to the Mexican revolution • The rebellions of Miguel Hidalgo and José Morelos • Santa Anna's dictatorship • Guerrillas and the War of the Reforms • Marshal Bazaine and Mexican guerrillas • The Porfiriate and the 1910 revolution • Early guerrilla actions • The guerrilla armies of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata • The political, social and economic revolutions • Civil war • American intervention • Zapata's and Villa's deaths

GUERRILLA WARFARE played a spotty but important role in the Mexican revolution, which was fought from 1910 to 1920. This complex upheaval started as a political revolution, but so intense was a need for sweeping social and economic changes that the fighting developed into a series of bloody civil wars. The conflict should prove of particular interest to the North American since it helps to explain a Mexican xenophobia only slowly disappearing and one founded in part on North American territorial acquisition and commercial exploitation, in part on diplomatic and military intervention during the fighting. Washington intervened forcibly on several occasions. Lacking accurate information and not understanding the dynamic forces at work in the impoverished country, the Wilson administration greatly embarrassed itself and extricated its military forces only with difficulty.

Wilson's confusion is not difficult to understand. The Mexican revolution seemed to pale in comparison with the dramatic events in Europe.



Wilson and his advisers did not and perhaps could not understand that World War I would end a phase of history, while the Mexican revolution would foreshadow a new and as yet incomplete phase.

Although the outbreak of the Mexican revolution surprised every-

one, including the revolutionaries, it did not suddenly explode. Rather, it seethed from a centuries-old fermentation familiar to many other areas of the world, a powerful concoction that created and nurtured the host of elements that exploded in 1910. In Victor Alba's words:

> . . . Everything the future was to bring was already foreshadowed: a frustrated middle class, indignant at the arrogance of foreign capital; an urban youth longing for freedom of thought and expression; a proletariat in constant protest; a stultified and downtrodden peasantry, which sent off occasional sparks of rebellion; a certain number of theorists of change, which all the other groups confusedly hungered for; and a few organized and militant groups with programs for action.[1]

Aztec chieftains, who depended on military might for survival, did not use guerrilla tactics to any significant degree either in fighting internecine wars or in defending against Spanish incursions, and this is the main reason that they steadily gave ground to the intruder. Early Mayan victories against small Spanish expeditions possibly helped to mask innate superiority of Spanish arms, horses, armor and cannon to pave the way for Hernán Cortés' successful conquest, but pride also played an important role.

Cortés ruled harshly, but he nonetheless recruited large native armies to fight for him. Professor Kirkpatrick has described a punitive expedition into one rebellious region, Pánuco, where the Spanish commander, Sandoval, burned four hundred chiefs ". . . in the presence of their people: he then nominated or acknowledged the successors of these victims as native chiefs of the people and left the country beaten down into uneasy submission."[2] In later periods, as many as two hundred thousand natives served Spanish arms.

Spanish colonizing efforts continued to breed local uprisings. Later in the sixteenth century, the Mayas fought the intruder for over twenty years, ". . . a cruel and devastating war that ended in mutual exhaustion"; they finally submitted to become virtual slaves, as had their brethren to the north. These early centuries of Spanish colonialism are not, in general, marked by violent rebellions, however. Sir Nicolas Cheetham, whose recent book *A History of Mexico* is recommended, has argued that this ". . . was due to the fundamental good sense and humanity of the viceregal regime."[3] It was also due to the Indians'

1. Victor Alba, *The Mexicans–The Making of a Nation* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967).
2. F. A. Kirkpatrick, *The Spanish Conquistadores* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1934).
3. Sir Nicolas Cheetham, *A History of Mexico* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970); see also William H. Prescott, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Salvador de Madariaga, *The Fall of the Spanish American Empire* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1947); Hubert Herring, *A History of Latin America* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955).

generally docile nature, to frequent and fierce epidemics, to economic necessity, and, in large part, to lack of political organization and communications, not to mention arms and armies.

The viceregal system of rule may have held advantages and in general kept the peace, but Mexico is a large land area and communications were rude. The prevailing system of settlement, the *encomienda,* begun by Cortés, created powerful colonial barons who in many ways resembled feudal lords presiding over serfs. At the colonist's death, the holding reverted to the crown, but, in time, the barons retained their holdings, or *haciendas,* which frequently increased until relatively few persons owned most of the valuable land. The government could not function everywhere and did not always function well, and, in a relatively short time, local creoles frequently exploited the native to a sickening degree.

The Spanish hold on Mexico began to slip when the Napoleonic wars brought civil war to Spain. In 1808, an interregnum occurred, with a *gachupín* government ruling on orders from the regency in Spain, a confused period soon exploited by Mexican liberals.

North of Mexico City, in the mining area of Querétaro, an active group of dissidents had sprung up under the aegis of a young army officer, Ignacio Allende, and a parish priest, Miguel Hidalgo, a tall, self-styled prophet of fifty-seven years. In mid-September, Hidalgo summoned parishioners by tolling church bells, then treated them to a harangue that ended with the cry, "Death to the Gachupines."

The peons reacted swiftly and impressively: Within two weeks, Hidalgo had raised an army of tens of thousands. Calling himself Captain-General of America, he led this ill-trained host against a series of town garrisons. At first he was successful, but when he and Allende fell out over command of the army, a government force badly mauled the rebels. More dissension followed as Hidalgo struggled to hold his capital of Guadalajara and fend off General Calleja's government troops, a series of actions marked by extreme cruelty on both sides. Hidalgo finally met defeat in conventional battle, which dispersed his army. He was captured, cast out of the Church, and executed in the summer of 1811. Despite his failure, he is still regarded as the father of the Mexican nation. In Cheetham's words:

> . . . In his concern for the welfare of the people he was well ahead of his times, and he may rightly be considered the precursor of the whole social movement of the 1911 revolution, on which the political philosophy of modern Mexico rests.[4]

General Calleja's problems did not end with Hidalgo's demise. Although the rebel army had been destroyed, numerous officers and men

4. Cheetham, op. cit.

escaped to the mountains, there to organize guerrilla bands. This period produced a particularly able guerrilla leader, José María Morelos, a short, stocky village priest who had been a pupil and later lieutenant of Hidalgo. Sent to the country southwest of Mexico City (today's Guerrero), Morelos recruited a strong guerrilla force that was capable either of fighting Calleja's army or retiring to the hills if necessary.

Morelos fought Calleja's army for four years. He not only held his own in early encounters, but, in 1812 and 1813, gained the initiative until he controlled a sizable area running nearly across the country between Acapulco and Vera Cruz. Such was his strength in late 1813 that he arranged a conference of rebel delegates to whom he proposed an independent Mexico: ". . . a republic, universal suffrage for all citizens without distinction of race, the abolition of privilege and the breaking up of the great estates belonging to private landowners and the Church."[5] Creole conservatives rejected such radical notions, and a split developed, which gave Calleja a needed breathing space. As the new viceroy, he now reorganized his army and again went after Morelos. The two forces met outside Valladolid, where the rebel leader fought and lost two battles. In 1814, government forces recaptured the main towns and retained the initiative against the rebels, now split into two camps. Morelos was captured in 1815, cast out of the Church, and executed.

Morelos' death severely damaged the movement, as did conciliatory efforts by Calleja's successor, Apodaca. One by one, guerrilla bands made peace with the government, until only two important leaders were holding out: Guerrero, in the mountains east of Acapulco, and Félix Fernández, in the difficult terrain behind Vera Cruz.

The political confusion that embraced Spain at this time extended to Mexico and cost its people dearly. A young officer, Agustín de Iturbide, who had distinguished himself in Calleja's campaigns, sought to appease Guerrero with a plan that would make Mexico an independent kingdom. In the middle of these negotiations, Iturbide pulled off a military coup and proclaimed himself emperor of Mexico. A good many generals, including Antonio López de Santa Anna, refused such arbitrary promotion. Breaking away from Iturbide's government, they declared for a republic and forced Iturbide to abdicate, in 1823.[6]

This action unfortunately set the pattern for a century of Mexican politics: a military coup—what was called a *pronunciamiento*—followed by corrupt government and eventually a countercoup, with very little good accruing to the long-suffering Mexican peon. Although guerrilla warfare did not play a dominant role in these years, it was never far removed from the scene. The Mexican army failed to use it in its war

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.; Iturbide exiled himself to London but soon returned to Mexico and was shot.

with the United States (possibly from pride) and was severely beaten, a defeat that cost almost a third of its territory. The man who finally toppled the disastrous Santa Anna dictatorship, Juan Álvarez, depended only in part on guerrilla tactics—the Santa Anna regime was so rotten and the army so demoralized that the rebels won a relatively easy victory. In the civil war that followed—the War of the Reforms—guerrillas operated behind the opposing armies, but, too often, these were little more than bandit groups exploiting an already confused and ravaged countryside.

Guerrilla warfare came into its own, however, during the abortive effort of Emperor Napoleon III to restore a Mexican monarchy and put the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian on the throne. The Monroe Doctrine had theretofore prevented direct foreign intervention, but in 1862 the United States had its hands full with its own civil war. An allied army, mostly French but with Spanish and British contingents, landed at Vera Cruz and began to fight inland. By spring, the French were fighting alone; after a setback at the battle of Puebla, Napoleon sent reinforcements, and the army ably commanded by Marshal Bazaine entered Mexico City. The liberal government of Benito Juárez now moved north to Paso del Norte (Ciudad Juárez), which it defended while waiting for American intervention. By the spring of 1864, organized resistance to French arms had virtually ended, but, throughout the occupied areas, guerrilla actions flared.

None of these actions was particularly important by itself, but together they constituted a challenge to authority. And the challenge gained strength because that authority itself was divided: Napoleon was not pleased with what had become an expensive campaign—he had fielded some thirty thousand troops; and Maximilian's supporters, the clergy and landowners, were not pleased at his refusal to reinstate various privileges; and Bazaine was not pleased, because his army knew no rest and he was spending a great deal of money in fruitless pursuit of these wretched guerrilla bands.

For some time, Bazaine had been arguing for solution by force: he wanted to treat the guerrillas as outlaws, with summary execution of those captured. Maximilian eventually agreed. An overzealous Mexican officer fighting for the French now summarily executed two captured generals. The guerrillas retaliated. With each French reprisal, the guerrillas gained new recuits—and the war continued.

But Napoleon was in trouble: at home, a strong and arrogant Prussia was threatening him, and abroad, the United States Government was demanding his army's recall. Early in 1867, he bowed to these pressures and withdrew his army. Unable to stand alone, Maximilian surrendered and was court-martialed and shot.[7]

7. Ibid.

Maximilian's death put Juárez and the liberals back in power. Unfortunately, Juárez soon died and the party split into three factions, each devoted to self-aggrandizement. For forty years, leaders such as Manuel González and particularly Porfirio Díaz sold Mexico to anyone who would buy it. Their peculations included selling huge tracts of public land, including mineral rights, to a chosen few—either Mexican or foreign speculators—along with railways and mining and later oil concessions. A political elite, the *científicos,* preached laissez-faire economics that virtually ignored social problems, particularly those of the Indians, who still constituted 30–40 per cent of the population. Porfirio's ruling political philosophy was short but scarcely sweet: "bread and the stick."

Under the Porfiriate, of several decades, grand larceny became a way of life: Porfirio and his henchmen disposed of 50 million hectares (one hectare equals nearly two and one half acres) of land, much of it going to foreign ownership and management—about $3.5 billion poured into the dictator's coffers from 1880 to 1910. The Catholic Church once again became a large landowner, as did Porfirio's regional bosses, the hated *jefes políticos.* One Mexican rancher owned 2.5 million hectares in Chihuahua; the Cedros *hacienda* in Zacatecas comprised 750,000 hectares; thirty-two persons owned the sugar-growing state of Morelos; three thousand families owned *half of Mexico.* Landowners frequently forced peasants from common land (the *ejidos*) and dispossessed tribes that had occupied territory for generations. Of 10 million peasants working the land, 9.5 million owned nothing.[8]

This perhaps would have been tolerated had it resulted in a decent way of life. Instead, the *haciendas* offered conditions familiar to the feudal ages:

> . . . Wages were sometimes as low as twenty-five centavos a day; corporal punishment was a normal practice and most peasants fell hopelessly into debt with the *hacienda* store. The diet was insufficient and their housing primitive in the extreme; disease was rife and a school was rarely available for their children. . . . Lands lay fallow, the Indians struggled on the brink of starvation and Mexico was obliged to import foodstuffs for its townspeople.[9]

As one historian wrote, Díaz did ". . . much to develop his country. But he did nothing to develop his people."[10]

8. Alba, op. cit.; see also Ronald Atkin, *Revolution! Mexico 1910–1920* (New York: John Day, 1969); Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexico—The Struggle for Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

9. Cheetham, op. cit.

10. Atkin, op. cit.; see also Patrick O'Hea, *Reminiscences of the Mexican Revolution* (Mexico City: Editorial Fournier, 1966). O'Hea was a plantation manager before and during the revolution.

His people sometimes protested. A disciple of the French socialist Charles Fourier, one Rhodakanaty, had started a small labor movement in 1866. One of his disciples, Julio Chávez, led a short-lived peasant rebellion in 1869—he was captured and shot. The movement continued during the 1870s and was fed by the writings of Marx and Bakunin. Significantly, these doctrines held little appeal to the peons, who were far more attracted by the promise of immediate reforms.[11] That did not mean they were opposed to armed uprising. In 1885, the Yaqui tribes of Sonora rose against the government and, for fifteen years, under such capable leaders as Cajeme and Tetabiate, fought a guerrilla war. When government weight finally told, the army rounded up some eight thousand tribesmen and deported them to Yucatán to work on the plantations virtually as slaves. Other revolts occurred, but either the army or a gendarme force, the despised *rurales,* put them down rapidly and cruelly.[12]

Down but not out.

The countryside was never completely safe during the Porfiriate, and even if the *rurales* suppressed active opposition, peasant hatred continued to grow. Serious uprisings occurred in Tenochic in 1892, in Papantla in 1895, in Acayucan in 1906, and in Viesca in 1908.[13]

A revolutionary movement also existed. In 1906, two anarchists, the Flores Magón brothers, well known for their revolutionary newspaper *Regeneración,* formed a Liberal Party whose slogan was "Land and Liberty." These and other labor leaders also incited a series of provincial strikes in mines and factories. A frightened government overreacted—troops put down one strike by killing some two hundred workers.[14]

But a more dangerous situation was developing in Porfiriate ranks. Porfirio and his ancient henchmen had grown increasingly isolated and intransigent. Had they been intelligent, they would have read the increasing demonstrations and uprisings as proper warning of vast social unrest—like Horatio seeing the king's ghost, they would have said, "This bodes some strange eruption to our state." A few of the younger Porfiristas recognized the danger and began to demand reforms. When the dictator, soon to turn eighty, refused to name a successor, a party member named Francisco Madero broke away and organized a group called the Anti-Re-electionists. Madero was in his thirties, a small, restless man, rich and well educated, a teetotaler and vegetarian. Arrested during the 1910 presidential elections, Madero upon release fled to Texas, denounced Díaz's re-election as fraudulent, named himself provisional

11. Alba, op. cit.
12. Atkin, op. cit.; see also Frank Tannenbaum, *Peace by Revolution: An Interpretation of Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933).
13. Alba, op. cit.
14. Cheetham, op. cit.

president, and issued a reform program called the Plan of San Luis Potosí.[15]

No mass uprisings followed, but Madero's lieutenants in Chihuahua, Abraham González and Pascual Orozco, raised a number of mounted bands which, using guerrilla tactics, effectively harassed immobile army garrisons. One subordinate leader, typical in some ways, was named Doroteo Arango. A mestizo with a touch of negro blood, at sixteen years of age he had killed the *hacendado's* son, who had raped his sister, and fled to the hills to become a cattle thief. The thirty-year-old Arango knew little of Mexican politics, but, hating government and landowners, he came down from the hills, rounded up fifteen horsemen, and joined Madero. Soon feared by the federals for fantastic mobility and surprise attacks, he became famous as Francisco "Pancho" Villa and shortly commanded a force of some five hundred horse.[16]

Although the army was disorganized and riddled with corruption, it withstood rebel attacks in a war that was cruel from the beginning. Porfirio's generals, deeming the rebels to be bandits, ordered all prisoners shot. The rebels retaliated by executing government officials and all officers (but allowing soldiers to join rebel ranks). Subordinate guerrilla leaders also paid off old scores: on one occasion, Pancho Villa ordered two hundred Chinese killed in one town simply because he hated Chinese.[17]

In relatively short order, rebel forces controlled enough of Chihuahua for Madero to transfer his revolutionary government from Texas. Meanwhile, revolts continued to break out in the North, and also in the South, in the sugar provinces.

Those readers who remember Wallace Beery's superb portrayal of Pancho Villa will inevitably connect the Mexican revolution with Villa, but a guerrilla leader named Emiliano Zapata played an even more significant role. John Womack has recently written an excellent biography of this rebel leader: *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution.*[18] Zapata was a tenant farmer in the southern province of Morelos. Incensed at feudal conditions, he became outspokenly critical and was banished to the army. Discharged in 1910, he returned to Morelos, already restive with a few small guerrilla bands operating from the hills. Recognizing the futility of this meager effort, Zapata set out to organize a peasant uprising.

Zapata was neither a Marxist nor a Communist. The historian Frank

15. Ibid.; see also Alba, op. cit.; Stanley K. Ross, *Francisco I. Madero—Apostle of Mexican Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

16. Atkin, op. cit.; see also O'Hea, op. cit., who writes from a basis of personal acquaintance with Villa.

17. Atkin, op. cit.

18. John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968).

Tannenbaum described him as ". . . a man of no learning, of no broad social contacts, a simple, vigorous human being . . . who knew that his people had been robbed of their lands, and that it was his call to return these lands to them." His program reflected Madero's stated agrarian and social reforms, and neither program was dissimilar to that of the Taiping rebels in 1850 (see Chapter 24).

Ronald Atkin, who has also written an excellent new study of the period, *Revolution Mexico 1910–1920,* describes Zapata as ". . . a small, slender man with a sensuous Asiatic face, mandarin mustache and eyes as black and hard as obsidian. Unlike the rough, rude Villa, Zapata was a dandy. He always wore symbolic, theatrical black—a fitted jacket and tight trousers with silver trimming down the seams. He wore enormous, silver-laden sombreros and his taste extended to fine horses and beautiful women."[19] Deadly earnest in social-economic protest, he rallied peasants by the thousands with the cry: "Men of the South, it is better to die on your feet than live on your knees!" Give us land and liberty, he thundered—and his cry reverberated throughout the province.

Within nine months, Zapata had raised an army of three thousand peasants, a spontaneous and self-supporting uprising: ". . . We have begged from the outside not one bullet," Zapata boasted, "not one rifle, not one peso; we have taken it all from the enemy."[20] The uprising spread quickly, and, in general, regional leaders such as José Trinidad Ruíz, Salazar, Neri, and a man with the unlikely name of De la O proved highly effective guerrilla fighters.[21]

Zapata's initial success was all the more wondrous in view of government forces in Morelos—about a thousand troops under General Casso López and perhaps five thousand *rurales.* John Womack explained their general impotence:

> . . . the only places they effectively held were the towns they were stationed in, the district and major municipal seats. In some cases, especially among the *rurales,* the commanders were excellent; and on paper they had crafty tactics for their mounted police—constant pursuit, night marches, mobile provisioning. But almost all officers and troopers came from other states . . . and they were so ignorant of the twisting trails and ravines they now had to maneuver through as they were unfamiliar with the local villagers, whom they inevitably harassed and who then informed on them to the rebels. The planters too resented the expense and disruption the soldiers and policemen caused. The result was that the federal forces rarely budged from their quarters.[22]

19. Atkin, op. cit.
20. Ibid.
21. Alba, op. cit.
22. Womack, op. cit.

The Díaz government could not withstand the combined onslaught against its authority. When negotiations with the rebels broke down in early 1911, fighting resumed. In the North, Orozco's guerrillas captured Ciudad Juárez; in the South, Zapata's bands took Cuautla.

These victories toppled the government.[23] After a short and confused interim government, Madero won election to the presidency. But he was already in trouble with his own party. More like a boy on a pony than a man on horseback, Madero proved far too weak for the enormous task he faced, one he did not even understand. Madero insisted that the people wanted a political revolution, whereas they were vigorously demanding fundamental social and economic changes. But Madero failed to offer even a political revolution. A poor administrator, he quickly lost control to conservative ministers, and, instead of pushing through vital and promised reforms, he followed a vacillating policy that merely bred new discontent.

De la Barra's interim government had already sent an army under General Victoriano Huerta against Zapata, who had withdrawn his guerrillas to the mountains. Madero halted this punitive pursuit, but Zapata, rightly suspicious of the new president, refused to disarm his guerrillas. When Madero failed to push through promised land reforms, Zapata announced his own reform program. In November 1911, ". . . standing on a table in a mountain hut . . . while the Mexican flag was raised and a band played the National Anthem," Zapata read out the Plan of Ayala. Like that of the Taipings in 1850, the program markedly resembled Marxist teachings:

> . . . immediate seizure of all foreign-owned lands and of all properties which had been taken away from villages, the confiscation of one-third of the land held by hacendados friendly to the Revolution and full confiscation against owners who "directly or indirectly" opposed the Plan. . . . All land held by the Zapatistas was immediately turned over to the people, and crude huts went up in the productive fields of fifty-three of the richest haciendas in the country, which were declared forfeit "to the sovereign cause of liberty and equality."[24]

Once again, peasants by the thousands flocked to fight under Zapata's banner, a grim death's-head.

After announcing his new program, Zapata resumed fighting in the South. In January 1912, Madero sent a new governor to Morelos, Francisco Naranjo, Jr., a fairly liberal man who carefully studied the situation. ". . . I found that Morelos lacked three things," he said later,

23. Cheetham, op. cit.; Porfirio Díaz fled to Paris and died four years later.
24. Atkin, op. cit.

"first plows, second books, and third equity. And it had more than enough latifundios, taverns and bosses."[25] Naranjo had put his finger on the problem, but was unable to effect necessary reforms. Meanwhile, federal troops under Brigadier General Juvencio Robles were marching through the state, burning towns, relocating peasants, shooting guerrillas. When these punitive measures failed and the guerrilla force continued to grow, Madero relieved Robles with General Felipe Ángeles. Ángeles took an altogether new tack and attempted to bring peace to the torn country by general amnesty and good sense. His measures soon began to deprive the guerrillas of recruits and of support from the towns, and, had the provincial administration acted forcefully and intelligently, it could probably have stopped the fighting altogether.

As it was, it refused to enact the proposed reforms. Zapata, in turn, had changed tactics by ordering his guerrillas to burn cane fields in order to deprive peons of work and thus create recruits. His forces shortly swelled until subordinate leaders were fielding units with as many as eight to twelve hundred guerrillas.[26]

In the North, Pascual Orozco felt himself slighted by the new government and, early in 1912, also resumed fighting, though scarcely for a revolutionary cause. His new patron was a millionaire cattle baron who wanted to embarrass Madero's government and cause it to fall. In the event, Orozco was soon challenged by Pancho Villa and then defeated by a federal army under command of General Huerta, an able if drunken and dishonest soldier incongruously known to his admirers as "the Mexican Cromwell." As if Madero did not have enough problems, he now ran afoul of the United States Government.

Public opinion in America originally had favored the revolutionary cause, at least sufficiently to cause President Taft to recognize and even assist the Madero government while officially holding to a neutral policy.[27] But American commercial interests in the country were strong: American companies owned three quarters of the mines, half the oil fields (England owned the other half), and vast cattle ranches in the North—all together, by 1910, an investment of some $2 billion.[28] The tragic exploitation of people and property was in keeping with North America's curious little imperialistic fling that had begun with the Spanish-American War. An American fleet patrolled the Gulf Coast, its purpose according to Philander Knox, Taft's Secretary of State, to keep Mexicans ". . . in a salutary equilibrium, between a dangerous

25. Womack, op. cit.
26. Ibid.
27. Atkin, op. cit.; among hundreds of American volunteers to the rebel forces was a future film star, Tom Mix.
28. Alba, op. cit.

and exaggerated apprehension and a proper degree of wholesome fear."[29]

The American ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, a fifty-five-year-old archconservative, was firmly wedded to American commercial interests. This group, which formed a powerful colonial lobby called The Committee of the American Colony, deplored the notion of a reform government and, through Wilson, did what they could to defeat Madero. Whether through intention or ignorance, Wilson, who admired Porfirio Díaz, badly misreported the actual situation from the beginning of the revolution. The Mexican Government had interpreted the lull that followed the original outbreaks as a sign of weakness, whereas it was a period of rebel reorganization and recruitment. This was a fundamental error—we shall encounter it again and again—and Wilson went along with it: ". . . The conspiracy lacks coherence and the government will easily suppress it," he reported, also commenting on ". . . the lack of intelligent leadership" among the rebels.[30] Even when the situation clarified, Wilson persisted in denouncing

> . . . the President's [Madero's] ineptitude, his hostility to the United States and his fatal leanings toward radicalism. By manipulating or disregarding his [Wilson's] own instructions he contrived to give the Mexicans a misleadingly harsh impression of his government's attitude towards the Madero regime. Although the revolution had not taken place without some loss of American lives and property, it was grossly dishonest of Wilson to exaggerate these incidents and to pretend that disorder was increasing, whereas the truth was that by mid-1912 peace had been restored in the whole of Mexico outside the area overrun by Zapata.[31]

Ambassador Wilson misrepresented the situation so badly that Washington adopted an anti-Madero policy and moved troops to the border. The ambassador's machinations helped anti-Madero forces to overthrow, indeed to murder, the president and the vice-president in early 1913 and install General Huerta in power. Huerta was a dreadful man —an alcoholic, dope addict, thief, and despot—and neither Taft nor his successor, Woodrow Wilson, recognized his government, nor did three northern Mexican states, where revolution again broke out.

The governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, challenged the Huerta government by announcing still another reform program, the

29. Atkin, op. cit.; see also Peter Calvert, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910–1914—The Diplomacy of Anglo-American Conflict* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968): a detailed and excellent political-diplomatic analysis.
30. Atkin, op. cit.
31. Cheetham, op. cit.

Plan of Guadalupe. Huerta's army at first forced the rebels north but did not destroy Carranza's army. Based at Nogales, on the Sonora-Arizona border, the rebel force was commanded by Álvaro Obregón, thirty-three years old, a former schoolteacher and factory worker who, along with his associates, Adolfo de la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles, would soon become important revolutionary characters (and eventually presidents).

Another rebel leader was about to come into his own in neighboring Chihuahua. This was Pancho Villa, who had returned from Texas to organize a new force of mounted irregulars. Such was his charisma that he had little trouble in attracting men to his banner. When federal troops captured and executed his titular commander, General Abraham González, Pancho Villa became military commander of the state.

Villa was not as good a guerrilla fighter as Zapata, but he was as picturesque. A teetotaler and non-smoker, he was a crack pistol shot; as Ronald Atkin wrote, he loved women, ice cream, and war. As long as he commanded a small band, he prospered, but as his force increased, he began to encounter problems that he failed to solve and that eventually brought him to heel.

The opposing forces spent most of the summer of 1913 in strengthening themselves. Huerta's strategy was to defend the towns along the railway, leaving the countryside to the rebels. This was a holding action while he maneuvered to gain American recognition of his government.

Woodrow Wilson despised Huerta and what he stood for and steadily refused to recognize him. But, in the spring of 1913, the British Government offered to recognize Huerta in return for a promise of "free elections" as soon as possible. Germany, France, Spain, and Japan played along, but Wilson relieved his ambassador and refused to name a new one. Leaving the embassy under control of a chargé d'affaires, Wilson sent a personal emissary to the war-torn country. John Lind, former governor of Minnesota, proposed a cease-fire with "free elections" to follow, with Huerta abstaining from candidacy. Carranza refused the plan and announced that the Constitutionalists would execute anyone recognizing a president elected under it! In the event, the elections proved a farce and Huerta continued as dictator.

But an uneasy dictator.

Carranza's armies had been steadily growing. Pancho Villa now commanded some eight thousand men, a force armed and equipped in part by captured government weapons, in part by arms smuggled from the United States and paid for by "contributions" and "loans" exacted from towns in the best medieval tradition. Villa's army even included a modern hospital train staffed with sixty American and Mexican doctors.[32]

32. Atkin, op. cit.

In bold contrast, his disparate force included lieutenants as unorthodox as they were cruel: Tomás Urbina, the Lion of the Sierras, an illiterate whose signature was a heart; Fausto Borunda, called the Matador because he always killed prisoners; Rodolfo Fierro, another brute, who on one occasion killed three hundred federal prisoners on the spot.[33] Such men were called "finger generals"—". . . their nickname coming from the practice of appointing officers by pointing a finger . . . and saying, 'You, be colonel; you, general; you, governor.'"[34] Along with other leaders, they turned up in small bands that included wives, children, and animals; the resultant army strongly resembled the Algerian *smala,* an awkward mob that perforce traveled by rail. Villa exercised unquestioned authority over most of these bands. His personal following was high at this time. Although not understanding the goals of the revolution (nor did the other leaders, with the exception of Obregón and Calles), Villa did understand the peon's desire for land, and, like Zapata, distributed it liberally. He used his guerrilla army in civic works—repairing streets and building schools. Villa also had gained two important aides: General Felipe Ángeles, a professional and capable soldier, and Martín Luis Guzmán, his secretary (who later wrote novels based on his experience).

Villa's army fought well in the early battles. In September, he and Obregón began to push southward. The tactical problem consisted of attacking towns defended by government troops. In the early attacks, Villa developed what became a favorite tactic, *un golpe terrífico* (a terrible blow) delivered by a flank attack of cavalry (a tactic repeatedly used by Frederick the Great). Villa was so impressed with its success that he organized an elite and independent unit, the *Dorados,* three squadrons of one hundred horse each.

Both Obregón and Villa scored impressive victories in the autumn fighting. The rebel cause prospered further when President Wilson, early in 1914, changed his policy of "watchful waiting" and allowed the rebels to buy arms in America.

But nothing was pleasant about the war. The rebel attacks were costly, and interspersed with this confused campaign were small bands looting, raping and killing—a terrible period reminiscent of the Thirty Years' War. Neither side gave or expected quarter. Horrified by the brutality, President Wilson sent an army officer, General Hugh Scott, to Villa's camp. Scott explained how the habit of executing prisoners repelled American citizens and gave him a British army manual on the treatment of prisoners and conquered areas: ". . . Villa was fascinated. He had

33. Ibid.; see also O'Hea, op. cit., who personally knew many of these subordinates.

34. Alba, op. cit.

it translated into Spanish and distributed among his officers." Scott claimed that he reprieved the next four thousand prisoners. But, in Atkin's words,

> . . . Villa still executed the *Colorados* whenever he captured them, explaining that they were peons, just like the revolutionaries, and that no peon could volunteer to fight against the cause of liberty unless he were a wicked man.[35]

The ghastly war continued through the winter. But intense rivalries had been developing between Carranza, the "First Chief" of the Constitutionalists, and his military commanders, and also between Obregón and Pancho Villa. The rebel armies nonetheless continued to advance toward Mexico City. Huerta's cause was virtually lost. He received a temporary boost in popularity in April 1914, when Washington intervened by seizing a ship loaded with munitions, an action that led to the famous Tampico incident and an American force landing at Vera Cruz, killing two hundred defenders and occupying the port. But even this incredibly inept move could not save him—in July he abdicated, and, a month later, the federal army left Mexico City.

But matters were scarcely pacific in the rebel camp. Frightened of Villa's growing power and truculent attitude, Carranza now steered him away from the capital. When Villa protested, Carranza stopped coal deliveries to his camp. Villa, who depended on trains to move his *smala,* was stymied—and Obregón's army beat him to Mexico City.

Villa did not long remain stymied. At the end of September, when he was again marching south, he issued a manifesto that defied Carranza's authority. Carranza's rule also faced a threat from the South: Emiliano Zapata, who controlled a large area south of Mexico City, was pushing toward the capital as well. Like Villa, Zapata had held to a rigorous social-economic interpretation of the revolution. In taking over the countryside of Morelos, Puebla, and Guerrero, he ruthlessly eliminated landowning opposition, killing plantation managers, burning haciendas. To retain control of the land, he summarily distributed it to peons, who farmed it while carrying rifles. Zapata thus strengthened his power base, and in some ways proved a more formidable enemy than the northern forces. But the states under his control paid a terrible price: whole villages destroyed; thousands of men conscripted and deported north as laborers by government forces; plantations razed and burned; crops destroyed.

Zapata remained strong, however, and, combined with Villa, proved too powerful for Carranza, who moved his government to Vera Cruz,

35. Atkin, op. cit.; see also O'Hea, op. cit.: Scott's success may have been exaggerated—he did not speak Spanish.

leaving Mexico City to Villa and Zapata. This proved only a temporary setback. Neither rebel leader knew what to do with his power, and soon evacuated the capital. Obregón had used the breathing space to reorganize his army and again take to the field. Fighting seesawed until April 1915, when Obregón tempted Villa to attack his army entrenched at Celaya, west of Mexico City. Villa's military adviser, General Felipe Ángeles, was away, and Villa had failed to learn the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war: horses were useless against trenches defended by barbed wire and soldiers firing rifles and machine guns. A series of abortive attacks cost him perhaps ten thousand killed and broke his army.[36] Retreating north, he halted now and again to fight losing battles. His close friend Tomás Urbina deserted with the treasury; other leaders and their guerrilla followers faded away.

Villa reached his northern sanctuary of Chihuahua with a greatly decimated army. A few months later, another blow fell when Washington, which had recognized Carranza's government, stopped arms from reaching Villa. Partly in retaliation, in January 1916, Villa's troopers held up a train in Sonora and cold-bloodedly murdered sixteen American engineers; in March, his band raided Columbus, New Mexico, and killed eight American soldiers and ten civilians. In response to the public outcry, President Wilson gained Carranza's permission to send a punitive expedition under General John Pershing into the northern provinces.

Pershing's expedition failed for two reasons: his troops were neither trained nor equipped for guerrilla warfare, and his operations were constantly hampered by Carranza, who was only too aware of the prevailing Mexican hatred for Yankee intervention. On the one occasion that Pershing's cavalry found Villa, it could not pursue, because its horses were worn out. The Americans were operating in hostile country, and soon learned that even federal troops resented their presence. They scored a few successes: on one occasion, a cavalry column surprised a group of rebels and killed forty-four of them; on another occasion, a young lieutenant, George Patton, surprised and killed the commander of Villa's famed *Dorados*. But these were slight when compared to the investment in and embarrassment brought by the expedition. The New York *Herald* bluntly stated that

> . . . through no fault of his own, Pershing's Punitive Expedition has become as much a farce from the American standpoint as it is an eyesore to the Mexican people. . . . Each day adds to the burden of its cost . . . and to the ignominy of its position. General Pershing and his command should be recalled without further delay.[37]

36. Alba, op. cit.
37. Atkin, op. cit.

Although Pershing's operations were increasingly restricted—as of July, his patrols could operate only 150 miles into Mexico—the campaign lasted into early 1917.

Pancho Villa continued to operate in the North, though with only sporadic success. In the summer of 1919, another American force, under Brigadier General James Erwin, brought his small army to bay and defeated it. Small bands of Villistas survived; Villa himself outlasted his enemy, Carranza, whose rule had brought continued disaster to Mexico. In 1920, the First Chief fell out with Obregón and was murdered while trying to escape the country. Obregón made peace with Villa and kept him quiet by giving him a large hacienda, which he ruled in the best overlord tradition until he was ambushed and killed in 1923.

Emiliano Zapata also suffered a violent end. Unlike Pancho Villa, Zapata continued to fight guerrilla warfare against the Carranza government. General Pablo González commanded the campaign in Morelos against what he called "the Zapata rabble." González answered Zapata's guerrilla tactics with wholesale spoliation: ". . . Whole villages were burned; crops were destroyed; women and children were herded into detention camps and every man González could lay his hands on was hanged."[38] Zapata replied with wholesale terrorism against landowners and army officers:

> . . . Some victims were crucified on telegraph poles or on giant cactus trees; others were staked out over ants' nests and smeared with honey, or sewn up inside wet hides and left to suffocate as the hides dried in the sun. One of Zapata's favorite execution methods was to stake out a man on a rough framework of branches over the top of a fast-growing maguey cactus. During the night the thorn-tipped blossom stalk of the plant would grow a foot or more, driving itself inch by inch through the staked-out victim.[39]

Although the Carranza government introduced a new constitution in 1917, Zapata refused to submit to what he believed was reactionary government. Fighting continued into 1919, when Zapata fell victim to an elaborate ruse: an army colonel sent word that he wished to desert along with his regiment. To prove his good intention, he attacked a government force and killed fifty-nine soldiers! Duly impressed, Zapata met him at a rendezvous and was instantly shot dead. The colonel received fifty thousand pesos and a promotion.[40] Following Zapata's death, resistance in Morelos diminished and finally settled into uneasy peace.

The Mexican revolution was expensive. In addition to millions of dollars spent by each side on arms, armies, and ammunition, it cost an estimated three million lives.[41] It left the country virtually bankrupt, with

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Alba, op. cit.
41. Atkin, op. cit.

industries and mines at a standstill and virulent hatreds among the populace that would persist for decades. Nor did it accomplish all basic revolutionary aims. But it did clear the way for a system of government that, despite many faults, has without question improved the lives of its peoples—a task of reconstruction not yet completed.

Chapter 19

Guerrilla fighting in World War I • Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa • The background • A guerrilla army forms • Lettow-Vorbeck's problems • The Boer campaign against him • His incredible retreat • The cost • Lettow-Vorbeck's secret • British weaknesses • Meinertzhagen's prediction

THE STATIC NATURE of World War I prevented guerrilla operations on the western front but not in subsidiary theaters. Brilliant campaigns were fought in East Africa and Jerusalem—campaigns that bore primarily a military hallmark in that each contributed to the fortune of its parent army, although in totally different fashion.

The war produced two other peripheral actions, however, of a primarily political hallmark: one was the revolt in Ireland, where rebels used guerrilla methods, mainly terrorist activities, to gain a political aim. The rebellion only indirectly affected the war, in that by hurting and embarrassing England it helped the Central Powers; in other words, the rebels used the war as an ally.

The other action was the Russian Revolution, which had been brewing for decades. Achieved by quasi-guerrilla methods, it directly affected the war in favor of Germany, who did all within her power to bring it about. But here, too, the war proved the true catalyst. And it was the

chaos and confusion brought by war that allowed a reasonable expression of the will of the majority to be subverted by a Bolshevik minority —albeit a minority inspired by charismatic leadership that cannot be denigrated merely because of unfortunate results.

These four actions hold diverse and interesting lessons, each for different reasons. Taken together, however, and related to the lessons of former centuries, they complete the legacy seized on by Lenin and converted by him and his followers into a new political-military approach to warfare.

At the outbreak of World War I, a forty-five-year-old German army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, commanded German East Africa's (later Tanganyika, today's Tanzania) garrison force, a *Schutztruppe* that, together with the police force, numbered about 260 white officers and 4,600 *askaris,* or natives. Though virtually surrounded and cut off from overseas supply by British blockade, Lettow-Vorbeck refused to consider his civilian superior's plea for neutrality. Instead, he insisted on military action in order to pin down "as many troops as possible" and thereby cause England to provide reinforcements otherwise destined for France.

Lettow-Vorbeck told his own story after the war, but it has recently been presented in Leonard Mosley's splendid book *Duel for Kilimanjaro,* on which I have in part based the following brief account.[1]

Shortly after outbreak of war, the British decided to occupy the coastal towns of German East Africa. In early November, two reinforced brigades from India landed near Tanga, in the North, an effort that was supposed to have been supported by another brigade coming overland. This help never arrived, and so inept was the amphibious operation that Lettow-Vorbeck's guerrillas, aided by swarms of local and furious bees, soon caused the enemy to re-embark.

This disaster cost the British eight hundred dead, five hundred wounded, and several hundred taken prisoner; it cost Lettow-Vorbeck fifteen European and fifty-four *askari* lives, it brought him recruits by the hundreds, and it also supplied ". . . twelve machine guns, hundreds of rifles, 600,000 rounds of ammunition, coats and blankets enough to last for the rest of the war."[2]

But Lettow-Vorbeck was after much bigger game. He wanted to entice a large British expeditionary force into German East Africa—an immense country, whose 650,000 square miles of jungle, forests,

1. Mosley, op. cit.; for another recent account, see Brian Gardner, *German East* (London: Cassell, 1963).

2. Ibid.; see also General von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1920). Lettow-Vorbeck claimed that the British suffered closer to 2,000 deaths rather than 800; he also claimed the capture of 16 machine guns.

bushlands, heat, rain, and disease would not gladly suffer large armies. He reasoned that if guerrillas continued to cut the all-important Uganda railway, the British would be stung into the desired reaction—and each soldier lured south would be one less available to be sent to Europe.

Throughout 1915, his small guerrilla bands, usually two Europeans and eight *askaris,* operated from Mount Kilimanjaro's wooded slopes, destroying bridges, blowing up trains, ambushing convoys, and capturing arms, ammunition, horses, and mules. At the same time, Lettow-Vorbeck was recruiting and training a guerrilla-type army, which, by late 1915, reached a peak strength of three thousand whites and eleven thousand *askaris.*

Lettow-Vorbeck was supremely suited to carry out this ambitious program. A large, physically tough man, he was a professional soldier who had fought in China in the Boxer Rebellion. In 1904, he had campaigned against the Hottentots in Southwest Africa, had been wounded, but had learned a great deal about guerrilla warfare from these superb bush fighters, who, as the British had earlier experienced with the Zulus, moved faster on foot than the European on horse! Lettow-Vorbeck ". . . took away with him from south-west Africa a lesson he never forgot—that in savage lands it is not necessarily the big army that will win the campaign, even if it eventually wins the war."[3]

In trying to mobilize German East Africa's resources, Lettow-Vorbeck often fought an uphill battle. His nemesis was the governor, Heinrich Schnee, a vapid little man who wished to keep the area neutral. A more complex and less determined man than Lettow-Vorbeck might have bowed to his nominal superior's desire. Lettow-Vorbeck was not particularly complex, but he was determined, and, above all, he was a realist. Reasoning that neutrality would preserve nothing if Germany suffered defeat, he argued that, in time of war, military authority must rule. As a German army officer, he felt it incumbent to fight in the best way he could, a decision soon condoned by the German emperor himself. Schnee never did agree—a stormy and prolonged relationship that forever hindered Lettow-Vorbeck's operations.

A perpetual shortage of arms, ammunition, and supply also plagued the colonel. The British disaster at Tanga and guerrilla forays in the North provided him with needed arms. The British also helped by bombarding coastal towns and turning the apathetic European population into active participants willing to donate goods and services to the army. In the spring of 1915, a German freighter evaded the British blockade and crash-landed on the coast to disgorge eighteen hundred rifles, 4.5 million rounds of ammunition, two six-centimeter guns, four machine guns, shells, explosives, tents, and communication materials.[4]

3. Ibid.; see also General von Lettow-Vorbeck, *Mein Leben* (Munich: Koehlers, 1957).

4. Lettow-Vorbeck (*Reminiscences*), *supra;* see also Hordern, op. cit.

But the Royal Navy prevented another such windfall, and Lettow-Vorbeck's diversely located units were never entirely free from ammunition shortages. They soon became dependent on home-made or ersatz items such as candles, soap, quinine, medicines, cigars, cigarettes, beer, whiskey, boots made from antelope skin (the soles cut from captured British saddles). Later in the war, as the British occupied the towns and pushed inland, most of these items disappeared, with resultant hardship to the guerrillas.

Hardship, however, meant that Lettow-Vorbeck was accomplishing his basic mission. Early British failures and concomitant guerrilla successes had deeply offended British *amour-propre* and decided London on a campaign designed to eliminate the troublesome Lettow-Vorbeck. In early 1916, a mounted brigade of Boers arrived in Nairobi, the vanguard of an impressive force commanded by Major General Jan Smuts, once a hunted guerrilla himself. Smuts commanded a two-year offensive that ended in stalemate, with Lettow-Vorbeck's force, though weakened, still very operational.

General van Deventer next took over the chase, and in late 1917 forced Lettow-Vorbeck to begin a long retreat south into Portuguese East Africa, *a three-thousand-mile trek* that ended back in the German colony in the autumn of 1918. Here he rebuilt his shattered force and by November was again wondering where to strike. At this point, the European armistice ended his war.

At a cost of some 2,000 killed, 9,000 wounded, and 7,000 prisoners or missing, besides six or seven thousand native carriers dead (mostly from disease), he had contained 160,000 British troops besides various Portuguese and Belgian expeditions from south and west. In hunting him, the British lost an estimated 10,000 killed, 7,800 wounded, and about a thousand missing or captured in addition to nearly 50,000 native carriers dead. Belgian and Portuguese casualties amounted to 4,700.[5]

How to explain this fantastic record?

Lettow-Vorbeck and his *Schutztruppe* must take most of the credit. He adopted and retained a simple and clear-cut mission, one which his subordinates fully understood and one for which they were trained. He knew his natives, allowed them their customs, offered them understanding, compassion, and success. He knew his country, and consistently paced operations to terrain and weather. He constantly improvised, never ceased experimenting with field expedients. Above all, he remained an indomitable commander who recognized but was not deterred by his own weaknesses, who gained strength when the enemy demanded surrender. Once, when he was fever-ridden and nearly blind, he led his exhausted horse into camp. His adjutant noted, ". . . I am not sure

5. Ibid.; see also Mosley, op. cit.; Gardner, op. cit.

which one more resembled a skeleton. One thing is certain. The horse will not last the next twenty-four hours, but the colonel will."[6]

He did not go into this war lightly. He knew that he was but a small cog, a very small cog on the wheel of total war. He did not know that the British did not intend to use black soldiers on the western front; he could not have dreamed of the tactical stupidity of a battle such as the Somme, which in one day cost the British fifty thousand dead—so he did not realize that the few thousand white soldiers he and his people were retaining by their own agony would not greatly have influenced the European war.

These facts do not shrink the dimensions of his unique accomplishment. Britain had to supply and pay an enormous army, a total bill of £72 million, and she also had to withstand the severe buffeting of German psychological warfare, which constantly harped on the British failure to run down Lettow-Vorbeck.

Nor do facts lessen the import of his decision. He knew that he was inviting wrath to his country, that people would suffer and die, that he himself would have to surmount an endless stream of personal and organizational problems in order to survive. Anyone doubting the ghastly seriousness of his approach need read only his own words concerning organization and training of the first guerrilla groups which operated from Kilimanjaro slopes against the British railway:

> . . . I had to teach the Europeans that it was possible, in these waterless wastes, to drink their own urine to quench their thirst. It was a bad business when anyone fell ill or was wounded, with the best will in the world it was impossible to bring him along. To carry a severely wounded man from the Uganda Railway to the German camps, as was occasionally done, was a tremendous performance.[7]

So tremendous, Mosley adds, that ". . . he gave orders that it was to stop. A wounded man was relieved of his gun and ammunition, shot through the head, and left to the lions, hyenas or the vultures."[8]

Lettow-Vorbeck was as ruthless with his own body. By early 1917, he was enduring his fourth bout of malaria; sand flies and jiggers lived in his skin, at times he could scarcely walk on a scabbed and festered left foot, his teeth were infected, and he had scratched his one good eye on long elephant grass. By autumn of that year, enemy columns were closing from all directions while enemy aircraft droned relentlessly overhead. His once splendid force numbered only about two thousand

6. Mosley, op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

rifles, including two hundred Europeans, and some three thousand bearers, who were now frequently deserting. But Lettow-Vorbeck was not ready to quit, at least without trying to wring some profit from disaster:

> . . . All I knew was that henceforth we would at least have this over the enemy—we could withdraw quickly anywhere we wished, for we had no more dumps to protect, no more hospitals to worry about. The enemy would have to involve increasing numbers of men in his search for us and would progressively exhaust his strength.[9]

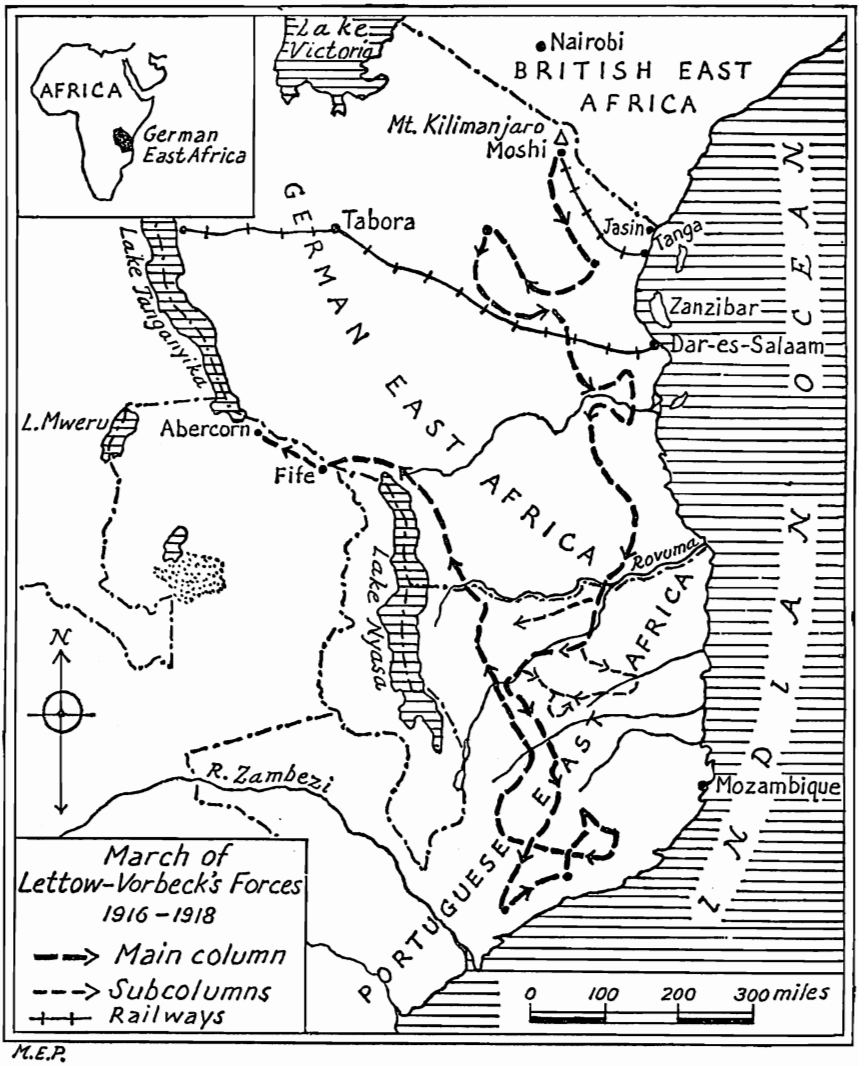
Does a greater example of command optimism exist in the literature of war?

In addition to Lettow-Vorbeck's natural and acquired attributes, he derived considerable strength from his enemy's weaknesses. In 1914, the British high command both in Africa and India epitomized the arrogance of ignorance. Major General Aitken, who commanded the task force of eight thousand that sailed from India to Tanga, ". . . openly expressed his contempt for the Germans. He maintained that they made poor officers and that their native troops were ill-trained and badly directed . . . and he went on record as saying that he was confident his troops would have thrashed the enemy by Christmas."[10] The record does not offer his comments after the disastrous landing, defeat, and reembarkation of survivors, which cost him his job and relegated him to the status of colonel on half pay.

The British East African command erred in the opposite direction. The governor, Sir Charles Belfield, did not want a war and ". . . refused to co-operate with his military commanders."[11] The senior military commander, Major General Wapshare, was later described by his intelligence officer, Captain Meinertzhagen, as ". . . a kindly old gentleman, nervous, physically unfit and devoid of military knowledge."[12] The aggressive young captain found Brigadier General Tighe pleasant but useless, drink having given him gout and a bad liver.[13]

Neither of these commanders was qualified to divine the military problem, which called for a strategic defensive with strong, mobile patrols to neutralize guerrilla depredations along the Uganda railway. Instead, aided by the wisdom of the supreme command in London, they thought in terms of "expeditions"—vast "sweeps" to envelop and destroy the enemy.

9. Ibid.
10. R. Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary 1899–1926* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1960).
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.



M.E.P.

The conventional approach merely helped Lettow-Vorbeck. Had the British not landed at Tanga, had they not bombarded coastal towns, he would have had the devil's own time raising any sort of an effective force. He could never have raised an army large enough to invade neighboring countries, and if he had tried, the British and Portuguese disposed of ample forces to stop him. He should have been allowed to wither on the vine. He knew this, and this is why he set about making himself an

excresence, an insulting, disgusting presence that the British, in their own minds, had to eliminate.

As he hoped, they chose to wipe him out not by a qualitative approach that would have neutralized his operations, but rather by a quantitative approach that represented the summit of Lettow-Vorbeck's dreams.

Wapshare's first effort, an overland expedition of eighteen hundred troops and fifty-five hundred bearers ended in the little coastal town of Jasin just south of the border, where, after four companies were lost to an enemy attack, it withered "away from sickness and heat."

The highly vaunted Boers did not fare much better. Meinertzhagen found Van Deventer contemptuous in his ignorance of this war ". . . between coolies and kaffirs":

> . . . I tried to explain to them that they had not the slightest idea of climate and health conditions, neither had any of them any experience of fighting in thick bush. I told them I thought that perhaps two years might finish the campaign. They smiled and told me I did not understand the Boer.[14]

Meinertzhagen was correct. In the spring of 1916, Smuts sent Van Deventer south in command of 1,200 mounted troops and 8,600 infantry and artillery. Lettow-Vorbeck wisely stayed out of sight, letting rain and the tsetse fly fight for him. On April 6, Van Deventer counted 1,150 mounted strength, on April 12, 800, and on April 16, 650. By the end of the month, he had a fighting strength of 3,000 left out of 10,000.[15]

Other expeditions fared equally ill. By autumn of 1916, ". . . out of 54,000 horses, mules, donkeys and oxen which had been fed into the supply lines south of the Central Railway . . . all but 600 had died."[16] This appalling expenditure of men, animals and effort would have been difficult to defend even if "victory" had resulted. But "victory" was nowhere in sight. And yet, continued adversity only increased Smuts's tenacity—precisely as Lettow-Vorbeck hoped. The capture of Lettow-Vorbeck became an obsession to Smuts. Van Deventer, in turn, never saw the forest for the trees, never totally modified his conventional thinking to fit the task at hand. Only late in the campaign did the British approach the obvious target of the natives—and then with excellent success, but by then it was too late to matter.

Anyone can be wise after the event, but in the case of this campaign the facts were on hand by summer of 1916 Only one officer in the Brit-

14. Ibid.
15. Mosley, op. cit.
16. Ibid.

ish camp looked at them objectively. This was Captain Meinertzhagen, and during that summer he wrote:

. . . Von Lettow . . . is not going to be caught by maneuver. He knows the country better than we do, his troops understand the last word in bush warfare and can live on the country. I think we are in for an expensive hide-and-seek, and von Lettow will still be cuckooing somewhere in Africa when the cease-fire goes.[17]

17. Meinertzhagen, op. cit.

Chapter 20

Thomas Edward Lawrence • His background • The original Arab revolt • Lawrence's first impressions and estimate of the situation • He joins the rebellion • Arab reverses • Lawrence recovers the initiative • His illness • Moment of truth: a new tactical doctrine • His tactics analyzed • The Arab contribution

WHILE LETTOW-VORBECK was training black guerrillas in remote Kilimanjaro hills, a young British intelligence officer in Cairo was tinkering with a different type of war. This was Thomas Edward Lawrence, who was to become famous to the world as "Lawrence of Arabia."

T. E. Lawrence was an illegitimate Welshman, a twenty-six-year-old reserve lieutenant, a short man, slightly built, his boyishly fair countenance belying either an Oxford honors degree or an extensive knowledge of the Near East gained from several years of archaeological digging in northern Syria, a vocation actively encouraged by British Intelligence.

Scholar, linguist, historian, writer, artist, and poet, Lawrence had not proved a quiescent staff officer in GHQ, Cairo. ". . . A subaltern on the staff, without a Sam Browne belt, and always wearing slacks, scorching about between Cairo and Bulaq on a Triumph motor-cycle, he was

an offense to the eyes of his senior officers."[1] His ready criticism of the way the Near East war was being fought against the Turks infuriated most of his seniors. The British surrender of Kut-el-Amara, in Mesopotamia, where he served as negotiator, only heightened his disgust.

Lawrence fortunately did not believe in empty criticism. He not only told his superiors what was wrong, but he insisted that an Arab revolt was the best way to beat the Turks. In talking this up, he appeared at times brilliant, at times frivolous, generally impudent, often rude. He probably would not have endured in any but the British army, which tolerated eccentrics on the grounds that the genius of a few amply repaid the sacrifice.

Not too many officers listened to Lawrence, fewer still agreed. But one who did agree was Kitchener Pasha, now Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, who offered encouragement to the Arabs. The chief of British Intelligence in Cairo, Major General Clayton, also recognized the possibilities of a revolt and encouraged Lawrence to investigate further. A handful of other high-ranking diplomats and officers agreed, and they helped pave the way for Lawrence to exercise what most held to be perverted military thought, others a whimsical imagination, a few genius.

Lawrence's hoped-for revolt broke out in the Hejaz—the skinny Arabian province flanking the Red Sea—in the summer of 1916. Husein, the sherif of Mecca, succeeded in capturing that holy town from the Turks. But his force as well as those commanded by his sons, Feisal, Ali and Abdullah, were badly organized and lacked arms and equipment. By September, Feisal's and Ali's armies were marking time southwest of Medina; Abdullah, having won Taif (and the surrender of the Turkish governor-general), hovered northeast of Medina with his warriors. In the minds of many ranking British staff officers in Cairo, the Arab revolt had failed.

Lawrence disagreed, believing instead that lack of leadership explained the present dormant state. Arab nationalism, he thought, could become an ideal sufficient to unite all tribes in a war against the Turks —but a leader was needed to translate this into action. At this crucial point, GHQ dispatched a ranking and eminently qualified British diplomat, Ronald Storrs, to Jidda to help Abdullah and his father, Husein, through still another crisis. Lawrence meanwhile had been using influential friends to wangle his transfer to the Arab Bureau; he now *took leave* to accompany his good friend Storrs. On the trip down the Red

1. David Garnett, (ed.), *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938); a number of good general biographies are available: Robert Graves, *Lawrence and the Arabs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927); Basil Liddell Hart, *T. E. Lawrence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934); Anthony Nutting, *Lawrence of Arabia* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1961); Robert Payne, *Lawrence of Arabia—A Triumph* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1963).

Sea, Lawrence became close friends with Husein's chief of staff, an Arab-Circassian ex-colonel in the Turkish army, Aziz el Masri, whose advice, albeit cynical at times, greatly helped Lawrence in the difficult months ahead.

The three men landed at Jidda on October 16, a scene Lawrence later used to open his first major work, *Revolt in the Desert,*[2] a short version of his subsequent classic *Seven Pillars of Wisdom.*[3] Emir Abdullah did not overly impress the young intelligence officer. Lawrence found him too clever, his sincerity discouraged by personal ambition; he was ". . . too balanced, too cool, too humorous" to be *the* leader of the revolt, too discouraged to be the armed prophet who ". . . would set the desert on fire."[4]

Storrs now persuaded Husein to allow Lawrence to visit Ali and Feisal. Lawrence met Ali and his nineteen-year-old half brother Zeid at Rabigh. Ali, too, proved disappointing. Though possessing a ". . . dignified and admirable manner," the thirty-seven-year-old sherif, weakened by tuberculosis, lacked any ". . . great force of character," was ". . . nervous and rather tired," and was not possibly up to the task ahead. Zeid possessed a certain fire, but was too young for the task.[5]

From Rabigh, Lawrence traveled cross-country, a long and dangerous trip by camel, to Feisal's camp at Hamra. This tall, slender, black-bearded prince at once impressed Lawrence as a natural leader. Ensuing talks in which he found the thirty-one-year-old ruler to be ". . . hot-tempered, proud and impatient" confirmed his first impression. Although Feisal was tired and discouraged, he was willing to fight.

As he explained to Lawrence, the Arabs, after initial successes, had lost the initiative to the Turks. In his opinion, the enemy would now try to advance on Rabigh and recapture Mecca. To void this plan, Feisal proposed to fall back and then move against the Hejaz railway while his brothers, Abdullah and Ali, struck the Turkish base at Medina. But Feisal needed arms, ammunition and other aid if he was to keep going.

Lawrence welcomed Feisal's aggressiveness as well as the fighting spirit he discerned in numerous tribes. As he visited various tribal levies and talked to individual fighters, he began to form his own idea of the best tactical contribution the Arabs could make. He concluded that Feisal's tribesmen, if supplied with light guns, ". . . might be capable of holding their hills and serving as an efficient screen behind which we could build up, perhaps at Rabigh, an Arab regular mobile column,

2. T. E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927).

3. T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973); for an excellent background study of the revolt, see Ronald Wingate, *Wingate of the Sudan* (London: John Murray, 1935).

4. Lawrence (*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*), *supra.*

5. Ibid.

capable of meeting a Turkish force (distracted by guerrilla warfare) on terms, and of defeating it piecemeal. . . ."[6]

At this stage of his thinking, Lawrence envisioned a Hejaz war ". . . of dervishes against regular troops. It was the fight of a rocky, mountainous, barren country (reinforced by a wild horde of mountaineers) against an enemy so enriched in equipment by the Germans as almost to have lost virtue for rough-and-tumble war. The hill-belt was a paradise for snipers; and Arabs were artists in sniping. Two or three hundred determined men knowing the ranges should hold any section of them; because the slopes were too steep for escalade. . . ." Similarly, the valleys lent themselves to easy ambush that should frustrate and probably prevent Turkish transit. ". . . Without treachery on the part of the mountain tribes," Lawrence decided, it seemed impossible that ". . . the Turks could dare to break their way through." But,

> . . . even with treachery as an ally, to pass the hills would be dangerous. The enemy would never be sure that the fickle population might not turn again; and to have such a labyrinth of defiles in the rear, across the communications, would be worse than having it in front. Without the friendship of the tribes, the Turks would own only the ground on which their soldiers stood; and lines so long and complex would soak up thousands of men in a fortnight, and leave none in the battlefront.[7]

After promising Feisal as much help as possible, Lawrence returned to the coast convinced of the possibilities of an effective rebellion. On the return voyage, he found unexpected allies in two important Englishmen. One was Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, commanding the Royal Navy in the Red Sea, a close friend of the sherif of Mecca; the other was Sir Reginald Wingate, soon to become High Commissioner of Egypt. These officers read Lawrence's reports, which prompted Wingate to wire Cairo:

> . . . Following observations of Lieutenant Lawrence a man of great experience and knowledge. . . . Assistance in material and especially quick-firer guns and machine-guns is vital if they [the Arabs] are to be kept in the field. If given this there is no reason why they should not continue to operate successfully for an indefinite time. Their morale is excellent and their tactics and leadership well-suited to present objective.[8]

Thanks to Wemyss and Wingate, Lawrence wafted into Cairo on a lofty cloud of importance. Pleasantly surprised at being closeted with top commanders, he even momentarily forgave their myopic incompe-

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Payne, op. cit.; see also G. MacMunn and C. Falls, *Military Operations, Egypt and Palestine* (London: HMSO, 1928, Vol. 1, and 1930, Vol. 2).

tence in order to plead his case—the Arab need for immediate arms and supply as well as for British-officer instructor-advisers. Again to his surprise, his recommendations turned quickly into formal orders. Then, to his consternation, he himself was ordered to report to Feisal as adviser and liaison officer.

Lawrence's protests at his new assignment were genuine. He had never fancied himself a troop leader and certainly not a leader of Arab irregulars. So ill-prepared was he in practical military matters that at Yenbo, on the way to Feisal's headquarters, he took a crash course in demolitions from a British expert. His friend Aziz was still there, desperately trying to whip the native army into some semblance of military organization. Although four British planes had arrived, Cairo had not sent much other aid and no officer-instructors. News from the various rebel forces was favorable, however. At Yenbo, ". . . the feeling was busy and confident."

This changed in short order. The hill tribes that formed Feisal's barrier forces gave way to the first major Turkish assault. A Turk cavalry column had pushed on, nearly captured young Prince Zeid's force and now was looking hungrily at the Yenbo base. This unexpected success brought Feisal with his five-thousand-strong camel corps to screen Yenbo, but he in turn was attacked and driven back into the town, where he was protected by the guns of hastily concentrated British warships. These proved too much for the Turks, who backed off to sit like a hungry dog, one eye on Yenbo, one eye on Rabigh.

Lawrence now pulled a master coup by persuading Feisal to march two hundred miles up the coast to the small port of Wejh, from where he could more easily interdict the Hejaz railway. This was a shrewd psychological move that more than neutralized recent Turk successes. Feisal's army on the march, some ten thousand mounted and foot warriors, emphasized the extent of the rebellion and brought dozens of tribes into the fold. From Wejh, taken easily thanks to British warships and slight Turkish resistance, Feisal's agents continued north and east to plead the cause of Arab nationalism and pave the way for further moves by the rebel army.

An equally important result showed in the Turkish camp. The Turks could not pursue Feisal. Sickness already was tearing at their columns, and hostile tribes were slicing their thin lines of communication. They lacked both transport and will to pursue Feisal north They could probably have captured Yenbo, but Lawrence made that effort unattractive by sea evacuation of stores. They could have marched on Rabigh, but the Arabs there could retreat on Mecca; meanwhile, so the Turks reasoned, Feisal could wheel about and strike Medina. So, instead of pursuit, the Turks chose to fall back on Medina, where half the force guarded the city, half the railway that supplied the city.

Lawrence did not yet know it, but he had hit upon a successful formula for war in the desert. At the moment, other thoughts occupied his mind. Returning to Cairo, he learned of a French plan to land a British-French force at Akaba, and hurriedly returned to Wejh to persuade Feisal against it. Instead, Lawrence sold him on a plan for a land assault of Akaba by *Arab* forces once Feisal had won necessary tribal submissions.

But now Lawrence learned from Cairo that the Turks were planning to evacuate Medina. Although this move would have suited the Arabs, the transfer of some twenty-five thousand Turkish soldiers would threaten British operations in the Beersheba area. Accordingly Cairo wanted to disrupt the move at all costs. This would involve cutting the all-important Hejaz railway—the umbilical cord to Turkish supply from Syria to Medina—and attempting to disrupt any march made by the Turks, preferably by an Arab attack against Medina. Feisal agreed to help. To win Abdullah's co-operation, Lawrence left on another long and dangerous trip, some two hundred miles across the sands to Ais, northwest of Medina.

Readers of Lawrence's books will remember this journey as the one that forced him to kill one of his guides in order to prevent a blood-rift in the ranks—a soul-searing episode that added to personal ravage caused by back boils, dysentery, and enteric fever. Arriving at Ais more dead than alive, he briefed Abdullah and collapsed.[9]

Lawrence nearly died in Abdullah's camp. High fever brought delirium and visions, and these slowly changed to intense pain from a renewed plague of boils as he returned to reality. Lying in a sun-baked tent, a latter-day Job in a military wilderness, he asked himself the why of war against the Turks.

Nothing about it fitted conventional theories of warfare:

> . . . the textbooks gave the aim in war as "the destruction of the organized forces of the enemy" by "the one process battle." Victory could only be purchased by blood. This was a hard saying, as the Arabs had no organized forces, and so a Turkish Foch would have no aim: and the Arabs would not endure casualties, so that an Arab Clausewitz could not buy his victory.[10]

Were the textbooks correct?

Only if one accepted the theory of "absolute" war. The Arab war, however, could not be called absolute: The destruction of the Turkish army by armed confrontation lay hopelessly beyond Arab means.

Was it possible that war did not have to be absolute? Clausewitz, whom Lawrence greatly admired, admitted a number of reasons for fighting a war; two eighteenth-century commentators, De Saxe and

9. Lawrence (*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*), *supra.*

10. T. E. Lawrence, "Guerrilla Warfare." In Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1957, Vol. 10.

Guibert, had preached the virtues of "limited" wars, which should be fought (and won) with as few battles as possible.

If one looked on the Arab war as a rebellion, the picture changed. The Arab aim ". . . was geographical, to extrude the Turk from all Arabic-speaking lands in Asia."[11] In gaining the domination of territory,

> . . . Turks might be killed, yet "killing Turks" would never be an excuse or aim. If they would go quietly, the war would end. If not, they must be driven out: but at the cheapest possible price, since the Arabs were fighting for freedom, a pleasure only to be tasted by a man alive.[12]

Lawrence's strategic and tactical analysis hinged on three elements, ". . . one algebraical, one biological, a third psychological."

The algebraical element meant "measuring" invariables of the war to arrive at specific conclusions. The Arabs wanted about 140,000 square miles of territory. If they built a regular army and attempted to occupy this area, the Turks would entrench, and, at best, a stalemate would develop. Suppose, however, that Arabs instead formed

> . . . an influence, a thing invulnerable, intangible, without front or back, drifting about like a gas? Armies were like plants, immobile as a whole, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. The Arabs might be a vapor, blowing where they listed.[13]

To meet a vapor attack, an attack in depth with ". . . sedition putting up her head in every unoccupied one of these 100,000 square miles," the Turks would need a fortified post every four square miles:

> . . . 600,000 men to meet the combined ill wills of all the local Arab people. They had 100,000 men available. It seemed that the assets in this sphere were with the Arabs, and climate, railways, deserts, technical weapons could also be attached to their interests. The Turk was stupid and would believe that rebellion was absolute, like war, and deal with it on the analogy of absolute warfare.

The biological factor, what Lawrence called bionomics, respected relations between the organism and its environment. In war, this is the relation of man to battle, the giving and taking of blood until a decision is reached. This could not help the present situation: The Arabs were irregulars, limited in number, ". . . not units, but individuals, and an individual casualty is like a pebble dropped in water: each may make only a brief hole, but rings of sorrow widen out from them. The Arab army could not afford casualties." The Turkish army could afford casu-

11. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars, supra.*
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.; cf. Clausewitz, op. cit.

alties, but only in men. Materials in the Turkish army were at a premium; therefore ". . . the death of a Turkish bridge or rail, machine or gun, or high explosive" would be more profitable than the death of a Turk.[14]

Lawrence's final factor was the psychological, "the ethical in war"—what Xenophon had called the diathetic. The *will* of the Arab had to repair numerical and material weaknesses. His mind had to be influenced, and not alone his mind, but those of his enemy and his enemy's allies. The French theory of war combined moral and physical factors. Years before, Foch had written that the moral is to the physical as three to one, and on this comforting axiom the French built the disastrous opening strategy of World War I: the *offensive à outrance,* or all-out offensive, that sent hundreds of thousands of French soldiers to unnecessary death. Lawrence separated the factors: ". . . the contest was not physical, but moral, and so battles were a mistake." He was not interested in regimental traditions and elite corps, but rather in men's minds: ". . . the printing press is the greatest weapon in the armory of the modern commander."[15]

The sum of these three factors dictated an indirect approach to war:

> . . . the Turkish army was an accident, not a target. Our true strategic aim was to seek its weakest link, and bear only on that till time made the mass of it fall. The Arab army must impose the longest possible passive defense on the Turks (this being the most materially expensive form of war) by extending its own front to the maximum.[16]

To accomplish this, the Arabs needed ". . . a highly mobile, highly equipped type of force, of the smallest size," which would variously strike at Turkish line of communications. Size was not important, since ". . . the ratio between number and area determined the character of the war, and by having five times the mobility of the Turks the Arabs could be on terms with them with one-fifth their number."[17]

This was a latter-day approach to De Saxe's eighteenth-century philosophy. To the incredulity of professional British and French officers raised in Napoleonic tradition, Lawrence argued that battles are unnecessary, that they ". . . are impositions on the side which believes itself weaker, made unavoidable either by lack of land-room, or by the need to defend a material property dearer than the lives of the soldiers." The Arabs had plenty of land-room and nothing of material value to lose,

> . . . so they were to defend nothing and to shoot nothing. Their cards were speed and time, not hitting power, and these gave strategical rather than

14. Lawrence, "Guerrilla Warfare," *supra.*
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

tactical strength. Range is more to strategy than force. The invention of bully-beef had modified land-war more profoundly than the invention of gunpowder.[18]

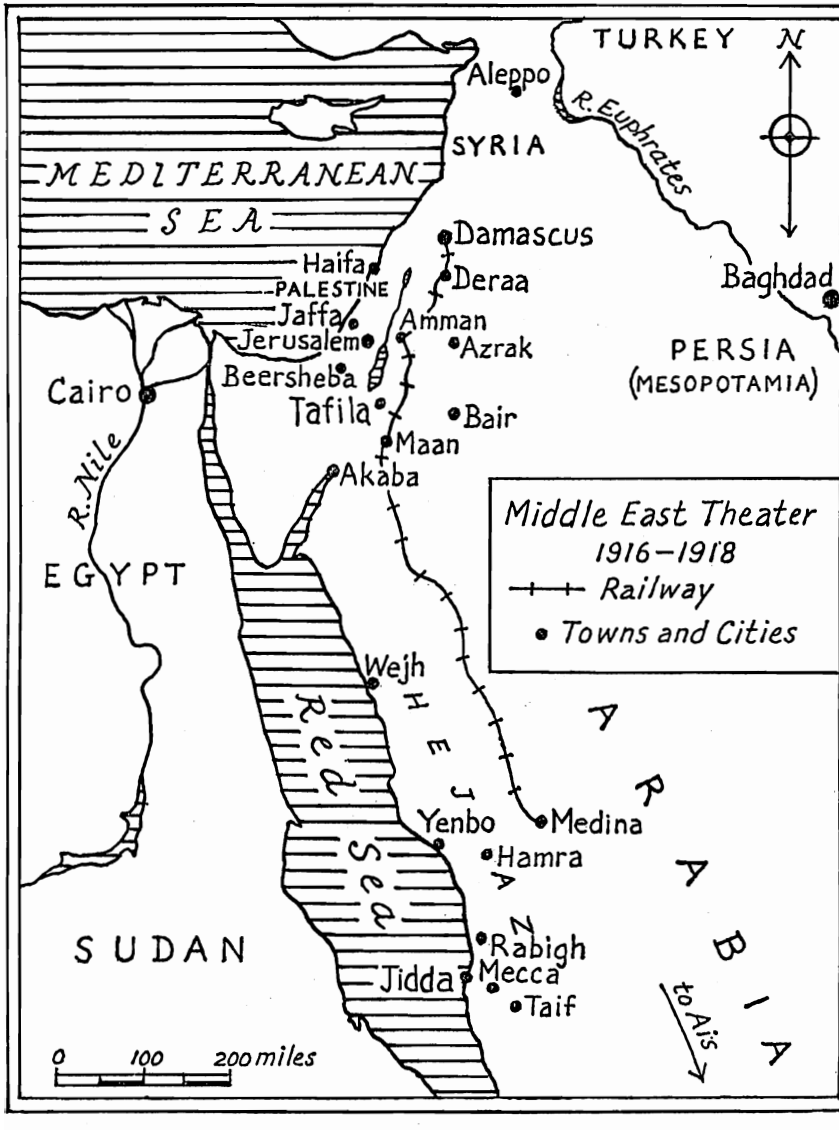
Conversely, the Arabs had no need to take Medina either by expensive assault or tiresome siege. Let the enemy stay there, or anywhere else, in the largest possible numbers, then destroy him by "killing" his line of communications.

Toward this end, the Arabs added to the sea bases of Yenbo and Wejh by taking Akaba. From these bases, they developed "ladders of tribes" to their advanced bases, from where they seized ". . . Tafileh and the Dead Sea; then Azrak and Deraa, and finally Damascus."[19] With this, the Turks in Arabia were virtually at the mercy of their enemies. In Lawrence's opinion, the Arabs were on the verge of proving Marshal de Saxe's dictum ". . . that a war might be won without fighting battles." In gaining incontestable control of some one hundred thousand square miles, the Arabs had killed, wounded, or captured about thirty-five thousand Turks at little loss to themselves. The Turkish garrisons were totally on edge, morale stood at rock bottom, and undoubtedly the whole army would have collapsed had not General Allenby's immense victory in Palestine summarily driven Turkey from the war.[20]

The enormity of war on the western front, the precipitate fall of the Turks, and the Arab failure to obtain their political aim in the Near East have tended not so much to dim as to confuse the extent of Lawrence's accomplishment. Postwar commentators concentrated on war in the West at the expense of such secondary theaters as Palestine. Most writers treated the Arab war as a guerrilla side show, interesting enough, probably some help to old Allenby, who won the affair in Palestine, but not having much to do with "real" war.

This judgment ignores two essential points. One is that Lawrence and his Arabs were fighting a separate war, a carefully defined war of insurrection that, although dependent on British arms and finances, helped Allenby enormously. Lawrence was not afraid of more Turks; indeed, he wanted more Turks, since enemy quantity enhanced friendly quality. As he pointed out, the Turks would have needed six hundred thousand soldiers to establish ". . . a fortified post every four square miles," nor would this effort necessarily have given them control of the territory, since each Turkish soldier would merely ". . . own the ground he sat on, and what he could poke his rifle at."[21]

18. Ibid.
19. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars, supra.*
20. Lawrence, "Guerrilla Warfare," *supra.*
21. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars, supra.*



The second point is the "personalized" nature of Lawrence's war. He did not insist on grafting his own and his country's military standards on a body incapable of reception. Instead, and thanks to linguistic ability, imagination, perception, intellectual and moral honesty, and, not least, immense energy, he went to the tribes, found a leader, determined

a viable goal, weighed capabilities, and hit on a type of war compatible to leadership, capabilities, and the political goal. The estimate of the situation that Lawrence brought forth from the sand dunes in 1917 is a military equivalent of the British constitution—one of the most interesting unwritten documents of all time.

His political preparation of the area greatly simplified Allenby's subsequent operations, which stood in strong contrast to those in neighboring Mesopotamia, where the British

> . . . remained substantially an alien force invading enemy territory, with the local people passively neutral or sullenly against them, and in consequence had not the freedom of movement and elasticity of Allenby in Syria, who entered the country as a friend, with the local people actively on his side. The factors of numbers, climate and communications favored us in Mesopotamia more than in Syria; and our higher command was, after the beginning, no less efficient and experienced. But their casualty lists compared with Allenby's, their wood-chopping tactics compared with this rapier-play, showed how formidably an adverse political situation was able to cramp a purely military operation.[22]

In fighting his own war, Lawrence displayed a versatile strategy and tactics at odds with orthodox military thinking. Under his aegis, the Arab army ". . . used the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place."[23] Although he was highly experimental, he always respected his cardinal dictum that ". . . range is more to strategy than force." Raiding parties struck and ran, and this was fundamental, since it denied the enemy a target. In turn, Arab casualties remained minimum: ". . . many Turks on the Arab front had no chance all the war to fire a shot, and correspondingly the Arabs were never on the defense, except by rare accident."[24]

Essential to such operations was ". . . perfect intelligence, so that plans could be made in complete certainty. . . . The headquarters of the Arab army probably took more pains in this service than any other staff." Simple armament was equally essential. Lawrence preferred light machine guns, which the Arabs used as automatic rifles, ". . . snipers' tools, by men kept deliberately in ignorance of their mechanism, so that the speed of action would not be hampered by attempts at repair." Demolitions were important, with each irregular receiving at least rudimentary training in their use. Camels provided standard transport. On occasion, Lawrence used armored cars manned by Englishmen with gasoline either carried by camels or brought in by air. Although they performed well under certain conditions, ". . . the tactical employments

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Lawrence, "Guerrilla Warfare," *supra.*

of cars and camel-corps are so different that their use in joint operations is difficult. It was found demoralizing to both to use armored and unarmored cavalry together."[25]

Lawrence's tactics might have been countered, at least in part, by intelligent Turkish adaptation. In 1923, Lawrence wrote Colonel A. P. Wavell:

> . . . If the Turks had put machine guns on three or four of their touring cars, and driven them on weekly patrol over the admirable going of the desert E. [east] of Amman and Maan they would have put an absolute stop to our camel-parties, and so to our rebellion. It wouldn't have cost them 20 men or £20,000 . . . *rightly applied.* They scraped up cavalry and armored trains and camel corps and block-houses against us: because they didn't think hard enough.

Lawrence dismissed several other possible Turkish countertactics: well-destruction would not have helped, nor did airplanes, which they used:

> . . . Bombing tribes is ineffective. I fancy that air-power may be effective against elaborate armies: but against irregulars it has no more than moral value. The Turks had plenty machines, and used them freely against us—and never hurt us till the last phase, when we had brought 1,000 of our regulars on the raid against Deraa. Guerrilla tactics are a complete muffing of air-force. . . .

The Turks did miss

> . . . one other thing of which every rebellion is mortally afraid—treachery. If instead of counter-propaganda (never effective on the conservative side) the money had been put into buying the few venal men always to be found in a big movement, then they would have crippled us. We could only dare these intricate raids because we felt sure and safe. One well-informed traitor will spoil a national rising.[26]

Lawrence's most amazing feat was assimilating himself to his environment, or, put another way, the ability to respect the Arabs as individuals leading their own way of life. Many of Lawrence's achievements stemmed from this relatively simple outlook. He refused to impose Western standards on people he regarded as civilized. A good example is his failure to respect the military principle of concentration of force. He could not achieve this, because tribes would not mix and one tribe could not operate in another's territory. As a result, he fought the war with ". . . the widest distribution of force," but this increased fluidity of operations, while the tribal concept insured a flow of replacements and, more important, avoided intertribal wars.

25. Ibid.
26. Garnett, op. cit.

Lawrence's insistence on individual importance remained paramount. Since lines of communication and supply troops did not exist, every soldier was a front-line soldier. But he could not be committed in strength; rather, by relay, by individual action, which levied severe strain and exacted from the soldier ". . . special initiative, endurance and enthusiasm." To maintain this, demanded charismatic leadership. English officer-advisers were purposely few in number, not more than one per thousand troops, and ". . . those who were present controlled by influence and advice, by their superior knowledge, not by an extraneous authority."[27]

The sum of the experience was enormous, suggesting to Lawrence that:

> . . . irregular warfare or rebellion could be proved to be an exact science, and an inevitable success, granted certain factors and if pursued along certain lines. Here is the thesis: Rebellion must have an unassailable base, something guarded not merely from attack, but from the fear of it: such a base as the Arab revolt had in the Red Sea ports, the desert, or in the minds of men converted to its creed. It must have a sophisticated alien enemy, in the form of a disciplined army of occupation too small to fulfil the doctrine of acreage: too few to adjust number to space, in order to dominate the whole area effectively from fortified posts. It must have a friendly population, not actively friendly, but sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy. Rebellions can be made by two percent active in a striking force, and ninety-eight percent passively sympathetic. The few active rebels must have the qualities of speed and endurance, ubiquity and independence of arteries to supply. They must have the technical equipment to destroy or paralyze the enemy's organized communication, for irregular war is fairly Willisen's definition of strategy, "the study of communication," in its extreme degree, of attack where the enemy is not. In fifty words: Granted mobility, security (in the form of denying targets to the enemy), time, and doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents, for the algebraical factors are in the end decisive, and against them perfections of means and spirit struggle quite in vain.[28]

This was not an accidental theory, neither was it applied hit and miss. In 1933, Lawrence wrote a most revealing letter to Basil Liddell Hart, who was about to publish a major work:

> . . . You talk of a summing up to come. Will you (if you agree with my feeling) in it strike a blow for hard work and thinking? I was not an instinc-

27. Lawrence, "Guerrilla Warfare," *supra;* see also Liddell Hart, op. cit., who cites Lawrence's "Twenty-Seven Articles"—"a theory of the art of handling Arabs . . . [written] as a confidential guide to newcomers from the British Army." These could be studied with profit by today's Western advisers to foreign armies.

28. Ibid.

tive soldier, automatic with intuitions and happy ideas. When I took a decision, or adopted an alternative, it was after studying every relevant—and many an irrelevant—factor. Geography, tribal structure, religion, social customs, language, appetites, standards—all were at my finger-ends. The enemy I knew almost like my own side. I risked myself among them a hundred times, to *learn.*

The same with tactics. If I used a weapon well, it was because I could handle it. . . . To use aircraft, I learned to fly. To use armored cars, I learned to drive and fight them. I became a gunner at need, and could doctor and judge a camel.

The same with strategy. I have written only a few pages on the art of war—but in these I levy contribution from my predecessors of five languages. You are one of the few living Englishmen who can see the allusions and quotations, the conscious analogies, in all I say and do, militarily.

Do make it clear that generalship, at least in my case, came of understanding, of hard study and brain-work and concentration. Had it come easy to me I should not have done it so well. If your book could persuade some of our new soldiers to read and mark and learn things outside drill manuals and tactical diagrams, it would do a good work. I feel a fundamental crippling incuriousness about our officers. Too much body and too little head. The perfect general would know everything in heaven and earth.

So please, if you see me that way and agree with me, do use me as a text to preach for more study of books and history, a greater seriousness in military art. With 2,000 years of examples behind us we have no excuse, when fighting, for not fighting well. . . .[29]

Lawrence also heavily emphasized the factor of faith—the why of the irregular war or rebellion. And here he was skating on dangerous ice. Later critics condemned him for pursuing an unrealistic political goal.[30] He himself defined this goal as winning a vast territory so that Arab tribes could live in a loose confederation of freedom. Knowing the power politics of that imperialist day, for Lawrence was a realist as well as a romanticist, did he imagine that this could be the case at war's end?

The answer is difficult. Ignoring the creation of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* the tragedy of his subsequent life is explained in part by massive disillusionment. How much this stemmed from the Paris conference is difficult to say. Lawrence accompanied Feisal to that august gathering and strongly pleaded the Arab cause, but this could have been prompted by a sense of loyalty or, more likely, a conscience stricken by having led the Arabs up the garden path, as he admitted in *Seven*

29. Garnett, op. cit.

30. R. Aldington, *Lawrence of Arabia—A Biographical Enquiry* (London: Collins, 1955); see also P. Knightly and C. Simpson, *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* (London: Nelson, 1969).

Pillars. In August 1923, he wrote of this work to his close friend Mrs. Thomas Hardy:

. . . It is meant to be the true history of a political movement whose essence was a fraud—in the sense that its leaders did not believe the arguments with which they moved its rank and file: and also the true history of a campaign, to show how unlovely the back of a commander's mind must be. . . .[31]

But other factors undoubtedly played a role in the tragedy—his illegitimacy, early mental and moral confusions, the terrible rigors of prolonged desert campaigns, and finally physical and mental torture suffered at Deraa.

Probably all these combine to form the explanation, but the emotional factor must reign supreme. No one can doubt the idealistic motivation of the Arab revolt. Lawrence found this during his first reconnaissance, in 1916, and he correctly realized that, if properly exploited, it could move mountains. He revealed its strength, but also its devouring nature, in the opening page of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom:*

. . . We were a self-centered army without parade or gesture, devoted to freedom, the second of man's creeds, a purpose so ravenous that it devoured all our strength, a hope so transcendent that our earlier ambitions faded in its glare. As time went by our need to fight for the ideal increased to an unquestioning possession, riding with spur and rein over our doubts. Willy-nilly it became a faith. We had sold ourselves into its slavery, manacled ourselves together in its chain-gang, bowed ourselves to serve its holiness with all our good and ill content. The mentality of ordinary human slaves is terrible—and we had surrendered, not body alone, but soul to the overmastering greed of victory. By our own act we were drained of morality, of volition, of responsibility, like dead leaves in the wind.[32]

Victory is an illusory word.

31. Garnett, op. cit.
32. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars, supra*

Chapter 21

The Irish revolution • Asquith reacts • Rise of Sinn Fein • Michael Collins and the Irish Republican Army • The IRA and terrorist tactics • The Royal Irish Constabulary • The Black and Tans • The Auxies • Sir Nevil Macready's iron fist • Sinn Fein replies • The war escalates • Partition and British departure • The cost • Question of terrorist tactics • Definition of terror • Rule by terror • Paradox of terror: the double standard • Terror in the East

THE IRISH REVOLUTION began in Dublin on Easter Monday 1916. Padhraic H. Pearse, at thirty-seven years of age a veteran member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, voiced the insurrectionary words from the wide steps of the general post office. His brogue heavy in lazy, warm air, Pearse proclaimed the end of English rule in favor of a free republic; as his oratory washed by a few startled citizens, fellow conspirators set up a series of fortified strong points in and around the city. By the time authorities awakened, rebels held city center, seemed hopeful of general uprising.

No general uprising.

Although many Irishmen resented English rule, they found nothing attractive about the militant IRB, with its organizational appendages the Sinn Fein (Ourselves Alone) and the Irish Volunteers. For sixty years, power had resided in the Irish Nationalist Party, whose eighty

members vigorously and often cacophonously represented their country in the House of Commons. At the outbreak of World War I, John Redmond, speaking for country and party, had pledged Ireland to the war effort. In spring of 1916, some sixty thousand of her sons were serving in France. Heavy casualties, harsh taxation and other wartime measures, many of a niggling nature so dear to bureaucratic hearts, had somewhat soured the glorious opening notes, but martial displeasure was a long way from open rebellion.

And, on that Easter Sunday, most citizens watched apathetically and perhaps even apprehensively, and not a few secretly rejoiced when government recovered to proclaim martial law, arrest ringleaders and several hundred followers, and end the revolt. A popular nationalist paper, *The Freemen's Journal,* judged the abortive effort to have been ". . . an armed assault against the will and decision of the Irish nation itself constitutionally ascertained through its proper representatives."[1]

The attempted *putsch* may have affronted public opinion by challenging legal authority, but it was not entirely sinister. Irish leaders had been demanding home rule for a long time; indeed, such a bill was languishing in the Statute Book in London, deferred until the end of the war.[2] The IRB action should have been construed as an exaggerated demand for political autonomy, the indiscretion of ringleaders punished by mild prison sentences and fines, other "troublemakers" released—life presumably then continuing in its pleasant if turbulent fashion.

But now the English Government erred egregiously. Preoccupied with reverses on the western front, Asquith foolishly let the Dublin military command court-martial and execute the ringleaders (including Pearse). In the first two weeks of May, fifteen Irishmen were shot, a process that George Bernard Shaw warned was ". . . canonizing the prisoners." Asquith belatedly stopped the executions and hurried to Dublin. He was too late. As Beckett has pointed out, ". . . Ireland was quickly passing under the most dangerous of all tyrannies—the tyranny of the dead."[3]

The IRB efficiently exploited widespread resentment, which continued to spread despite the government's conciliatory efforts. Prompted by England's new ally, America, whose Irish population commanded a large vote, Lloyd George in spring of 1917 declared a general amnesty of political detainees and prisoners; in July, he convened an Irish Convention, which unfortunately settled nothing. Former prisoners scurried back to subversive tasks, prison (as usual) having only sharpened rev-

1. J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603–1923* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966).
2. W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929), Vol. 5.
3. Beckett, op. cit.

olutionary zeal. A real cause existed now—". . . the grass soon grows over a battlefield but never over a scaffold."[4]

That scaffold had taken more than rebel lives. It had choked the legitimate party virtually out of existence. In its place rose Sinn Fein, under such able if diverse leaders as De Valera, Arthur Griffith, and Michael Collins.

The militants would scarcely lack ammunition. In 1918, the government announced its intention to introduce conscription. The Irish people rose in protest, the English Government backed down, thousands of young volunteers flocked to the now not-so-covert IRB colors. To combat growing subversion, Lloyd George's government seized Sinn Fein leaders, another mistake, in that the arrest of De Valera and Griffith left the future of the movement to fire-eating Michael Collins, who wanted outright insurrection.

In 1919, Collins reorganized the Irish Volunteers into the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and commenced limited war. The government answered by declaring Sinn Fein and its elected assembly, the Dail, illegal. Incidents mounted, and, by 1920, a virtual state of war existed.

Collins had no intention of repeating the mistakes of 1916. His was a ragtag army of high-spirited volunteers with little military training, no uniforms and a wild assortment of weapons—Hotchkiss machine guns, Lewis guns, German Mausers, Mannlichers, Winchester repeaters, British army Lee-Enfields, sporting rifles and shotguns, hand grenades and mines—mostly stolen from legal authority.[5] The IRA probably never exceeded fifteen thousand members; according to Collins, its effective strength was ". . . not more than three thousand fighting men." He divided these into brigades, battalions, and companies, but, despite this military veneer, his real strength consisted of small "flying columns" of fifteen to thirty men who trained in guerrilla warfare, particularly the hit-and-run raid and the ambush—terrorist tactics that included assassination.[6] By creating a reign of terror, Collins hoped to make ". . . regular government impossible, and the cost of holding the country so great that the British would be compelled to withdraw."[7] His primary targets were the police and the military, but he soon included prominent government officials and progovernment Unionists. In 1920, his terrorists killed 176 policemen and wounded 251; they also killed 54 soldiers and wounded 118, besides killing and intimidating numerous civilians. They blew up police and military barracks, burned courthouses and tax

4. Churchill, op. cit.
5. Bennett, op. cit.
6. Ibid.; see also Giovanni Costigan, "The Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1919–1922," *University Review*, Dublin: Spring 1968; on occasion, flying columns were larger—in 1921, Tom Barry commanded 104 men in an ambush of British forces at Crossbarry.
7. Beckett, op. cit.

collectors' offices, destroyed coast-guard stations, robbed the mails, and even sheared girls' heads ". . . because they had been seen talking to soldiers or constables."[8] On the evening before Easter, they destroyed 315 barracks of the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) in a single night. Such was the extent of their activities that the English viceroy, Lord French, reported the Sinn Fein as ". . . an army numbering 100,000 . . . properly organized in regiments and brigades, led by disciplined officers. . . . They are a formidable army."[9]

The Royal Irish Constabulary numbered about ten thousand men neither organized nor trained to combat insurgency. Unlike England's unarmed police, the Constabulary was ". . . a para-military force, armed with carbines, bayonets, revolvers and grenades." When counter-subversion became a principal activity, their plain clothesmen were loathed by the IRA, who regarded them as spies. In addition to armed attacks, the IRA conducted effective psychological warfare against the Constabulary:

> . . . De Valera stigmatized the R.I.C. as "England's janissaries," and called upon his compatriots to ostracize them. "These men must not be tolerated socially," he ordered, "as if they were clean, healthy members of our social life. They must be shown and made to feel how base are the functions they perform, and how vile is the position they occupy." Policemen, he emphasized, must be made "to understand how utterly the people of Ireland loathe both themselves and their calling," so as to "prevent" young Irishmen from dishonouring both themselves and their country by entering that calling."[10]

Dublin walls sometimes carried the chalked words: "Join the R.A.F. and See the World. Join the R.I.C. and See the Next."[11]

By now, a significant minority of the population actively sympathized with the movement—one authority estimates over one hundred thousand offering *active* support; a large percentage remained apathetic, frightened by Collins' terror. Police morale fell, resignations increased, recruitment fell off. Worse yet, the police had begun to abrogate constituted authority: ". . . Barracks and court houses were abandoned in the remoter parts of the south and west of the country . . . [where] *Sinn Fein* police, young men with green armlets, kept what order there was, and the *Sinn Fein* courts administered their own rough justice with variable, and sometimes impressive success."[12]

8. Edgar Holt, *Protest in Arms—The Irish Troubles 1916–1923* (London: Putnam, 1960).
9. Costigan, op. cit.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Bennett, op. cit.

"The Irish Question" was progressively dividing the home government. A substantial group of parliamentarians and other officials wanted to deal gently with the rebels; a more substantial group opposed them:

> . . . The Prime Minister [Lloyd George] refused to believe that Sinn Fein had any real popular support in the guerrilla struggle that was raging. In October 1920 he denounced "the small body of assassins, a real murder gang, dominating the country and terrorizing it."[13]

The Chief Secretary for Ireland, Sir Hamar Greenwood, and the military commander at Dublin House, General Sir Nevil Macready, believed that only harsh methods would "win" the war—or, rather, the fight against "treason and murder."[14]

The punitive attitude prevailed and resulted in two police forces being recruited in England. One was a large unit of British ex-soldiers who served as constables. Wearing khaki tunics, breeches, and puttees, large tam-o'-shanter bonnets, and belts, bandoliers, and holsters of black leather, the members of this unit, eventually numbering twelve thousand, earned the colloquial name of Black and Tans, derisory in that this was a well-known pack of fox hounds in County Limerick.

The other unit was the "Auxiliary Division" of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Known as "Auxies," this unit eventually numbered about fifteen hundred, mostly British ex-officers who wore their old uniforms (minus rank) and Glengarry caps; they later wore dark green and khaki uniforms and fought in one-hundred-man "shock companies" under their own officers.

The government further strengthened Macready's hand by emergency legislation enacted in July 1920, a bill that ". . . gave wide powers to the military command, including authority to arrest and imprison without charge or trial anyone suspected of *Sinn Fein* associations, to try prisoners by court-martial, to hold witnesses in custody and imprison or fine them for failing to produce evidence, and to substitute military courts of inquiry for coroners' inquests."[15] Macready pleaded for authority to declare martial law throughout the country, and in January 1921, had declared it in eight southern counties.[16]

The results of this repressive policy were disastrous. Police-state methods turned Ireland into a hostile land, with British forces occupying tiny enclaves and those not entirely secure.

Neither the Auxiliaries nor the Black and Tans were trained in counter-insurgency warfare. From the beginning, they presented easy targets to Irish terrorists. In attempting to ferret out miscreants, their heavy hands

13. Costigan, op. cit.
14. Ibid.
15. Holt, op. cit.
16. Costigan, op. cit.

often fell on innocent civilians, thus further alienating an already hostile population. Each repressive measure worsened matters. No one citizen trusted the other. The old man in the worn trenchcoat standing quietly in a crowd might whip out a pistol and shoot a policeman; the young blade with the pretty girl might throw a hand grenade at a military post. Then the Crossley tenders—awkward lorries holding eight to ten police—would race to the scene, the Black and Tans arresting without caution, interrogating without discretion, on occasion employing torture.[17]

Puffs of hatred rose from the green land, a cloud floated over the island. In return for executing one insurgent, Kevin Barry, Tralee rebels ambushed a lorry load of Black and Tans, killed five, and captured two. Police and soldiers descended on the town, demanded the return of the two prisoners, and, to emphasize the demand, ". . . wrecked shops and houses with hatchets and crowbars and set fire to the County Hall." And in vain: the ". . . *Sinn Feiners* had thrown the two men alive in the furnace of the local gas-works."[18] At Kilmichael, an IRA flying column ambushed and killed an Auxie patrol. In turn, police squads fell on private houses, summarily executed citizens suspected of being Sinn Feiners. Toward the end of 1920, when the IRA began burning warehouses in Liverpool, the government authorized "official punishments" including the destruction of homes believed to harbor sympathizers, not to mention more-active suspects. This quickly backfired: for every cottage destroyed, the IRA burned down an official's much more valuable house. In his recent book *Out of the Lion's Paw,* Constantine Fitzgibbon has dramatically spelled out the give and take of hatred:

> . . . Like all guerrilla wars it was a dirty fight, atrocities breeding atrocities, vengeance following upon revenge. Murder was a weapon of war acceptable to both sides, though on the whole the Irish murdered selectively, the British with less discrimination. Some British units tortured their prisoners; some Irish tortured captured informers. There was much treachery, and little gallantry. The sudden ambush on the mountain lane; the raid in the night and the English officer or Irish leader shot in front of wife and children; the knife between the shoulder-blades in the dark, slum alley-way; the moment of awareness in the public house when the victim suddenly realizes that these men are not his friends, that he is alone with them, and that his lower lip is beginning to tremble; the lorry careering down a long village street, its machine-guns blazing blindly into unidentified little homes; drunken soldiers burning half Cork as a reprisal; Michael Collins's squad of professional assassins stalking their victims through the quiet and leafy suburbs; big, beautiful Georgian country houses blazing in the night, because their owners probably had Unionist sympathies; infuriated soldiers shoot-

17. Ibid.
18. Holt, op. cit.

ing into the massed spectators at a football match; and always the glance over the shoulder, the backward glance of fear. That is guerrilla warfare.[19]

In early 1921, the vicious exchange was heartily condemned by no less than the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, speaking in the House of Lords, condemned IRA violence, but also British reprisals. ". . . You cannot justifiably punish wrong-doing by lawlessly doing the like. Not by calling in the Devil will you cast out devilry." A few months later, Lloyd George voiced the dilemma: ". . . I recognize that force is itself no remedy, and that reason and goodwill alone can lead us to the final goal. But to abandon the use of force today would be to surrender alike to violence, crime and separatism, and that I am not prepared to do."[20] Privately he told colleagues that he refused ". . . to shake hands with murder."[21] So saying, he authorized another troop increase: by May 1921, British forces numbered about 50,000—some 35,000 regular troops, 12,500 Royal Irish Constabulary (including Black and Tans), and about 1,500 Auxiliaries.[22]

Strength settled nothing. By spring of 1921, the Cabinet had concluded ". . . that the only way to make sure of winning the Irish war was to raise an additional 100,000 troops and special police, together with thousands of armored cars, and then to cover the whole of southern Ireland with blockhouses and barbed wire, so that great drives on the Boer War model could be made to round up the whole I.R.A." Wiser heads pointed out that British public opinion would topple any government suggesting such a move.[23]

The matter might have ended there but for a good reason: the other side was also getting desperate. Collins' two-fold strategy had failed: Murderous raids and ambushes had, without question, disrupted normal government, but had not driven the English from the country, nor did the English seem on the point of leaving. The general public, always mercurial, was tiring of semianarchy—as Yeats had it: ". . . now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare / rides upon sleep." Compromise now seemed the only way to end agony.

In July 1921, the British Government proposed what could have become law in 1914: a partition, with an Irish Free State in the South—a self-governing dominion similiar in status to Canada. A treaty to this effect was signed in December, and British forces were quickly withdrawn. Peace lasted only a short time. In spring of 1922, civil war erupted between pro- and anti-treaty factions. But this was Irish fighting

19. Constantine Fitzgibbon, *Out of the Lion's Paw* (London: MacDonald, 1970).
20. Holt, op. cit.
21. Costigan, op. cit.
22. Churchill (op. cit.) put the figure at 60,000.
23. Churchill, op. cit.

Irish, so only Irish could win (or lose). This time, the rebel-rebels lost. A year later, the country settled into disturbed peace appropriate to its historical tradition of lilting turmoil.

The Irish revolution raised moral questions scarcely justified by number of casualties. A ranking British official, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, estimated British army losses at 566 killed. General Macready counted 750 rebel-army losses. A contemporary authority believes that fewer than 2,000 civilians lost their lives.[24] Compared to the blood bath of World War I, these figures represent a mild shower.

Yet the use of terror as a major rebel weapon genuinely shocked many English people. In discussing its use by insurgents, even Winston Churchill's normally silky pen jerked a convulsive protest that relied more on contradiction of terms than on rational consideration of traditional and moral aspects.[25]

This naïve reaction was perhaps inevitable in a land still hypnotized by its own majesty and power, a land that was outgrowing the use of force at home but still relied on it to rule an empire, thus a land that had become accustomed to a double standard of application while refusing to admit the paradox of definition.

These good people would probably have agreed with a contemporary definition of terror as "extreme fear" and "an object of dread."[26] Not only can terror be employed as a weapon, but any weapon can become a weapon of terror: terror is a weapon, a weapon is terror, and no one agency monopolizes it. The point is made with artistic brilliance by Goya, whose *Los Desastres de la Guerra* depict the "excesses" of the Spanish guerrilla war against France; the paradox is emphasized by the corpse-strewn battlefields of World War I caught in the camera's cold eye. Terror is the kissing cousin of force and, real or implied, is never far removed from the pages of history. To define (and condemn) terror from a peculiar social, economic, political, and emotional plane is to display a self-righteous attitude that, totally unrealistic, is doomed to be disappointed by harsh facts.

The paradox of terror, so conveniently ignored by English public opinion, particularly middle- and upper-middle-class opinion during the Irish rebellion, is ages old. Celtiberian slaves working New Carthage silver mines must have regarded Roman legionaries as objects "of dread" inducing "extreme fear." To enslaved minds, the legionaries were weapons of terror designed to keep the slaves in the mines—and apparently they worked very efficiently toward this end. From time to time, these and other slaves secretly rose to attack the Romans, who, upon

24. Costigan, op. cit.
25. Churchill, op. cit.
26. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary. London: 1968.

seeing a sentry assassinated or a detachment ambushed and annihilated, no doubt spoke feelingly about the use of terrorist tactics.

But who had introduced this particular terror to this particular environment? The Romans. Had they other options? Certainly: they could have kept their hands off the Iberian Peninsula, or they could have governed it justly and wisely (as a few officials tried to do). Instead, they came as conquerors ruled by greed, and, in turn, they ruled by oppression maintained by terror. What options did the natives hold either to rid themselves of the Roman presence or to convert it to a more salutary form? Only one: force. What kind of force? That which was limited to what their minds could evoke. Lacking arms, training, and organization, they had to rely on wits, on surprise raids, ambushes, massacres. Was this *terror* or was it *counterterror?*

The paradox survived the Roman Empire. The king's soldiers frequently became weapons of terror, just as did the rack and the gibbet. Feudal government of the Middle Ages rested on force (as opposed to the people's consent), often on terror exercised through the man-made will of God reinforced by hangman's noose or executioner's ax. No student of the period can seriously condemn the protesting peasant as a terrorist, for here, as in the case of Romans in Spain and indeed of most governments, European monarchs and ruling nobility held options of rule ranging from the most benevolent to the most despotic. Their subjects, however, held limited options: submit or rebel. If they chose rebellion, the options were again limited, the main reliance being placed on native wit. But since native wit was often sharply circumscribed, most rebellions were doomed to expensive failure. Whatever the effort, whether a single peasant who in the fury of frustration picked up a scythe and severed the tax-collecting bailiff's head from his body, or the group of peasants who grabbed pitchforks to stand against the king's soldiers—the effort, more often than not, was not *terror* but, rather, *counterterror.*

The paradox survived the Middle Ages and is implicit in many instances cited in preceding pages. But as bourgeois rule began to replace feudalism in Western nations, the paradox of terror began to wear a camouflage convenient to Christian conscience. As the people's will slowly asserted itself, as dynasties fell or became sharply altered in character, the pattern of rule slowly began to change. As nations came into being, as rule by law began to replace rule by whim, as the concept of democratic government began to claim men's minds, parliamentary processes visibly diminished the role of force and thus of a particular type of terror in civilized government.

The process greatly varied. In England, the bourgeois revolution of 1689, finally consolidated in 1832, established a climate in which rule by law and stable government grew to proud tradition. In France, the bourgeois revolution gave way to reaction unsuccessfully challenged by the proletariat in 1848, an enduring conflict, a climate that barely toler-

ated rule by law, with the inevitable result of semianarchic government. Each European nation treated the transition from feudalism to bourgeois rule in a different way and at a different time, and each in turn has faced the challenge of the proletariat in a variety of ways and with greatly differing results in which terror has never been far removed.

The paradox of terror remained very much alive in the imperialist philosophy of even the most advanced Western nations. By devious mental exercises conducted in the spiritual gymnasium of Christianity, colonizing powers defended the double standard: force used by themselves became benevolence; counterforce used by natives became terror. The conceit is clearly expressed in Cornwallis' denunciation of Marion and his guerrillas during the American Revolution.

It appeared in both subtle and blunt ways. Most of us do not think of a well-meaning missionary as a terror weapon. But he was just that to political functionaries of some tribes, in that he represented a distinct threat to the existing social-political-economic-religious structure, besides serving as harbinger of white armies that would take tribal lands and place the tribe in perpetual bondage. The missionary was a threat. The missionary was as much a threat to the savage's way of life as, to choose a military analogy, the musket was to the knight's way of life. Some readers will remember the touching scene in *Orlando Furioso* when the knight rowed out to sea and tossed the captured firearm overboard while cursing its invention and hoping it was the only one of its kind, because it would mean the end of knightly warfare. The thought process of the savage was similar when he tossed the first missionary into the cooking pot.

A more blatant example of Western hypocrisy occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, at the Hague conference on the rules of land warfare. One resolution proposed to abolish dumdum bullets. This was a splendid idea: a dumdum bullet is an ordinary cartridge with an X cut on the end, the improvised surgery insuring that the ball, when striking an object, preferably human, will expand and, upon leaving the object, tear away a great portion of flesh. If ever a weapon is terrible, it is a dumdum bullet, and it is not difficult to imagine the effect on an ignorant native's mind, for here terror was heightened by a seemingly magic quality of the white man's military art.

Yet, at this conference, the British refused to abandon the use of the dumdum, because of its proven efficiency in breaking up native charges![27]

The hypocrisy of Western governments also displayed itself in home

27. (Hague Conference on land warfare.) Lest the American reader nod smugly, he should remember that American soldiers used dumdum bullets in the settling of the West and during the Philippine Insurrection; the Japanese, incidentally, used them on Iwo Jima (and probably elsewhere) in World War II. Rumors of usage by both sides have been reported from Vietnam. They are also used during the annual Canadian-Norwegian slaughter of baby seals.

rule, but in a more subtle form than either a missionary or a dumdum bullet. Neither the rise of democratic government nor technical innovations wrought by the Industrial Revolution resulted in Utopia. Industrialization benefited many people, but it also brought grave social inequities to threaten seriously and frequently the fabric of social government in the most enlightened nations.

The overt terror of the king's soldiers, the lord's bailiffs, the rack, and the gibbet was replaced with the covert terror of industrial slavery: in England, the Lancashire cotton mills, the industrial centers of the Midlands, the Ebbw Vale coal pits, the doss houses; in America, the New England railways, the Chicago meat plants, the Allegheny coal mines, the Colorado copper mines—these and other by-products of *laissez faire* economics spelled miserable wages, torturous hours, dangerous and unhealthful working environments, accidents with no compensation, minimum if any retirement benefits, massive layoffs, widespread unemployment, slums, child labor, inadequate schools: altogether a portrait of hopelessness, the dignity of human beings cast like some sort of industrial refuse into gigantic slag heaps to form a social state in which death often became preferable to survival, a state mocking the cultural pretensions of Western civilization.

The deadening process of this social disease was accompanied by a hatred difficult for our affluent society to understand or even to comprehend. But it did exist, and it did assert itself. For then, as now, where man is deprived of dignity and hope, hatred sets in, and a corollary of hatred is a desire for vengeance. And if death is made to appear as good or even preferable to life, then an act of terror against an object of hatred is a simple and even rewarding matter, for the bite of the rifle's bark is momentary, and, as Socrates put it, the sleep is long and can be no less comfortable than life and may be more so.

And yet, to rational man, terror and counterterror are abhorrent and, except for isolated cases, they did not become favored weapons of the discontent in western Eurasia or in America. Men used terror on occasion, and at times the history of labor and, in some instances, agrarian movements in the respective countries is bloody and ugly, and the history of all countries is spotted with political assassinations. But this falls far short of a terror-ridden environment, of systematic repression on the one hand and systematic assassination on the other, far short of outright insurrection. In general, the working classes in western Eurasia and America avoided using terrorist methods primarily because of the lurking knowledge reaching to the depths of the labor movement that legislative processes inspired by the principle of one man-one vote were trying to eradicate social horrors evoked by industrialization and unmitigated greed of some landlords and factory owners. In short, the labor movement chose the ballot, not the bullet, evolution by selective trade unionism, not revolution by the mass proletariat. Particularly in

England, a peculiar and in some ways unhealthy calm accompanied the process. In despair, Karl Marx wrote to a friend in 1870: ". . . England possesses all the necessary conditions of social revolution; what she lacks is a universal outlook and revolutionary passion."

If social malaise of such intensity gripped enlightened nations, we can imagine its extent in the autocracies and colonies, where the major labor force remained strapped to the feudal concept of land ownership. In fulminating against social abuses in nineteenth-century France or England or twentieth-century America, neither Zola nor Dickens, neither Dreiser, Sinclair nor London, equaled Tolstoy's or Turgenev's narrative power, simply because of the much more orderly canvas of the West, where man was not yet divorced from his government, where hope for improvement still survived.

British and American workers may have been ill-paid and ill-treated and themselves and families host to a wide variety of social indignities, for any one of which society, industry, and government should have been ashamed, but they were not quelled by the knout under the least possible pretext, their demonstrations were not usually fired upon by troops, they were not subject to mass arrest and detention, they were not executed in wholesale lots when their whispered protests brushed authoritarian ears. Violence was not their chosen way of life, and this is the main reason that English public opinion was so shocked by the "Irish outrages."

That English public opinion was shocked does not alter the fact of terror that reigned in numerous countries throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. In 1914, an act of terror began the events that led to the first world war in history. In 1917, a reign of terror culminated in a revolution that changed the political face of the world.

Chapter 22

The Russian revolution • Historical background • Early terrorist tactics • Bakunin and Marx • Plekhanov and the liberals • Nicholas' assassination • Alexander III and the okhrana *• Lenin's rise • Guerrilla warfare in the countryside • Mensheviks versus Bolsheviks • Von Plehve's assassination • Gapon's Bloody Sunday • The October Manifesto and the reign of terror • The revolutionaries fight back • World War I and the government's weakness • Revolution • Bolshevik victory*

THE FALLOUT of radical thought produced by the explosion of the French Revolution filtered only slowly into the reactionary air of czarist Russia. Falling gently and slowly, it penetrated not the minds of peasants and serfs, those unfortunates whose isolated protests marked the decades with the patterned emphasis of tombstones, but, rather, it infected the palace hierarchy, made particularly receptive by the oppressive air of Nicholas I's reign. ". . . By virtually proscribing all forms of political, social and philosophical speculation," E. H. Carr noted, Nicholas "threw the whole intellectual movement of three generations into a revolutionary mould."[1]

The Decembrist uprising of 1825 was the result: ". . . a palace revolution," in Bernard Pares's words, "that did not succeed," but ". . . almost the first that had anything like a political program." Pares, along

1. E. H. Carr, *Studies in Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1950).

with most modern historians, marks this revolt ". . . as the first act in the Russian Revolution."[2]

As might be expected, the Decembrist uprising elicited harsh penalties from young and autocratic Czar Nicholas I. Although Nicholas continued to work for peasant reforms, oppression of the intelligentsia continued throughout his long reign (1825–55). But thought has always survived oppression, and if Pushkin and Lermontov were forced to premature deaths because of liberal views, others survived. The provocative thinking of the German philosophers Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Feuerbach, the radical writings of the socialist theorists Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Louis Blanc—all reached Russia and were embraced by the Belinsky-Stankevitch school, which produced such important political theorists as Michael Bakunin and Alexander Herzen.

The intellectual movement gained impetus during the opening years of Alexander II's more liberal reign. In discussions preceding the freeing of the serfs, specific liberal and revolutionary schools of thought appeared. The 1861 emancipation act directed liberal thinking almost exclusively to the peasant question and brought demands for further reforms. As early as 1861,

> . . . a students' meeting developed into a riot and was charged by the Cossacks. In June, students' clubs with their uniforms were forbidden; the numerous bursaries [scholarships] for poor students were withdrawn, and meetings were to be held only by special permission. In the autumn there were serious riots followed by mass expulsions, strict processions of the students and attacks of the troops; three hundred students were imprisoned. . . .[3]

Two important revolutionary movements appeared in these years. The young Pisarev opted for ". . . an insurrectionary freedom from all authority and convention," a movement described by Ivan Turgenev in his novel *Fathers and Children* and one that he termed the Nihilists. Another appeared under the aegis of Chernyshevsky, who, influenced by the utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and Mill, broke with the liberal Herzen to demand radical reforms in his *Unaddressed Letters:*

> . . . Fly-sheets began to appear, calling for terrorist acts against the government—such as that addressed *To Young Russia* in 1862, in which even the murder of the Emperor was advocated. About this time fires broke out in St. Petersburg and were attributed either to Revolutionaries or to Poles. . . . Chernyshevsky was tried and, on loose evidence, sent for twenty-four years to Siberia; Pisarev was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Both their magazines were suspended.[4]

2. Pares, op. cit.; see also Alan Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958).
3. Pares, op. cit.
4. Ibid.

The attempt on Alexander's life in 1866 virtually ended the liberal aspects of his reign. But repression could not stem various liberal movements that for a short time had been allowed to develop and were now nurtured from the West. In 1869–70,

> . . . the political influence of western Europe became yet more marked. The example of the Paris commune, the growth of socialism and anarchism, and the widespread agitation carried on with the aid of clandestinely imported literature, exercised a stimulating and encouraging effect. . . .[5]

Where some new movements preached non-violent methods, notably Lavrov's, who picked up the shreds of Pisarev's nihilist movement, others, such as Michael Bakunin's, called for all-out violence to achieve revolution. Writing from Geneva in 1868, Bakunin, in his book *Cause of the People,*

> . . . called on all to free themselves first and foremost from religion, but also from all traditions of hereditary property and the family; the State, he said, had to be destroyed. Bakunin's creed was anarchism; the future society was to be based on a number of free local communities; the means of production were to be controlled. Bakunin called for an armed rising. "It is not difficult," so he lightly wrote, "to raise any village"; and his appeal was to many more attractive than the milder methods advocated by Lavrov.[6]

Bakunin's theories collided squarely with those expressed by Karl Marx, who urged that revolution should be achieved within the framework of the state. They came closer on the subject of violence. Though no particular advocate of violence, Karl Marx wrote in his world-shaking economic study *Das Kapital,* first translated into Russian in 1872, that ". . . force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one."[7]

But Russia was not ready for Marxian theories. Instead, in 1872 a group of propagandists attempted to spread the revolutionary word to the peasants. Several thousand men and women—the forerunners of the Narodniks—discovered to their dismay that peasant ignorance, drunkenness, apathy, and misplaced faith in the czar, not to mention the size of Russia, poor communications, and powerful secret police and army made revolution by persuasion a difficult task.

Disappointed members of this group soon began returning to the cities, where ". . . they lived without passports and waged a systematic war on the police." Here they frequently joined revolutionary movements of the intelligentsia, who had continued to spread thoughts by

5. T. G. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1919), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.
6. Pares, op. cit.
7. E. H. Carr, *Karl Marx—A Study in Fanaticism* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1934).

the printing press and by word of mouth, the punctuation marks acts of terror. The first revolutionary society, *Land and Liberty,* formed in St. Petersburg, was dedicated

. . . to bring about an economic revolution from below by militant methods. It had a closely systematized staff, which was to produce strikes and riots wherever possible and was also to conduct propaganda. Its "heavenly chancellery" manufactured false passports, and its "disorganization department" planned acts of terrorism. A demonstration of December, 1876, in front of the Kazan Cathedral, where the chief speaker was the propagandist Plekhanov, led to further arrests and sentences. Among the revolutionaries the tide flowed ever stronger in the direction of terrorism.[8]

Professor Mazour has pointed out that although the new party recognized terroristic acts, it ". . . accepted these not as a policy of political opposition, but only as an expedient weapon of revolutionary defense. Terror could be directed only against individuals who served as instruments of oppression; it had no place in a society where political institutions allow the citizen freedom and justice."

. . . Terroristic activity [stated the 1876 program of the executive committee of the party] consists in the destruction of the most harmful persons in the Government, the protection of the party from spies, and the punishment of official lawlessness and violence in all the more prominent and important cases in which such lawlessness and violence are manifested. The aim of such activity is to break down the prestige of Governmental power, to furnish continuous proof of the possibility of carrying on a contest with the Government, to raise in that way the revolutionary spirit of the people and inspire belief in the practicability of revolution, and, finally, to form a body suited and accustomed to warfare.[9]

The government's answer to such tactics, repression rather than reform, was exactly what revolutionists needed to keep themselves in business and to propagate such "hard-core" bodies as *The Will of the People,* which went so far as to publish the death sentence of Czar Nicholas.

. . . These conspirators were not more than a few hundred in number. Their weapon was the bomb. While they fought the Russian police the public remained passive, but the sympathies of many were certainly, if anything, rather with the revolutionaries, who thus were often able to obtain indirect help or shelter. They were organized in sections and worked efficiently; and they had good information as to the Emperor's movement. . . .[10]

8. Pares, op. cit.
9. A. G. Mazour, *Russia—Tsarist and Communist* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1962).
10. Pares, op. cit.

Not all revolutionaries embraced a philosophy of terror. Notably G. V. Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, pleaded with his fellows to forgo terrorist methods, which he regarded as a waste of time. His stand split the party into Populists and Terrorists. Other liberal groups abhorred the idea of terror. The government could quite easily have isolated and neutralized the minority extremists, but, in 1878, when the czar appealed for public support,

> . . . in Kiev and Harkov the Zemstvo Liberals met in conference, and pointed out that while all guarantees of individual liberty were violated by the police, and while the demands of the public were persistently ignored, it was thereby precluded from giving any effective support to the throne. . . .[11]

Extremists recognized the all-too-fragile base of their organization. Their continued existence in part depended on publicity derived and sympathy aroused from mass arrests and large trials, which emphasized the rape of justice as well as keeping vital issues before the public eye. Proposed liberal reforms of General Melikov, the important first step toward constitutional government, had they been put into effect, would have terminated the reason for terrorist activities. The czar already had signed the first of these when two nihilists, Rysakov and Grinevetsky, assassinated him, in 1881.

A reform government or even a government interested in reform might still have succeeded in providing a suitable constitution, but Alexander III, ". . . big, strong and stupid," gave way to the most reactionary of his advisers. Although the revolutionary movement was virtually paralyzed by governmental repression, individual acts continued to plague authorities throughout Alexander's reign (1881–94): in the country, isolated peasant protests; in the cities, student strikes and riots; and, from 1880 onward, increasing industrial unrest and open strikes.

The government replied in kind with "the *okhrana* procedure":

> . . . This law, under which all Russia was at least partially governed . . . gave to local and imperial officials the right of search; the right to imprison any suspect for two weeks—the two weeks might be indefinitely extended by order of the Minister of the Interior; the right to exile a subject for five years without a trial or without bringing charges; the right to forbid residence in a given area for an indefinite period; the right to suppress meetings, even those for which official permission had been given; the right to dismiss employees of the Zemstva and town councils; and the right to hand civilians over to military courts-martial. Even this list is not exhaustive. . . .[12]

11. Ibid.
12. W. B. Walsh, *Russia and the Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1958).

In 1894, the weak Nicholas II insured continuation of this dreadful state of affairs by promising his advisers ". . . an unswerving adherence to the principle of autocracy,"[13] an injudicious statement that elicited a sinister warning by pamphlets distributed in St. Petersburg: "You have begun the struggle, and the battle will not be long delayed."[14]

Autocracy would have been acceptable had it produced necessary reforms in country and city. Despite the 1861 emancipation act, the plight of the Russian peasant under the vicious "commune system" beggared description. Prince Peter Kropotkin may have been an anarchist, but his words condemning Czar Nicholas' call for "order" in Russia were damning in their truthfulness. What is order? Kropotkin asked:

> . . . It is misery and famine become the normal state of society . . . it is the peasant of one-third of Russia dying of diphtheria, typhus, of hunger from hardship, amidst piles of grain making their way abroad. . . . It is land taken from the peasant in order to raise cattle to feed the wealthy; it is land left fallow rather than restored to him who asks for nothing more than land for cultivation.[15]

Russian industrialization, delayed until the last decades of the nineteenth century and brought to surging life by the financial genius Sergius Witte, drew numerous half-starved peasants to the cities and mines, where their lot was as bad as in the country.

Revolutionary parties were beginning to look to the worker for support. Plekhanov, who had broken with the anarchists and finally fled to Switzerland, published a Russian translation of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1882. A year later, along with Vera Zasulich, Paul Axelrod, and Leo Deutsch, he founded ". . . the first Russian Marxist group and planted the roots of Marxism in the new industrial proletariat of Russia."[16] This movement spawned "reading circles" in the larger Russian cities, and it was in one of these in St. Petersburg that, in 1893, the twenty-three-year-old Lenin became convinced that the newly created working proletariat ". . . would provide the driving force and the ideological justification of the Russian revolution."[17]

The rise of industrial strife contributed greatly to the revolutionary cause. The pioneer Bolshevik historian M. N. Pokrovsky wrote that ". . . in the space of six years (1881–86) the historians of the Russian labor movement have to record 48 large strikes affecting altogether more than 80,000 workers . . ."[18] Lionel Kochan has pointed out in

13. Pares, op. cit.
14. Masaryk, op. cit.
15. Lionel Kochan, *Russia in Revolution 1890–1918* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966).
16. Carr, *Studies in Revolution, supra.*
17. Ibid.
18. M. N. Pokrovsky, op. cit., Vol. 1.

his recent, excellent book *Russia in Revolution 1890–1918* that ". . . the strikes of the 1890s had political overtones and were organized"[19]; the germ of the later soviets, or workers' councils and trade unions, appeared in St. Petersburg textile strikes of 1896–97. In 1896, 118 strikes occurred, 145 in 1897, and 215 in 1898.[20] These and other demonstrations were ruthlessly suppressed, at first by police, both official and company-hired, but increasingly by troops. Where the army intervened in industrial disputes 19 times in 1893, it intervened 271 times in 1901 and 522 times in 1902.[21] Here was a dangerous condition, for where the worker originally began demonstrating and striking for economic betterment, slowly he was moving toward divorce from the harridan monarchy to marry the floozily attractive blonde of radical political change.

A few, a very few government officials recognized what was happening. In 1898, General Trepov, head of the police, presciently wrote:

> . . . If the minor needs and demands of the workers are exploited by the revolutionaries for such profound anti-governmental aims, then is it not up to the government as soon as possible to seize this weapon, that is so rewarding for the revolutionaries, from their hands and itself to assure the fulfilment of the task . . . the police are obliged to be interested in the same thing as the revolutionary.[22]

Colonel Zubatov, head of the Moscow security police and himself a considerable man of mystery, enlarged this idea by attempting to separate ". . . the workers' economic action from the revolutionary political struggle," encouraging unions to air and study workers' problems by appropriate courses and discussion groups. Zubatov succeeded so well that he quickly lost control of the movement, whose solidarity alarmed industry, government, and foreign investors. With his summary dismissal, in 1903, the movement lost momentum, but was revived by a peasant-priest-double agent, Georgi Gapon, who organized St. Petersburg workers into ". . . a cross between a trade union, a mutual aid society and even an underground revolutionary organization."[23]

But if authorities wished to separate trade unionism and revolution, Lenin saw the one leading to the other. The shooting of workers at the Obukhov works, in May 1901, had caused him to write on the subject of armed insurrection. In 1904, Lenin wrote in *Iskra* (*The Spark*):

> . . . It is up to the working-class to extend and strengthen its organizations, to intensify tenfold its agitation among the masses, taking advantage of

19. Kochan, op. cit.; see also Mazour, op. cit.
20. Walsh, op. cit.
21. Kochan, op. cit.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

every vacillation on the part of the government, *making propaganda for the idea of insurrection,* demonstrating its necessity on the example of all those half-hearted steps, foredoomed to failure, that are being made such a fuss of at present [the Zemstvo conference]. . . .[24]

Prompt and radical industrial and agrarian reforms undoubtedly could still have channeled the organizational trend into an evolutionary direction heartily desired by upper- and middle-class liberals and moderates including professional classes and an increasing number of university students. The new revolutionary parties lacked organization, they represented a minority, and they disagreed as to how revolution should be achieved.

The Social Revolutionary Party, which inherited the Populist movement, believed that revolution must come from the peasants. Certainly the land was stirring under protest. New railroads were slowly breaking down the barrier between city and country, which meant a far larger audience for inflammatory propaganda pouring from the cities. The drunken, apathetic peasant of Turgenev's novels was becoming militant. An official police report of 1898 has him indulging in the most basic form of guerrilla warfare:

. . . From reports reaching the Ministry of the Interior it is seen that in certain provinces, predominantly southern and south-eastern, there has recently emerged a series of peasant disorders in the form of systematic damage to the landowners' fields and meadows, together with the driving away of cattle under the protection of men armed with sticks, staves and pitchforks, and attacks on the landowners' watchmen and guards or considerable illegal timber-cutting in the landowners' woods, and brawls with the foresters. When the guards seize the peasants' cattle, the peasants, hoping to free it, *often moving by whole villages,* carry out armed attack on the buildings and farmhouses of the landowners and divide up the working and even the living quarters, attacking and wounding servants and guards.[25]

In sharp contrast to the agrarian movement, the Social Democrats held, as did Marx, that revolution must come from the working proletariat of the cities. But here, in 1903, another split and a serious one developed: the Mensheviks, dominated by Plekhanov, believing that the movement must be as broad-based as possible, essentially a trade-union concept; the Bolsheviks holding for the thirty-three-year-old Lenin's ". . . conception of a small dedicated body of professional revolutionaries" to steer the masses—in Max Weber's words, the "principle of the small number," with the Marxian result of the dictatorship of the proletariat—and this is what prevailed in 1917.

Each movement relied on propaganda, masses of it, and also on ter-

24. Pokrovsky, op. cit.
25. Kochan, op. cit.

ror—terror to disorganize the government, terror to draw reprisals and thus involve the whole population and widen the gulf between people and government, terror to protect the movement from spies, *agents provocateurs,* and traitors. Revolutionary parties already had suffered a high casualty rate—Lenin's brother, for example, was hanged in 1891—that necessitated cellular internal structure with emphasis on secrecy to cloak the cunning, tough, brave, and fanatical survivors.

The Socialist Revolutionaries carried out terror missions by a small, secret, and entirely voluntary group whose members were unknown even to the party's central committee. This committee ". . . designated the targets but only the combat organization determined and put into practice the mode of execution."[26]

The bravery and skill of party agents may be gathered by Lionel Kochan's description of Von Plehve's [the Minister of Interior] assassination in 1904:

> . . . It was no mean achievement to frustrate the extraordinary security precautions surrounding the minister. His office could only be reached by way of circuitous corridors. He dared not travel without an escort of police-cyclists and police droshkys, in a carriage protected by closed blinds of nickel-plated steel, proof against revolver bullets and shrapnel. To no avail. The two terrorists, Sazonov and Sikorsky, made use of a vehicle disguised to simulate the type of van used to collect letters from the pillar-boxes of the capital. With this they intercepted Plehve's entourage as it passed by the Warsaw railway station in St. Petersburg. Sazonov threw the bomb. A correspondent of the English newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph,* witnessed the explosion and noted that ". . . Plehve's end was received with semi-public rejoicings. I met nobody who regretted his assassination or condemned the authors."[27]

So fanatic were these agents that most of them willingly accepted death, confident that their places would soon be filled by other, equally ardent visionaries. The young Kaliayev, who killed Grand Duke Sergei in 1905, told the court:

> . . . I am not a defendant here, I am your prisoner. We are two warring camps. You—the representatives of the imperial government, the hired servants of capital and oppression. I—one of the avengers of the people, a socialist and revolutionist. Mountains of corpses divide us, hundreds of thousands of broken human lives and a whole sea of blood and tears covering the country in torrents of horror and resentment. You have declared war upon the people. We have accepted your challenge. Having taken me prisoner, it is now within your power to subject me to the torture of slow extinction or to kill me outright, but you cannot hold trial over me. No matter how much

26. Ibid.; see also Masaryk, op. cit.; Walsh, op. cit.
27. Kochan, op. cit.

you may seek to exercise your sway, there can be no justification for you as there can be no condemnation of me. Between you and me there can be no reconciliation, as it cannot be between absolutism and the people. We are still the same enemies, and if, having deprived me of liberty and the opportunity to speak directly to the people, you have seen fit to institute this solemn judgement upon me, I am in no way obliged to recognize you as my judges. . . . Let us be tried by this great martyr of history—the Russia of the people.[28]

These chilling words did not yet represent "the Russia of the people," either in the cities or on the land. The true tragedy of the Russian revolution is the unheeded cry of the majority of the people for evolution toward a better life—for basic subsistence, basic liberties defended by representation in a constituent assembly as the first step toward constitutional monarchy, moves favored by a surprising number of landowners and industrialists and by nearly all professional classes.

But Czar Nicholas II refused to budge from autocratic absolutism; his ministers of state remained nearly as hidebound in frightened intensity. To worsen matters, the war with Japan in 1904–5 led to an unmitigated series of military disasters, each lending itself to the thunder of anti-government propaganda that kept Russian air charged with revolutionary fervor.

Czar and government not only refused the relatively modest demands of the people, but fear caused them to deny these demands, by police and army repression. In January 1905, peasant-priest-double agent Gapon caused near crisis by leading a general strike in St. Petersburg. On Sunday, January 9, the tall, bearded Orthodox priest, purple robes flapping in the Neva breeze, gold cross glittering on his chest in the cold winter's sun, led perhaps two hundred thousand workers and their wives and children to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, there to present a people's petition of grievances to the czar. The unarmed, hymn-singing multitude reached the Narva Gate, where it halted before infantry bayonets. And then, without warning, hidden Cossack cavalry units charged the columns of demonstrators while infantrymen fired point-blank into the massed throngs.

Thus Bloody Sunday, a thousand or more people killed, thousands wounded. Bloody indeed, and not only from a humanitarian standpoint. Bloody Sunday caused the Russian worker and the peasant to question the omniscience theretofore enjoyed by the paternalistic figure of the czar. Bloody Sunday cut the first chunk from the broad-base support enjoyed by Nicholas. In many people's minds, the need not for political reforms but for *radical* political reforms became dominant for the first time. In Lenin's words: ". . . The revolutionary education of the proletariat made more progress in one day than it could have made in

28. Ibid.

months and years of drab, humdrum, wretched existence." Moreover, the precipitate display of force solved nothing. The fully charged air of the cities now exploded into a continuous series of protest acts including isolated mutinies in army and navy.

The crisis resulted in the famous October Manifesto, of 1905, seemingly an official surrender. This document guaranteed fundamental civil liberties including freedom of the press, extended the sorely limited franchise, and reformed the Duma, or parliament, into a legislative body. A general amnesty followed, the peasants were tossed some overdue land reforms, and trouble began to decrease.[29]

People reacted variously to this document. The Octobrists, a new, conservative party, embraced it; so did the right-wing Kadets, in the hope that a legislative Duma could evolve into a constituent assembly. As perhaps foreseen by the government, the manifesto caused violent disagreements among the Social Democrats and other revolutionary parties. The Mensheviks and some of the Socialist Revolutionaries wanted to believe in it. Genuinely inspired, the manifesto could have made history with minimum bloodshed. But it was not genuine. Its intention was as thin as its paper, and Trotsky was right to denounce it as ". . . a cossack's whip wrapped in the parchment of a constitution."

The manifesto was a brake. The fast-moving events of 1905 had caught government off guard, its repressive forces severely weakened by war in the Far East. The manifesto was to gain time for government to regroup its forces. In this it succeeded admirably, first by quieting the peasant with mild land reforms, second by breaking the united political front of the cities into two general pieces, then by causing internal dissension in the radical portion. When renewed violence broke out in December with a workers' uprising in Moscow, the government put it down swiftly and continued to repress a new wave of demonstrations, student riots, strikes, and peasant uprisings that lasted well into 1906.[30]

Despite the return of troops from the Far East in early 1906, the government held little reason to feel secure. Between November 1905 and June 1906, 288 police officials were killed and 383 were wounded. ". . . Altogether, up to the end of October, 1906, 3,611 government officials of all ranks, from governor-generals to village gendarmes, had been killed or wounded."[31] The new repression could not stop agitation or propaganda, and each function expanded as the impotency of the Duma became increasingly obvious.

The 1905 revolution introduced a new and most important organizational factor, the soviet of workers' deputies. A soviet was a group of

29. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1945); see also Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855–1914* (London: Methuen, 1952).

30. Pares, op. cit.

31. Kochan, op. cit.

elected representatives—one representative per thousand workers—who became a sort of mature strike committee to further workers' demands. The factory soviet, however, soon broadened its base of support by representing more than one factory and by transcending any one political party. The St. Petersburg soviet, which came to life in autumn of 1905, soon grew to 226 members representing 96 factories, and also representatives of five trade unions.[32] This organizational concept quickly spread to other cities and even resulted in soviets of peasants and soldiers: ". . . There were peasants' soviets and military soviets and student soviets and village soviets and city soviets 'from St. Petersburg to Tiflis, and from Warsaw to Vladivostok.' "[33] The St. Petersburg soviet led the October 1905 uprising, the Moscow soviet led the December uprising. The idea was to attain a unity of action far superior to that rendered possible by the emasculated trade unions now permitted.

Lenin did not recognize the true potential of the supposedly apolitical soviets, but Leon Trotsky did. In his visionary mind, they fitted nicely into revolution by the "principle of the small number." They would remain outside party jurisdiction but would be regarded as ". . . the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government," the gun of the political party. Having direct and virtually instant contact with the masses, they became prime targets, along with the trade unions, for Bolshevik propaganda.

The forces that exploded into the 1917 revolution were now in play, except for World War I. From 1906 on, a repressive and unyielding government pitted itself against a declamatory if divided people. In discussing the White Terror following the 1905 revolt, Professor Masaryk wrote,

> . . . My pen is reluctant to describe the infamies of this reign of terror. In actual fact, every one in Russia is still [1913] an outlaw. It may be said without exaggeration that during the white terror the fear of death ceased to exist. It had been driven away by pogroms; by the death sentences of courts martial and field courts martial; by arrest and martyrisations in the prisons and on the road to Siberia; by the extremities of cruelty and torture; by the frequency of suicide in the prisons; by illness, epidemic, disease and famine. . . .[34]

The pathetic aspirations of moderate liberals, primarily the Kadets, to legislative reforms through the Duma came to naught; the militancy continued, but outlawed parties operated underground in sporadic and often unco-ordinated jabs and thrusts, the casualty rate remained high

32. Ibid.
33. Walsh, op. cit., quoting Khrustaleyev-Nosar.
34. Masaryk, op. cit.

with exiles and executions the order of the day. In September 1907, during the vacation of the Duma, the premier, Stolypin,

> . . . set up field courts-martial which dealt drastically with revolutionary crime, the whole of the proceedings being ordinarily completed in four days. The usual sentence of these courts was death, and 600 persons were executed. . . .[35]

Stolypin's police and soldiers continued to move ruthlessly across the face of Russia. From 1905 to 1910, the government handed down 7,101 death sentences and carried out 4,449 executions.[36] Nor did repression end with Stolypin's assassination, in 1911. In 1912, troops put down a strike in the Lena gold fields in Siberia by firing on unarmed men, killing 170 and wounding nearly four hundred. Important strikes followed, to culminate in the massive St. Petersburg general strike of July 1914, which fizzled only in the wash of war's outbreak.

But when cannons sounded and cause called, land-hungry peasants and underprivileged workers swallowed grievances to fight for country and czar. Country proved a better cause than czar, who failed with his army as with his people. Russia's disastrous war with Japan might never have been fought, so little were its lessons respected. With a few exceptions, uniformed fools, mostly aristocrats, commanded the army. The army lacked artillery, airplanes, communications, transport, medical services. Its weapons were obsolete and in short supply: millions of mobilized men lacked rifles and even boots.

The emergency of war changed nothing of this hapless picture. Mismanagement, incompetence, corruption, cupidity, nepotism—each bloomed following mobilization. Food supplies quickly grew short, both in the army and at home. Industrial production slowed. Well-meaning officials submitted corrective plans only to see them shelved by Czarina Alexandra, now totally under the demoniac influence of the "Mad Monk," Grigori Rasputin; and when Nicholas II was persuaded to become commander-in-chief of the army, with headquarters at Tsarskoe Selo, Alexandra became virtually the ruler of Russia.

A palace revolution might have salvaged something from the growing ruin of government. No palace revolution occurred. Instead, the czar and his generals ordered new and voracious offensives that devoured hundreds of thousands of men. At the end of June 1915, Russian losses numbered an estimated 3.8 million and had to be replaced with men taken from factories, mines, and fields. In all, 15 million were mobilized; about half were listed as killed, wounded, or missing. Survivors faced ever-growing shortages in arms, food, and equipment; at home, people faced near starvation. Production slowed, almost ceased. Riots and

35. Pares, op. cit.
36. Masaryk, op. cit.

strikes in cities proclaimed the growing temper and were ruthlessly suppressed.

But abysmal conduct of the war had gnawed away final and frail supports of government. Finally, even the troops rebelled: in February 1917, the St. Petersburg garrison, ordered to break up a massive hunger demonstration, refused its orders. Demonstrations and riots increased in intensity in early March, and still the garrison, some 160,000 troops, refused to act. A general strike brought three hundred thousand workers into the streets, and now mobs began running amok, attacking police stations, storming law courts, breaking open jails.[37] Police either were killed or fled—or joined the revolution. While ministers paled and the Duma fretted, the troops, with a few exceptions, still refused to act. On March 12, regiments began to mutiny, and that was the end of monarchy. The czar abdicated; the vacillating Duma finally established a provisional government in the form of an Emergency Committee. Frantic revolutionaries meanwhile had been trying to assess events, then harness the revolutionary force. The result was a Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, an organization not unlike that which had emerged in 1905; its Executive Committee soon challenged the Duma's Emergency Committee, and eventually, using armed Red Guards, seized power from it.

The St. Petersburg soviet consisted of about twenty-five hundred deputies including most Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democratic leaders. These formed a Central Executive Committee to carry out policy determined by a small and elite Praesidium. Bolsheviks were not strongly represented in this early body, but nonetheless the differences between it and the provisional government were fundamental.

Russia's attitude toward the war provided the major issue. The Lvov-Kerensky government, strongly influenced by the allied powers France, England, and America, pledged Russia to continue fighting. Unaware of the real situation, the American ambassador urged recognition of the new government, which was given on March 22, 1917; Britain, France, and Italy quickly followed suit and even sent labor delegations ". . . to reconcile the differences between the Provisional Government and the Socialists."[38] They were going to take some reconciling: on March 27, the Petrograd soviet issued a proclamation to the people of the world calling for ". . . concerted and decisive action in favor of peace." The Soviet "defeatists" had accepted what the bourgeois right-wing and moderate liberals had failed to realize: that the Russian people had no intention of continuing the war. The allied powers, by demanding continued Russian participation—as Elihu Root succinctly put it, "no fight,

37. Moorehead, op. cit.; see also N. N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955). Ed. and tr. Joel Carmichael.

38. Vernadsky, op. cit.; see also G. F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956).

no loans"—helped to widen the already dangerous gulf between the Kerensky government and the Russian people.

To this turbulent, divisive climate, the little, bald-headed, sharp-eyed Lenin returned in 1917 (under German auspices from Geneva by means of the famous sealed railroad car across Germany). He was shortly joined by the tall, imperious Trotsky, an intellectual revolutionary in the Menshevik mold, who had sailed from America. The revolution had surprised both of them, but, unlike the Mensheviks, they realized that, if properly controlled, it could result in a smashing socialist victory.

In Lenin's mind, the Petersburg soviet formed ". . . the germ cell of a workers' government." With its quasi-military Red Guards, its affinity to workers (the mainstay of the revolution), its contacts in other cities and in the armed forces, the soviet should be able to usurp the function of the badly disorganized and divided provisional government. Once this happened, the small but well-organized Bolsheviks, in turn, should be able to wrest control of the soviet from the majority but divided Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.

Lenin carefully tailored his appeals to these general objectives. In contrast to the muddled program offered by the Lvov-Kerensky government, Lenin offered a simple three-point program: immediate peace; immediate distribution of land to peasants and seizure of factories by workers; all power to the soviets.[39] In contrast to Mensheviks and most Socialist Revolutionaries, who did not believe the time propitious, Lenin demanded an immediate socialist revolution; in addition, the Bolsheviks, by every means possible, urged extension of soviets into cities and villages to undertake ". . . the task of organizing insurrection and of serving as organs of revolutionary state power."[40]

Lenin was fighting an uphill battle. In June 1917, the Bolsheviks held only 105 seats in the All-Russian Soviet Congress, the Socialist Revolutionaries holding 285, the Mensheviks 248. This called for a great deal of razzle-dazzle to keep the Bolsheviks alive, and in this respect Lenin was a past master. "Loot the looters," he screamed to hysterical masses. "Peace to the village huts," he cried, "war against the palaces." Rubbish slogans, certainly—but flaring as effective matches in that highly tindered air.

Other parties performed a great deal of Lenin's work for him. The Bolshevik presence should have caused the provisional government to forget its differences, at least temporarily, and govern, but right-wing and moderate liberals and numerous Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries refused to take either Lenin or his group seriously, a pathetic display of the arrogance of ignorance.

39. Vernadsky, op. cit.
40. Kochan, op. cit.

Lenin and his lieutenants realized what the provisional government and the allied powers failed to realize: the Russian people, particularly workers and peasants, were demanding an end of war and immediate and fundamental changes in their ghastly existence. Kerensky undoubtedly sensed the feeling, but failed to control it. He respected it with the "Declaration of Soldiers' Rights," in May 1917, and he appointed political commissars in the army ". . . and charged them with the responsibility of political leadership."[41]

The declaration proved fatal to army discipline, and Lenin quickly exploited the new political commissars through army soviets. Kerensky's provincial civil commissars, taken from the old zemstvo committees, ". . . had almost as little contact with the people as the authorities whom they displaced," and this greatly simplified the work of the village soviets.[42] Finally, Kerensky erred fatally by ordering an offensive against the Austrians, in July 1917.

This effort collapsed within a few days, with entire regiments marching to the rear. The extent of the catastrophe caused Lenin to call on soldiers and sailors in St. Petersburg to seize the government. Lenin was premature; the Party paid the price: Trotsky arrested, Lenin fleeing to Finland, the Bolsheviks momentarily shattered.

But instead of exploiting this development, Kerensky refused to break with the St. Petersburg soviet, thus further alienating upper, middle, and officer classes. Moreover, by turning the disorganized and demoralized army over to General Kornilov, a strong man to whom he gave virtually dictatorial powers, he created a dangerous rival.

In September, Kornilov attempted his own putsch. This failed not because of Kerensky's leadership, but, rather, because workers and soldiers refused to countenance it. As Professor Vernadsky pointed out, it left Kerensky ". . . a prisoner of political and economic anarchy," unable to prevent radical socialists from taking the initiative. In September, an increasingly demoralized Kerensky was forced to release Trotsky from prison and overlook Lenin's secret visits from Finland.

In October, Trotsky became president of the St. Petersburg soviet, and Bolsheviks won control of the all-important Military Committee of this body. On November 7, the Bolsheviks arrested Kerensky's cabinet members and stampeded the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets into adopting the Bolshevik program, to be carried out by the new government of Russia: the Council of People's Commissars; president: Lenin; Commissar for Foreign Affairs: Trotsky; other key billets: Rykov, Stalin, Lunacharsky. Kerensky fled, the Bolsheviks put down a liberal-student uprising in Moscow, and, on November 20, opened secret negotiations with Germany to end the war. Moving swiftly to con-

41. Vernadsky, op. cit.
42. Ibid.

solidate his coup, Lenin directed Dzerjinsky to organize a powerful secret police, the Cheka, which immediately invoked a reign of terror designed to eliminate all bourgeois (non-socialist) opposition and to cow lesser adversaries into obedience.

A major stumbling block remained: the Constituent Assembly, whose 703 deputies, elected in late November, included only 168 Bolsheviks. Prior to its first meeting, in January 1918, Lenin's police arrested all non-socialist deputies, murdering two in the process. When socialist deputies, mainly Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, refused to accept Lenin's self-proclaimed government, the Bolsheviks withdrew from the assembly. On January 20, the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets disbanded the assembly by decree, forcibly removing the deputies.

In less than three months, the work of over thirty years had brought a new government to Russia. Whether it could effectively rule remained to be seen.

Chapter 23

Lenin's problems • The Red Terror • Treaty of Brest-Litovsk • Trotsky builds the Red army • Lenin on guerrilla warfare • Allied intervention • President Wilson's ambiguity • Whites versus Reds • The guerrilla aspects of civil war • Lenin's tactics • Reason for allied failures • Kolchak's and Denikin's shortcomings • Cost of allied intervention • Lenin's victory • The Communist International: short-term losses, long-term plans

LENIN faced massive internal and external problems in consolidating his theft of the Russian revolution: a rapidly demobilizing imperial army, the German enemy pressing against the southern provinces, the Ukraine in revolt, grave shortages of food and materials, minimum agricultural and industrial production, lack of foreign credits and supply, rampant inflation.

Politically, the upper, middle, and professional classes and a large portion of bureaucracy and peasantry loathed the Bolsheviks and refused to co-operate with the new government. Deposed military commanders such as Kolchak in Siberia and Alexeiev, Kornilov, and Denikin in the South were organizing former imperial officers into nucleus "White" armies that were attracting regional guerrilla dissidents such as Cossacks, Georgians, and Ukrainians, a growing movement supported by the allied powers, who were muttering thinly veiled threats

of open intervention should Russia sign a separate peace with Germany.

The challenge of survival brought forth an intensified display of leadership, discipline, organization, fanaticism, guile, and ruthlessness that already had served Lenin so well. In speaking of political-social change, Bismarck once remarked, ". . . you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs." Lenin put it rather more forcefully: ". . . No dictatorship of the proletariat is to be thought of without terror and violence." Dzerjinsky's Cheka abridged these words to the "Red Terror," a hideous period characterized by torture and summary execution in wholesale lots, summary imprisonment and deportation to Siberia, and, finally, slow starvation of "unproductive elements" by refusal of food-ration cards.

Nor did the peasants escape. To "deepen the revolution," the government sent teams of agitators and Red Guards to organize village soviets and start the all-important flow of food to the cities. When peasants refused to yield hoarded grain supplies, special "food battalions" of Red Guards and secret police relentlessly seized them.[1] To break up united peasant opposition and discredit the Socialist Revolutionaries, Lenin used divide-and-conquer tactics, in this case turning the poorest peasants into "Committees of the Poor," which he pitted against rich and middle-class peasants with the slogan "Loot the Looters"—words used rather differently but a few months earlier.

To rid himself of the German incubus, Lenin signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in early March 1918. By this, he ceded vast amounts of Russia: eastern Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia to Germany; the Ukraine to be independent; part of Transcaucasia to Turkey—altogether a whopping 26 per cent of the Russian population, 27 per cent of her arable land, 75 per cent of her coal industries.[2] The treaty also brought down the wrath of the allied powers and virtually insured allied intervention. Lenin accepted these consequences as the cost for precious time which he urgently needed to reorganize his forces to face imminent civil war.

Bolshevik military fortunes in early 1918 rested on a heterogeneous collection of Red Guards plus various imperial units such as those under Muraviev, a former czarist colonel, which had defected to the revolutionaries. The Red Guards consisted of armed bands of former workers and soldiers. They varied greatly in size, allegiance, and effectiveness. The St. Petersburg contingent, ten to fifteen thousand strong, was commanded by a former mechanic, Clement Voroshilov. In February, Voroshilov marched his force of irregulars to the southeast to fight and beat the counterrevolutionary Volunteer Army, a successful cam-

1. Vernadsky, op. cit.
2. Ibid.; see also Pares, op. cit.

paign which gained him the support of a number of independent guerrilla bands and swelled his force to some thirty thousand. Other Red Guard units served the party in Moscow and the lesser cities and towns, but Lenin was well aware that this force could not long shelter Communist existence from the dark and rapidly forming clouds of counterrevolution.

In February 1918, Lenin appointed Trotsky chief of the Military Revolutionary Committee, with orders to build a "Workers' and Peasants' Army." Acting swiftly and imperiously, Trotsky started to fashion a Red army suspiciously at odds with revolutionary ideals. Abolishing the Soldiers' Committees created by Kerensky, he replaced them with Communist political commissars, who organized secret Communist cells in each unit. He caused the government to reintroduce conscription, which brought him four hundred thousand men by spring—conscripts armed and equipped from imperial army stocks. Bowing to the inevitable, Trotsky now turned over army organization and training to former czarist officers, most of whom were starving and welcomed any work, but some of whom were coerced into service by the Cheka:

> . . . the former tsarist officers were given curt notice to serve the new master in the country—the proletariat. They were to teach toiling men "how to fight the bourgeoisie. . . ." Should they desert their posts, their "fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives, and children" would pay for the betrayal.[3]

Trotsky also set up a special Central Operations Department, to control the numerous guerrilla bands scouring the countryside.[4]

That these steps were not popular, and that the Bolshevik hierarchy did not like independent guerrilla bands, was made abundantly clear by a letter from Lenin to party organizations:

> . . . Hundreds and hundreds of military experts are betraying us and will betray us; we will catch them and shoot them, but thousands and tens of thousands of military experts have been working for us systematically and for a long time, and without them we could not have formed the Red Army, which has grown out of the guerrilla force of evil memory, and has been able to score brilliant victories in the East. Experienced people who head our war department rightly point out that where the Party policy in regard to the military experts and the extirpation of guerrilla spirit has been adhered to most strictly, where discipline is firmest, where political work among the troops and the work of the commissars is conducted most thoroughly, there, generally speaking, the number of militia experts inclined to betray us is the lowest, there the opportunities for those who are so inclined to carry out their designs are the slightest, there we have no laxity in the army, there its organization and morale are best, and there we have the most victories. The guer-

3. Mazour, op. cit.
4. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Red Army* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964).

rilla spirit, its vestiges, remnants and survivals have been the cause of immeasurably greater misfortune, disintegration, defeats, disasters and losses in men and military equipment in our army and in the Ukrainian army than all the betrayals of the military experts.

Our Party Program, both on the general subject of bourgeois experts, and on the particular program of one of their varieties, the military experts, has defined the policy of the Communist Party with absolute precision. Our Party is combating and will "ruthlessly combat the supposedly radical, but actually ignorant and self-conceited belief that the working people are capable of overcoming capitalism and the bourgeois order without learning from the bourgeois experts, without utilizing them, and without going through a *long schooling* of work side by side with them."[5]

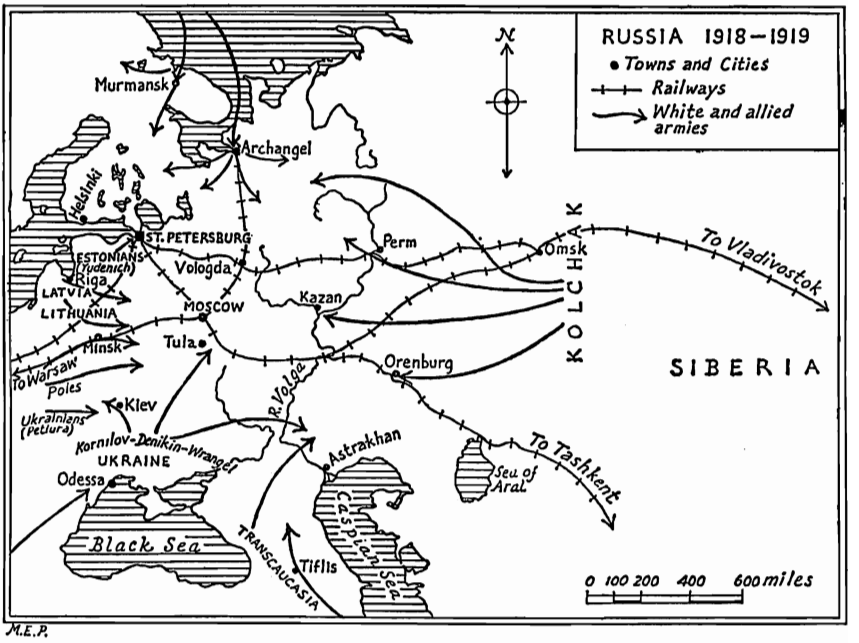
While Trotsky and Lenin so labored, counterrevolutionary fortunes also waxed. In April, the British landed troops at Murmansk, Archangel, and Vladivostok; American, French, and Italian landings followed, and the Japanese moved into eastern Siberia in considerable strength.[6]

The allied pretext was protection, from the Germans in Finland, of ammunition stores already delivered to imperial Russia. The real motive was to help Kolchak's counterrevolutionary army of Whites forming in the East. Pressed by his allies, and also thinking to neutralize Japanese aspirations on the Asia mainland, President Wilson only grudgingly authorized American forces to land. He instructed the force commander, Major General W. S. Graves, to remain neutral but to support neighboring Czech forces.[7] Since the Czechs were counterrevolutionary, this, in effect, showed the American hand; in short order, American forces were fighting with the British against the Reds. Nothing so well illustrates the confusion and downright ignorance that influenced the president at this critical juncture—the perhaps inevitable result of inept diplomatic reporting, primarily the failure of sixty-seven-year-old Ambassador David Francis, combined with the inaccurate and often con-

5. V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, c. 1961), Vol. 3 of 3 vols.

6. Vernadsky, op. cit.; by September 1919, troop strengths numbered: Japanese (eastern Siberia), 60,000; U.S.A., 8,500; British, 1,500; Italian, 1,400; French, 1,096.

7. About 40,000 Czech prisoners had formed brigades to fight on the Russian side against the Central Powers. After the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, they asked for transfer to the western front, which could only be accomplished, due to enemy battle lines, by their sailing from Siberian ports. When, in marching to these ports, their columns were strung from the Volga to Vladivostok, Trotsky, apparently acting under German orders, attempted to disarm and intern them. They successfully rebelled against the Bolsheviks and became an integral if dubious quantity in the counterrevolution.



flicting reports submitted by a host of the president's personal and quasi-personal representatives.[8]

The two-year war that ensued was as unlike war on the western front as Lawrence's campaign in Arabia. None of the armies was well organized, armed or equipped, or even well commanded, yet each won impressive local successes that, properly exploited, probably could have proved decisive. Battle plans were either non-existent or meaningless. The White armies spent months in "winning" hundreds of square miles and in reality controlled no more than the ground occupied by the feet of their horses. When their always insufficient numbers stretched thinly enough across the vast Russian steppes, a Red army would strike a weak point of the line to send the entire army hurtling back on its supply. One

8. G. F. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958). This work and its accompanying volume, *Russia Leaves the War, supra,* are vital for an understanding of this period, particularly the American participation. As Ambassador Kennan pointed out, Vice Consul Felix Cole had sent a lengthy appreciation from Archangel on June 1. This report, in Kennan's words ". . . what has subsequently proved to be the most penetrating and prophetic of all statements by western observers on the prospects for allied intervention in Russia," concluded by recommending delay. Ambassador Francis did not approve and did not cable any of it; it traveled by courier mail and reached Washington on July 19, too late to influence the president's decision.

day, a White cavalry unit would liberate a village from Bolshevik control; the next day, a Red partisan unit would liberate it from the Whites —the village being the major loser.

Armies formed and melted away. Irregular, partisan bands roamed the countryside in rapacious fury reminiscent of the Hundred Years' War. Readers familiar with the film *Dr. Zhivago* will remember the guerrilla leader in the black silk mask: this was Vasily Blücher, and his guerrillas fought the Whites east of the Urals throughout the war. Readers will also remember the armored trains that were genuine enough and quite useless. They steamed raucously through the vast countryside carrying Bolshevik leaders to often meaningless rendezvous. Occasionally they fired on an enemy band, usually without effect. A few troops traveled by train, a few by truck. Most of the "Whites" rode horses. In general, the "wheels" of the Red army were human feet.

A dozen times at least, Lenin seemed on the verge of defeat: he revealed his shaky position by signing the treaty of Riga, which gave Poland undeserved territorial gains. Yet, in the end, he remained master of Russia's fate. In the end, the bumptious allied armies folded their figurative tents and quietly slipped away, the White armies either capitulating or fleeing to leave the torn, bleeding, and famine-stricken country to the Bolsheviks.

The reasons for the Bolshevik success are varied and complex but of immense importance to any study of revolutionary warfare.

On the Bolshevik side, the single overriding key to victory was Lenin's superb leadership, which in time gave the Bolshevik effort the inestimable advantage of unity and fixity of purpose. The hallmark of this leadership was flexibility both of conception and execution.

Before 1917, Lenin's idea of world revolution bore scant similarity to what happened, but this did not deter him from exploiting what he instantly recognized as a unique historical opportunity. In late 1917, no one recognized the precariousness of the Bolshevik position better than Lenin. Great may have been his revolutionary ambitions and broad his objectives, but when the failure of western Eurasian socialists to launch proletariat revolutions became clear, Lenin shelved his grand domestic ambitions and objectives and subordinated himself and his lieutenants to the grim task of survival.

In accomplishing this task, he continued to display a cunning political and military flexibility that often overrode basic tenets held not only in the Communist party but also in Western political and military circles. If it suited his purpose, he never hesitated to yield, either politically or militarily. At times, the government aided the army; at times, the army aided the government: each remained subordinate to the Communist party.

To free his hand to start with, he surrendered immense territories

to Germany. And yet, what did he gave away? He yielded territory already controlled by Germany (territory that a strong Russia could one day recover), and he antagonized allied powers who were already antagonized and already aiding White armies as best they could.

To feed his hard-core strength, the workers and soldiers and their families, he endangered peasant support by forcing distribution of crops without adequate compensation. To build an army, he reintroduced the dreaded conscription, enlisted former Czarist officers and shamelessly used their talents, retaining some and discarding others at the end of the emergency.

He relied on a similar policy to fight the civil war. Retreat was not an ugly word so long as it spelled tactical sense. Space existed solely to trade for time: time for the allied powers to quarrel, time for socialist pressures in England and France to exert themselves, time to exploit enemy political and military errors, time for Russian guerrillas to cut Kolchak's and Denikin's lines of communication; time for loyal Russian peasants to scorch the earth; time for Red armies to form and march from north to south and from east to west to stem off still another enemy incursion.

A number of factors influenced the play. The Red army could not have existed without the supply and ammunition depots taken over from imperial forces. The essentially defensive military task (including the final successful counterattacks against the White armies) was immensely aided by operations on interior lines.[9] Lenin's lieutenants and most of the Bolshevik hierarchy, recognizing the literal "do or die" situation, shared his fixity of purpose.

Patriotic motivation also helped. The Bolsheviks may have stolen the revolution, but that scarcely made the idea of revolution less popular. The Red army may have been a dubious proposition from the standpoint of capability, as a generation of Western critics have tenaciously and often tediously pointed out, but it was in every sense a people's army and as such it formed a growing organism in which self-sacrifice often vied with refusal to accept defeat. Tables of organization and equipment (TO&E), vital to Western military structures, may have been nonexistent, but Voroshilov nonetheless transformed his ragtag collection of Red Guards and guerrillas into the Red Fifth Army, and his soldiers, in being beaten by Denikin and in finally beating Denikin, died just as splendidly as those of more properly organized units on the western front.

The Red army may have been battered and close to defeat, it may have lacked proper organization, modern weapons, artillery, communi-

9. This military term may become clearer by analogy to a beehive: the more territory the Bolsheviks lost, the more compressed became their lines of communication, until they could strike with concentrated forces at any intruder from any direction.

cations, airplanes, medical services—but it did not disintegrate under stress, as did the imperial armies, and, by the end of 1920, it numbered over five million, admittedly an inefficient force that supported only sixteen field armies of varying effectiveness, but nonetheless a force that insured Bolshevik control of what was left of Russia.[10]

The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre once wrote: "The alternative to transcending one's limitations is death." Throughout the civil war, Lenin respected his and Bolshevik limitations. A classic example occurred toward the end, when the Red army had pushed Polish forces from the Ukraine and was driving on Warsaw. A desperate Marshal Pilsudski had sued for an armistice; Bolshevik terms included provisions essential to eventual Russian domination of Poland: for example, citizens' militia of workmen, land grants for all families of Polish men killed or wounded in the war—in other words, the Bolsheviks held the master hand. But now the French intervened with fresh aid and, most importantly, with the services of Maxim Weygand, one of the few capable generals of World War I. Within days, the Red army was routed with a loss of some seventy thousand prisoners.[11] Lenin could have pursued this war further, for many of the factors that so far had aided him remained at work. Undoubtedly, some of his associates urged him to this course. Instead, he signed the disadvantageous treaty of Riga. But he had accomplished his major objective, expelling the Polish army from Russian territory; and he now freed his hand to deliver the *coup de grâce* to Wrangel's final White effort in the South.

A great deal of Lenin's success hinged on his capability of exploiting enemy errors. He did this so constantly and so swiftly and efficiently as to cause the student of the period to suggest that neither the Russian revolution nor the Russian civil war was won so much by the Bolsheviks as the one was lost by the provisional government, the other by the egregious errors of the counterrevolutionary Whites in loose concert with the Western powers.

Intervention in another country's affairs is a delicate matter at best. Whatever happens, the intervening agent is apt to reap the lion's share of the blame if things go wrong and none of the resultant credit if they go right. Primarily for this reason, the objective of the intervening party must be sufficiently important to warrant the risk to prestige. Its importance can be defined only by a careful spelling out of one or more specific aims, as opposed to a conglomerate ambition made the more meaningless by the frippery of legalistic and moralistic window dressing. As an operating rule of thumb: the more vague the stated objective, the less the validity and, in natural corollary, the less the chance of attainment.

10. O'Ballance, op. cit.
11. Churchill, op. cit.

But that is only the beginning. Assuming the specific objective is judged sufficiently important, it must be realistically attainable; that is, if disaster is to be avoided. First-rate minds using first-rate intelligence must weigh the effect of the intervening agent on the balance of the struggle, a process that involves consideration of national forces available for the act of intervention. If the amount of available force is clearly insufficient for the task, either at the inception or as it develops, then the importance of the objective must be reassessed in view of the obvious disadvantages including potential catastrophe.[12]

The allied intervention in the spring of 1918 failed on each count. No single interallied objective existed, but, rather, a nebulous ambition to re-create an eastern front against the Germans, either by persuading the Bolshevik government to this action or by replacing this government with another that would embrace allied interests. A lack of specific objectives prevented allied powers from determining a combined course of action, a deficiency the more glaring in view of the pinchpenny forces committed.

Several reasons explain this failure. The German offensive in France in the spring of 1918 automatically precluded a major allied diversionary effort, at least in northern Russia. Added to this were Anglo-French suspicions of each other's foreign policy, and Wilson's reluctance to intervene openly in Russian affairs, a natural reluctance reinforced by not wanting to give Japan a pretext to secure a permanent foothold in Siberia. Finally, allied representatives in St. Petersburg failed to determine either the depth of the revolution or Bolshevik ability to retain control of it.[13]

This was a catastrophic failure, but an understandable one. The diplomats and generals on hand were engrossed with the world war. They had switched support almost instantly from the imperial government to the provisional government, and they had been prepared to support the Bolshevik government had it agreed to keep Russia in the war. The chief of the American military mission in St. Petersburg had believed that he could persuade Trotsky to this course; the French and the British had even furnished officer adviser-instructors to the embryo Red army, an extraordinary move sharply terminated when Lenin opened peace negotiations with the Germans.[14] Britain and France already were aiding the White movement when Lenin abrogated Bolshevik responsibility for imperial Russian war debts and other obligations, in February 1918.

The erroneous estimate of allied observers hinged in large part on ignorance of conditions inside Russia. The majority of allied representa-

12. In rare instances, the action will still be approved, a handy example being the British sacrificial commitment to Greece in 1940.

13. Kennan, op. cit.

14. O'Ballance, op. cit.; see also Kennan, op. cit.: the U.S. assistant military attaché briefly participated in this effort.

tives did not speak the language, nor did this seem necessary, since the czar and czarina always corresponded in English, and since the court and diplomatic language was French. In those years an enormous gulf existed in all countries between the educated and the working and peasant classes, and the diplomatic corps saw no reason to bridge it, an attitude explicit in the vapid and saccharine writings of the British ambassador's daughter, Meriel Buchanan.

This attitude, natural perhaps, but nonetheless disastrous, meant that in 1918 allied representatives, with few exceptions, were linguistic prisoners of upper, middle, and professional classes who, desperately longing for active intervention, painted a canvas of falsely bright colors. It meant that they had no idea of the turmoil existing deep inside the country; knew nothing of working-class and peasant attitudes; could not talk or listen to Socialist Revolutionaries or Social Democrats or many other persons except through interpreters; lacked accurate information concerning strength, plans, or even progress of White armies, except what they were told by generally dubious sources.[15]

Taken together, this led to an illusory belief, in allied circles, that Bolshevik control was transitory, and this arrogance of ignorance was expanded into a completely unwarranted assumption that a display of allied flags would cause counterrevolutionary Whites to rally into a cohesive force capable of defeating the upstart Reds. When this did not happen, the allied forces found themselves increasingly paralyzed, their influence sharply curtailed. The November 1918 armistice greatly complicated matters. Although the French and British governments wanted to take more positive action in Russia, their leaders were wary of political repercussions—understandably so, in view of their immense losses in the war, not to mention their teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Instead of reinforcing northern sectors, the British had to satisfy themselves by occupying the Transcaucasian oil fields, from where they fed increasing amounts of arms and supplies to General Denikin. The French did send troops into the Odessa area, a halfhearted effort neutralized by the Reds, whose propaganda caused some French soldiers to defect!

The allies acted more decisively in the spring of 1919, when the Supreme Council, in Paris, offered the Kolchak Whites "munitions, supplies and food to establish themselves as the government of all Russia" in return for specific political guarantees.[16] In June 1919, the British

15. Kennan, op. cit.; after citing a linguistic failure, Kennan posed ". . . the uncomfortable question: on how many other occasions were those American representatives—ignorant as most of them were of the language in which the political life around them was transpiring—betrayed in this manner by their interpreter, and how much was added, in this way, to the confusion and misunderstandings of the time?"

16. Vernadsky, op. cit.

stepped up deliveries to Denikin, sending him ". . . a quarter of a million rifles, two hundred guns, thirty tanks and large masses of munitions and equipment" as well as two hundred military adviser-instructors.[17] Had Paris promises materialized, they might have reversed the failing situation. But Paris promises vanished in the smoke of the conference table. In August 1919, Lord Curzon noted:

> . . . The situation is so complex, and the difficulties of arriving at a decision which is acceptable to all are so great that, in some instances, it would be no exaggeration to admit that there is no policy at all.
>
> In these circumstances, the Great Powers when they meet—and too often it must be confessed that refuge is taken in inaction—adopt an uncertain line of conduct; the financial burden tends to fall almost exclusively on the shoulders of those who either have the greatest capacity or the least unwillingness to pay. . . .[18]

Churchill later wrote of allied statesmen: ". . . Some were in favor of peace and some were in favor of war. In the result they made neither peace nor war."[19] In the end, they evacuated, a perhaps inevitable decision but one that, first discussed publicly, proved catastrophic. To save their lives, thousands of Russians now left allied and White army ranks to go to the Red camp, which, never averse to making capital propaganda, was distributing verses such as the following:

> The uniform is British,
> The epaulettes, from France.
> Japan sends tobacco.
> Kolchak leads the dance.
>
> The uniforms are tattered.
> The epaulettes are gone.
> So is the tobacco, and
> Kolchak's day is done.[20]

The numerous and serious allied shortcomings paled in comparison with those of the White armies. Here dissension ruled, both internally and externally. Although a joint plan of attack and eventually a jointure of forces might have defeated the Red army, neither was achieved, even regionally.

Not only did southern armies pursue separate campaigns, but General Denikin, who had replaced General Kornilov after his suicide in early 1918, constantly alienated the peoples vital to his operational success. Unlike Lenin, he did not understand compromise: He broke with

17. Churchill, op. cit.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Walsh, op. cit.

the powerful Don Cossacks, whose chief, or *ataman,* Krasnov, was willing to use German arms and equipment; he held but slight sympathy for land reforms, none for autonomous provincial government.

In his numerous and sometimes extensive incursions, Denikin alienated the peasants, not alone by letting his armies live off the land and by commandeering grain and forage as ruthlessly as the Bolsheviks, but also by attempting to give the estates back to their private owners!

He treated provincial groups such as the Cossacks, the Georgians, and the Ukrainians not as allies but as subject peoples of the government he was going to re-establish. As a result, he forfeited an immense amount of potential strength. Instead of exploiting the loyalty of peasants already disillusioned by Bolshevik rule, he often caused them to fight as a third force, the Greens; in the Ukraine, for example, ". . . the peasant anarchist Nestor Makhno led partisans against, successively, Denikin's Whites, Trotsky's Reds, Wrangel's Whites, and finally everybody, until he fled to Rumania in 1921."[21] The brilliant French author André Malraux later depicted the senseless turbulence through a fictitious character, Katow, in *Man's Estate* (*La Condition Humaine*):

. . . On the Lithuanian front, his battalion had been captured by the Whites. Their arms gone, the men stood lined up on the vast snowy plain that was scarcely visible in the greenish light of the dawn. "Communists stand out!" They knew that it meant death. Two-thirds of the battalion had stepped forward. "Take off your tunics. Dig the trench." They had dug. Slowly, for the ground was frozen. To right and left of them the White guards stood waiting, impatient and ill at ease, with a revolver in each hand, for spades might be used as weapons. The center was left empty for the machine-guns trained upon the prisoners. The silence was immeasurable; it had the immensity of the snow which stretched as far as the eye could see. There was only the noise the frozen clods made as they hit the ground. Crisp thuds that came quicker and quicker. Even with death before them, the men were hurrying—to get warm. Several had begun to sneeze. "That'll do. Stop!" They turned round. Behind them, beyond their comrades, were massed old men, women, and children from the village; but scantily clothed, wrapped in blankets. Gathered there to profit by the lesson. Many shook their heads, as if they were making every effort to look away, but were spellbound in their anguish. "Take off your trousers!" For uniforms were rare. Many hesitated, on account of the women. "Take off your trousers!" Wounds had appeared, one by one, bound up with rags; the machine-guns had shot very low and almost all of them were hit in the legs. Many folded their trousers, though their great-coats had been thrown aside anyhow. They were lined up once more, at the edge of the trench this time, facing the machine-guns, white against the snow; flesh and shirts. As the cold pierced them they sneezed incessantly, one after another, and those sneezes were so intensely

21. F. L. Schuman, *Russia Since 1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).

human beside the grimness of that dawn, that instead of firing the machine-gunners had waited—waited till Life be more discreet. They had made up their minds in the end. On the following evening, the Reds recaptured the village; seventeen whom the shots had failed to finish were saved; Katow among them. Silhouetted against the snow, almost transparently bright in the eerie light of the dawn; convulsed with sneezes; so many shapes, they faced the machine-guns. . . .[22]

(Not for nothing did Pushkin cause Lieutenant Grinev, riding through the land torn by Pugachev's revolt, in 1773, to cry: "God defend you from the sight of a Russian rebellion in all its ruthless stupidity!")

A similar failure in leadership infected the Siberian command, where, after the 1918 armistice, Admiral Kolchak established a dictatorship. Almost at once, he alienated Socialist Revolutionary forces in the area and thus lost peasant support; halfhearted and contradictory measures began losing him support of potentially powerful Czech forces.

When counterrevolutionary fortunes looked up, in spring of 1919, Kolchak foolishly attempted a jointure with the allied-Russian force at Murmansk instead of a straight drive to join Denikin in the South. This abortive lateral movement presented a long exposed flank, which the Reds struck to send the White army spinning back in confusion.

In summer of 1919, the British military representative, General Knox, reported that in Kolchak's armies ". . . the men are listless and slack, and there is no sign of their officers taking them in hand. The men do not want rest, but hard work and discipline. . . . The enemy boasts he is going to Omsk, and at the moment I see nothing to stop him. As it retires the army melts, the men desert to their villages or to convey their families to safety. . . ."[23]

While this deterioration was in progress, General Denikin was enjoying unprecedented success in the South. Between April and October 1919, his forces took ". . . 250,000 prisoners, 700 guns, 1,700 machine guns and 35 armored trains; and at the beginning of October he reached Tula, within 220 [sic] miles of Moscow, with forces approximately equal to those of his opponents, namely, about 230,000 men." On September 22, 1919, Winston Churchill told the British Cabinet: ". . . General Denikin has under the control of his troops regions which cannot contain less than thirty millions of European Russians, and which include the third, fourth and fifth great cities of Russia. . . ." But Denikin lacked ". . . the resources—moral, political or material—needed to restore prosperity and contentment. . . ."[24] Worse than that, however, he refused to come to political terms either with General

22. André Malraux, *Man's Estate* (*La Condition Humaine*) (London: Penguin Books, 1972). Tr. Alistair MacDonald.
23. Churchill, op. cit.
24. Ibid.

Yudenich, advancing from Estonia on Petersburg, or with the Poles or with the Baltic States, or with Petlura, the Ukrainian leader. At the apogee of his autumnal advance, Denikin stopped to fight Petlura, a fatal error that opened his twelve-hundred-mile front to successful Red counterattacks. Thus the end of Denikin. The heir to his bankruptcy, General Wrangel, did attempt to introduce social and political reforms, at least verbally, but the movement never recovered its former momentum.

The collapse of the White armies did not surprise everyone in allied councils. During one of the Paris conferences, Marshal Foch is said to have remarked, "These armies of Kolchak and Denikin cannot last long because they have no civil government behind them."[25] An astute participant could have taken this a step further and asked what a military "victory" would have accomplished? Considering the prevalent political anarchy, the demonstrated inability of conservative-moderate-liberal-socialist elements to come to terms, an inability made the greater by their best leaders' now having been eliminated by the Red Terror, the peasant demands for land reform, and the nebulous but nonetheless autocratic designs of Denikin and Kolchak, the answer would have been political disaster: a divided Russia with the great powers occupying spheres of influence, which would inevitably have led to German-Japanese dominance.

Had these possibilities been respected, then intervention might not have been taken so casually and so aimlessly. Churchill, in *The World Crisis,* plaintively asks, ". . . Could they [the statesmen at Paris] not have said to Kolchak and Denikin: 'Not another cartridge unless you make terms with the Border States, recognizing their independence or autonomy as may be decided.'" Yes, they could have—and *before,* not after, the landings. And if the replies had not been eminently suitable, the landings need never have occurred and the allied powers would have profited immensely thereby.

For the allied intervention solved nothing and cost a great deal, a cost extending far beyond the cruelty of false hopes raised in the breasts of people far too small to escape the web of events, or beyond the thousands of Russians who did flock to allied colors only to be sacrificed ultimately to Red vengeance.

In spring of 1918, millions of Russians remained ideologically uncommitted to either the White or the Red cause. For decades, revolutionary parties in Russia had been preaching the evils levied on the masses by foreign capitalists, and now, as Bolshevik propaganda pointed out, here on Russian soil were foreign armies to protect the investments of these capitalists.

Judging from the effect of the later Polish incursion into Russia—

25. Ibid.

denounced, for example, by no less a figure than Brusilov, former commander-in-chief of the imperial army—the psychological effect of allied intervention could not but have been adverse. Very probably, the intervention better served Reds than Whites, and one cannot help wondering if Lenin otherwise could have achieved his "backs to the wall" fusion.

Allied intervention, more than any one factor, insured Communist hatred of the Western world. Taken with subsequent Western moves, it formed a convenient international bogeyman on whom to blame the disastrous effects of the postcivil-war famine, Lenin's further and ruthless consolidation of Communist power, the inefficiencies and errors of the regime during the post-Lenin power struggles, and the repressive cruelties of the Stalin and post-Stalin regimes.

Withdrawal of allied forces from Russian soil, defeat of the White armies, and lifting of the naval blockade in January 1920 yielded Lenin a somewhat Pyrrhic victory. Russia was plainly exhausted, her industry at a halt, finances ravaged by hopeless inflation, agricultural production at an all-time low. Serious peasant revolts in 1920–21 further clouded the picture, as did droughts that brought widespread famine in 1921–22. In less than two years, Russia lost perhaps five million people from starvation, a figure that probably would have doubled but for the humanitarian and now scarcely remembered efforts of the American Relief Administration.

Lenin answered this internal crisis by launching his famous New Economic Policy. The NEP, by recognizing the value of incentives to agricultural and industrial production, clearly abrogated basic Marxist principles and was welcomed in the West as an admission of Communist failure. This judgment was premature. The NEP represented a step backward, a temporary mollification of social-economic forces, in military terms the reduction of an awkward salient—but not a reversal of strategy. For, while Lenin was juggling with economic factors, his mind remained intent on achieving world revolution.

Lenin had never regarded the Russian revolution as an isolated phenomenon. As a Marxist, he had to adjust chronologically, in that revolution was supposed to have occurred first in Germany, then spread throughout Europe and the world. This slight anachronism in no way invalidated his belief in world revolution or in the Communist party as its major organizational force. In spring of 1919, at the height of his country's internal doubt and confusion, he presided over the First Congress of the Communist International—what would become dreaded throughout the world as the Comintern.

Little doubt or confusion reigned at this congress, where Lenin and Trotsky ran the elections and wrote the governing manifesto, a tedious document hopefully calling on the workers of the world to unite and

revolt. The Second Congress of the Comintern, called in July 1920, decided on a more indirect approach, of preparing the "world revolution" through "a systematic program of propaganda."

Winston Churchill properly identified the new tactics in *The World Crisis:*

> . . . The Bolsheviks do not work only by military operations, but, simultaneously or alternatively with these, they employ every device of propaganda in their neighbors' territories to make the soldiers mutiny against their officers, to raise the poor against the bourgeois, to raise the workmen against the employers, to raise the peasants against the landowners, to paralyze the country by general strikes, and generally to destroy every existing form of social order and of democratic government. Thus a state of so-called peace, i.e., a suspension of actual fighting with firearms, may simply mean that the war proceeds in a still more difficult and dangerous form, viz., instead of being attacked by soldiers on the frontier, the country is poisoned internally and every good and democratic institution which it possesses is undermined.[26]

Despite this gloomy analysis, had the Comintern been a cash-and-carry business, it soon would have gone broke. But it was not a short-term arrangement. To shift metaphors, it resembled an angry octopus whose head remained in Moscow while innumerable ganglia slithered into every corner of the globe.

The ganglia suffered a high casualty rate: Béla Kun's Communist government in Hungary lasted less than six months. The proletariat of western Eurasia and England responded flaccidly: these states were confused and exhausted, and, despite spurts of Communist enthusiasm in England and the new Czechoslovakia, by 1920 the less militant socialist parties controlled the workers. In America, the national temper and postwar prosperity made the task of selling rebellion tantamount to peddling whiskey to a prohibitionist. Bolshevik agitators received nearly as cool a reception in the Near and Middle East, where only a small proletariat existed and where the reasoned atheism of communism repelled rather than attracted: religion indeed was the opium of the masses, nor did they desire to quit smoking. The Far East offered more fertile grounds, and, in 1920, Lenin called the first "congress of the Peoples of the East" for ". . . the purpose of stirring up and using Asiatic nationalism."[27] Two years later, Comintern agents were active in China, where again the situation permitted no dramatic inroads.

Several factors softened these various rebuffs. By working through the Comintern, Lenin minimized damage to his foreign policy, including the business of the market place: ". . . an Anglo-Soviet Trade Pact

26. Ibid.
27. Walsh, op. cit.

was concluded in 1921, and during the years 1921–22 nineteen treaties of peace or of friendship were concluded between the new Soviet state and its neighbors."[28]

Nor did the professional revolutionary, long inured to failure, expect to accomplish miracles overnight. If an encircling ganglion were crushed or cut off, the party relied on the biological principle of *l'autotomie*—the virtually automatic regeneration of the hapless limb. For if the party's long arms failed to crush postwar political structures of Germany, Italy, France, Spain, and England, they nonetheless began to weaken foundations by establishing local Communist parties and serving as the line of communication necessary to feed these units with money and propaganda while honeycombing the area with secret party cells.

Widespread unrest greatly aided the process of fomenting revolution from within. The cumulative effects of the Industrial Revolution, the preliminary backlash of colonialism, the social-economic disruption of World War I—each played a contributory role in the social ferment of the day. From this ferment arose a variety of political genies, of democratic states whose weak and uncertain leadership bred reluctance to accept social challenges imposed by international communism, of fascist states dedicated to eliminating challenge imposed by fear with the blunt instrument of force, of nationalist states spurred by challenge but remaining aloof from the ideology—a political potpourri, a confused, frightened, and often brutal world in which revolution and its kissing cousin, guerrilla warfare, were to play significant roles.

28. Ibid.

PART TWO

Mao and Revolutionary Warfare

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. . . .

MAO TSE-TUNG

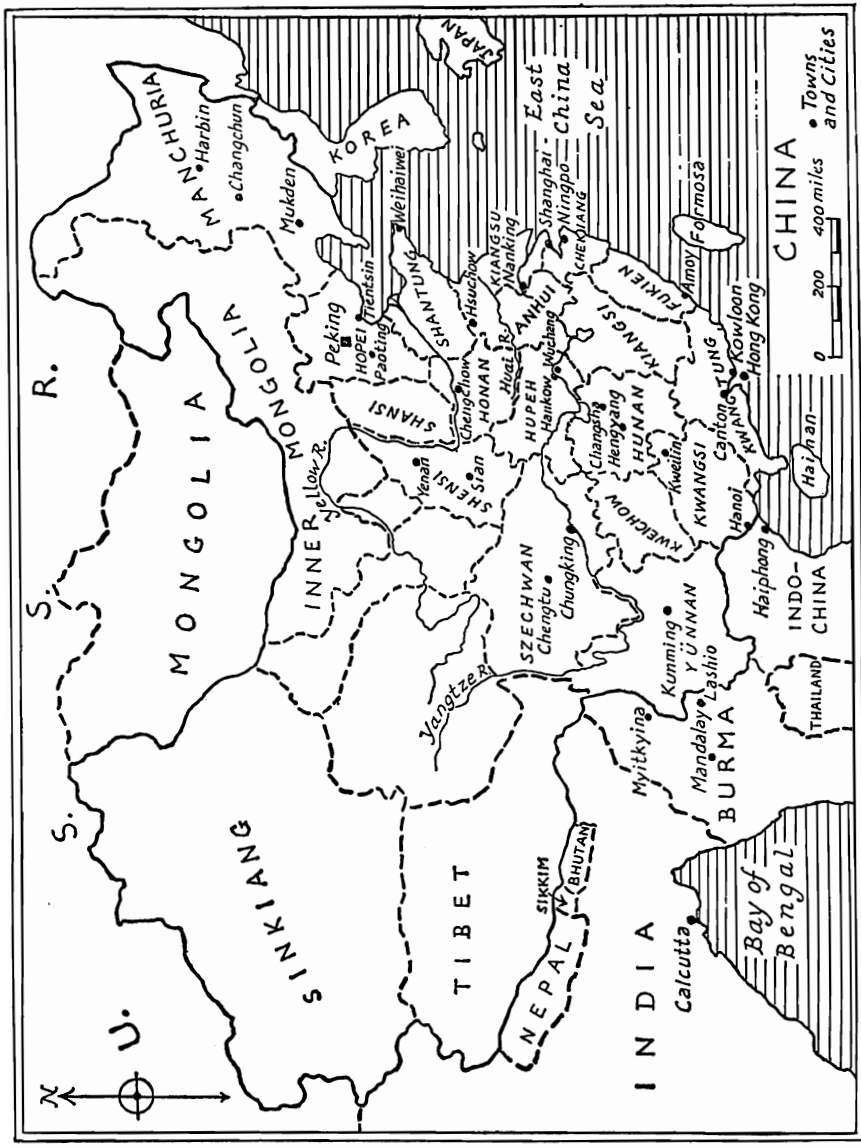
Chapter 24

The "sleeping giant" of China • Early revolts • Rise of the Manchus • Foreign intervention • The Opium War • Foreign exploitation • The Taiping rebellion • Peking faces increasing resistance • Rise of regional armies • China's second war with England • End of the Long-Hair revolt

UNLIKE RIP VAN WINKLE, the "sleeping giant" of China did not suddenly awaken to a new world. Instead, she emerged in a series of internal fits and external starts familiar to a somniloquist reluctant to face a day of gloom and drizzle. In her instance, the awakening began in the eighteenth century—a labored and sometimes perverted renascence that continues today.

Nor is Napoleon's term essentially correct. Although China shut herself from the West about the time Shih Huang Ti ("the First Emperor") built the Great Wall (200 B.C.), rather than a "sleeping giant" she resembled a fragmented colossus sheltering behind a spiritual-physical screen. In the minds of her rulers, China occupied ". . . the center of the universe, and the outer galaxies, except when they bothered China, were of no concern to her."[1] To keep them at safe distance, Chinese

1. Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (eds.), *China Readings 1 (Imperial China—The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967). Hereafter cited as Schurmann. The reader will find this 3-volume work essential to further study of ancient and modern China.



rulers relied on a protective ring of tribute-paying states: Japan, Korea, Manchuria, Turkestan, Tibet, Burma, and Annam.

Internal rule derived from a Confucianist-Taoist-Buddhist religious philosophy in which Confucianist teachings remained dominant. Chi-

nese scholars taught the Tao (the Way) as the key to human behavior: as long as everyone subscribed to the Tao, peaceful harmony would result. The Tao divided society into "gentlemen" and "small men." ". . . It was the gentleman's duty to exercise benevolent rule over the small men: emperor over his subjects, magistrate over the people, husband over wife and children." This would yield a "flat," or peaceful, existence: ". . . No disturbances in the realm, the village, or the home, no passion in the life of man, serenity in old age where death calmly supplanted life."[2]

The "flat" concept of existence was not exactly exciting. Like Plato's *Republic,* it formed a philosophic rationale for an involved type of benevolent despotism (the two words are incompatible). Although in earlier centuries China produced some remarkable discoveries in the sciences and some original and exquisite work in humanities and arts, her political structure stood still. Enforced isolation from the rest of the world and the gulf between the ruler-scholars and her vast millions led at first to tarnishing and then erosion of her political-economic-social structure. Scholars telling scholars what scholars already know is not conducive to original thinking, and, by the eighteenth century, China's learned outpourings, increasingly formal and restricted, were becoming devoid of reason, holding little or no practical connection with the people's problems.

These were immense, increasing almost daily. As is invariably the case, benevolent despotism, despite its Platonic sheen of logic, trampled promiscuously on basic human rights, in this case yielding the Chinese peasant an existence that in the nineteenth century would become subhuman. Harsh provincial rulers and rapacious landlords played evil roles in plenty, but to their work must be added frequent and catastrophic floods, droughts, and epidemics. Pearl Buck's novels in no way exaggerate the human degradation and despair suffered by hundreds of millions of human beings.

This perpetual semistarvation status of millions instantly condemns the efficacy of the "flat" theory of government demanded by Confucianist ruler-scholars. In any event, the concept proved largely illusory, for under its ostensibly placid surface, human emotions spilled over into countless protests and riots that failed to spread only because of lack of communications.

The basic Chinese conflict between ruler and peasant was traditional. Suggested in the ancient *Book of Songs,*[3] it is manifest in later regional peasant societies. The most famous of these secret organizations, the White Lotus, stemmed from the late fourth century. Originally a religious society, it slowly evolved into a revolutionary order that helped

2. Ibid.
3. Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1937).

overthrow first the Sung dynasty (960–1279), then the Mongols (1280–1368).[4]

A peasant-monk, Chu Yüan-chang, led the revolt against Mongol rule. Chu had begun leading guerrilla raids on villages when he was twenty-five. Winning an immense following by his policy of forbidding guerrillas to exploit or steal from common people, Chu captured Nanking in 1356 and extended his control south of the Yangtze River. Later, his army toppled the ruling Mongols, and he became the first Ming emperor, Hung Wu.[5] The Ming dynasty lasted until 1644, when the Manchus replaced it. Provincial uprisings continued to plague Manchu authority, but lack of cohesion and communications generally isolated these attempts sufficiently for the emperor's soldiers to "flatten" them. In 1795, however, the White Lotus society attempted unsuccessfully to overthrow the dynasty. Failure only encouraged other, more successful rebellions.

Economics formed the nub of the difficulty. According to the *Veritable Records* of the Ch'ing dynasty, China's population from 1750 to 1850 increased from 143 million to 430 million.[6] Simultaneously, land under cultivation decreased, a process already familiar to western Eurasia but partially offset there by the Industrial Revolution. No such revolution occurred in China to ameliorate the misery and starvation that increased from year to year.

Nor did the Peking government help matters. Caught in a political web, it struggled only fitfully to escape. Its fatigue increasingly told in the provincial bureaucracy, which found itself hamstrung by overcontrol from Peking, whose authoritative government was growing increasingly corrupt. The ruling air was not merely tainted with corruption, it exuded it. Professor Harrison has listed a few examples: ". . . forced crop payments, the pocketing of bribes, fraudulent land registrations (productive land registered as waste land), illegal imposts, the unjust allocation of assessments, the juggling of rates of exchange, and the increasing immunities of the landlords."[7]

Here was a dislocative air, a complicated admixture of obsolescent and corrupt government ruling harshly but ineffectually over starving millions. The ingredients for trouble were plain enough to see, but now a new one was added. This was the great catalyst of modern-day revolution: the foreign state.

More precisely, foreign states. Portuguese and Spanish traders started

4. Dun-jen Li, *The Ageless Chinese* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965).
5. Robert Payne, *Mao Tse-tung* (London: Abelard-Shuman, 1967).
6. John A. Harrison, *China Since 1800* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967). I have relied on this splendid and immensely readable work throughout these chapters on China.
7. Ibid.; see also L. C. Goodrich, *A Short History of the Chinese People* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969).

nudging the southern periphery in the early sixteenth century. By 1715, the Dutch and the English were trading out of Canton, but only with increasing difficulties. The remote Peking government—the throne that ruled through an omnipotent Grand Council—regarded Westerners as tributary guests forced to pay for the privilege of trading with China. A host of intermediary officials, provincial viceroys and governors, extended the emperor's hand, as did port and customs officials and Chinese merchants, who added their own "squeeze."

Why, then, did foreigners stay in Canton?

First, immensely profitable trade. The British East India Company, operating out of India, brought in raw cotton, metals, and woolens, and carried away cotton cloth, tea, and silk.[8] Added to this legitimate effort was contraband smuggling of opium, which increased throughout the eighteenth century. The British East India Company must bear onus for this pernicious trade from which a number of aristocratic fortunes derived. The company administered Bengal, where most of the opium was grown and prepared, and in time came to depend on the exorbitant profits to pay for its operations in India. But the profits were shared by a great many persons, including Chinese merchants and officials, who generally received the death penalty if caught. In Canton in 1828, ". . . it was estimated that about 90 percent of the total foreign import trade was in opium."[9] A few years later, the company lost its trade monopoly with China: other English merchants moved in and so did Americans, many of them unscrupulous traders.

Peking's attempts to halt the illicit trade were suspicious by their ineffectiveness, but such was the nature of China's monolithic government, so tenuous the chain of command, that orders issued at the top rarely led to compatible action at the bottom.

In 1839, the throne sent an Imperial Commissioner, Lin Tsê-hsü, to Canton to end the trade once and for all. Lin seized all opium stores and, in reply to English intransigence, closed Canton to British ships. The Governor-General of India declared war on China, the famous "Opium War" of 1841–42, which clearly exposed Chinese military weakness to British arms. British occupation of Canton and the coastal cities of Amoy and Ningpo led to lopsided treaties which gave England the almost uninhabited island of Hong Kong, opened Shanghai and major southern ports to Western trade under foreign-imposed "fair and regular" tariffs, established the extraterritorial principle governing land

8. Harrison, op. cit.; see also Tsiang Ting-fu, "The English and the Opium Trade." In Schurmann, *supra*. Some Western apologists, for example Cole and Priestley (op. cit.), have argued ingeniously (if speciously) that the relatively low profits from legitimate trade ". . . forced the west, primarily England, into the opium trade."

9. Harrison, op. cit.; also Schurmann, op. cit.

for foreign homes and businesses, and made England a "most favored nation."

As Professor Harrison has pointed out, the last clause established a disastrous precedent, for all subsequent treaties with other nations, such as that signed with America in 1844, contained a similar clause: ". . . internationally, China became a legal pauper, living on the good will of the treaty nations. The war of 1841–42 contained the seeds of a kind of cultural, economic, and political destruction unknown in any previous war in Chinese history."[10]

The treaties provided only surface solutions to profound problems. Opium smuggling continued, the ghastly "pig trade" in Chinese emigrants sprung up, Chinese pirates and Portuguese mercenary incursions in the South China Sea led to an increased presence of Western navies, and as Western merchants exploited extraterritorial privileges in the ports, unpleasant incidents repeatedly occurred with local Chinese.

A competent government would have had its hands full coping with this awkward transitional period. The rigid Peking government could not possibly have met the challenge. Living in splendid isolation in Peking, it continued to practice government by remote control. Its lesser officials merely exacerbated existing problems, either by sharing the throne's aversion to the foreign presence and thus creating rather than dissipating difficulties, or by profiting from the foreign presence and falsely reporting essential facts to Peking.

Simultaneously, Peking was faced with a worsening internal situation. Sporadic revolts, which had marked early decades of the century, were steadily increasing. In 1850, by far the most serious of these occurred: the Taiping peasant-based rebellion, which quickly spread to threaten the very existence of the Manchus.

The Taiping rebellion began in the remote southern province of Kwangsi, the work of a peasant-student named Hung Hsiu-ch'üan. Hung was born into a poor peasant family of Hakkas in Kwangtung in 1814.[11] His parents sacrificed greatly to send him to school. At four-

10. Harrison, op. cit.; see also Schurmann, op. cit. Professors Schurmann and Schell noted that ". . . the Nanking Treaty (1842) signed at the conclusion of the war represented China's point of no return. Hereafter, the tide of foreign penetration could not be reversed." In London, Lord Palmerston was aware of this: ". . . There is no doubt that this event, which will form an epoch in the progress of the civilization of the human races, must be attended with important advantages to the commercial interests of England."

11. The Hakkas, or "guest settlers," emigrated from northern China in the fourth century to settle in Kwangtung and Southeast Asia, where they eventually numbered some twenty millions. They assimilated slowly: after fourteen centuries, the Hakkas still spoke a different dialect and practiced different customs and habits, which kept them at odds with the local inhabitants, a condition undoubtedly existing today.

teen, he became a village teacher and, in subsequent years, studied in Canton to pass state examinations, an essential step to becoming a minor bureaucrat. Failing exams four times running, he suffered a nervous breakdown manifested by a vivid religious vision. He had been exposed briefly to missionary Christianity, and he ". . . now saw himself as the son of God and the younger brother of Jesus Christ, chosen at God's command for a special mission: to destroy the demons on earth and establish the Kingdom of God."[12]

Hung's desire was not altogether farfetched, at least regarding demons. In principle, these were the Manchus at Peking; in practice, they were provincial tax collectors, who, supported by despised soldiers, covered the southern provinces like locusts. Virtually any call for action against their rapacious demands would have proved popular, and the peasants of eastern Kwangsi, where Hung launched his revolt, in 1847, quickly flocked to his banner.

Here again was guerrilla warfare in its purest form: a few thousand peasants armed with pitchforks and calling themselves the "God-Worshipers." Based in the Thistle Mountains, a remote area safe from imperial infantry and cavalry incursions, these dissidents began striking out at the demon tax collectors, at first by raids on villages to gain support and recruits.

Hung's early successes attracted such a variety of anti-Manchu secret societies that the "God-Worshipers" became a blending of religious, nationalist, and social elements, which, as Professor Franke has written, ". . . constituted the Taiping Rebellion's point of departure."[13] The movement grew rapidly; in 1850, Hung's followers, now many thousands, proclaimed him the *T'ien-wang,* or Heavenly King, of the *T'ai P'ing T'ien-kuo,* or Heavenly Kingdom of the Great Peace.

What sounds to us like religious mumbo jumbo formed a most effective appeal to Chinese peasants. The Christian aspect magnetized people thoroughly disillusioned with Confucianist-Taoist rule; it also attracted sympathy of Western missionaries and, in consequence, that of some Western governments (themselves variously at odds with the Peking government). Despite outlandish titles, the political structure of the Taipings suited the problem of absorbing diverse power elements: Hung, the Heavenly King, ordained a number of plain Kings, whose followers continued to spread the word to draw in additional strength. Hung used a number of devices to tie these heterodox groups of peasants, coolies, country intellectuals, pirates, miners, and even businessmen into a common band. The Manchus had introduced the queue, or pigtail—the Taipings cut it off; the Manchus shaved the forehead—the Taipings let their hair grow, thus earning the official name "the Long-Hair Rebels."

12. Wolfgang Franke, "The Taiping Rebellion" (tr. by Franz Schurmann). In Schurmann, *supra.*
13. Ibid.

Most of all, however, Hung relied on the appeal of a social-political-economic manifesto that bore a remarkable resemblance to Karl Marx's work of 1848, but was conceived independently of it and was based ideologically on elements of Christianity and structurally on the pre-Christian Chou dynasty.[14]

Hung's manifesto is often termed primitive communism, just as Christ has been called the first Communist. Hung attempted to use religion as an instrument to effect sweeping land and social reforms. In the Kingdom of Heaven, the state owned everything. It assigned land on an equitable basis with surplus grain production going into a state granary. A state bank paid for tools and seed and for weddings, births, and funerals. Women were fully equal to men, but had to marry, though theoretically someone of their own choice. The state abolished prostitution and foot-binding and forbade opium, tobacco, and alcohol. The God-Worshipers could only practice their own brand of Christianity. The new state would deal with Western nations, but only on an equal basis, which meant, among other things, the end of extraterritorial privileges. Hung's manifesto, which also called for immediate calendrical and linguistic reforms, is altogether a remarkable document, and in 1851 it represented the most sweeping demand for change in China's long history.

Equally remarkable was Hung's army. Oriented religiously from inception, soldiers were taught to respect peasant rights. They could neither requisition food without payment nor enter dwellings without permission. They received intense religious instruction, could neither drink, gamble, nor smoke, and stood subject to execution for either rape or desertion. This surely must have been one of the purest armies in history, and since the phrase is contradictory, we must conclude that modern scholarship errs on the romantic side.

Still, in mid-nineteenth century, an army with such pretensions, at least in part consummated, differed radically from the badly organized, ill-disciplined, and utterly dissolute government forces, which plundered and raped at will. Undoubtedly, *esprit de corps* played a significant role in Hung's early and impressive victories. At first, Hung employed guerrilla tactics, striking the enemy at his weakest points and bypassing major garrisons, which eventually became "islands" in a hostile sea. His army continued to grow, and, in 1852, when it numbered some fifty thousand, he left his Kwangsi base and marched into Hunan. After converting the guerrilla formations at least in part to orthodox units armed with captured weapons, he further expanded, falling on Hankow, Wuchang, and Hanyang, then sailed his army down the Yangtze to Nanking, a rich prize that fell in March 1853. In October, one of his armies

14. Ibid.

reached Tientsin and marched on Peking, but was turned back by a strong force of imperial cavalry.

Having established headquarters in Nanking, Hung now turned south to consolidate his gains, an effort quickly traded for the more prosaic task of retaining them. For now "moral decay" set in. In Professor Franke's words,

> . . . shortly after the capture of Nanking the Heavenly King and other leaders, against all commandments of the revolutionary movement, began a life of excesses—high living, luxury, many concubines. Decay at the top naturally was contagious to those in the lower echelons.[15]

Internecine quarrels certainly played a role: a power struggle in Nanking in 1856 allegedly took some twenty thousand lives, including those of a great many of the early Taiping leaders. Professor Harrison marked 1856 as the apogee of the rebellion. From then on, ". . . corruption, nepotism, the attrition of leadership, the failure to carry out promised reforms, the loss of zeal by the masses, and simple war weariness all took their toll."[16]

Hung's early successes stemmed in part from Peking's failure to recognize the true nature of events. In early 1852, Emperor Hsien Fêng read an estimate of the situation prepared by one of his wisest and most trusted advisers. This stated in part:

> . . . Secondly, the thieves and bandits are too numerous and it is difficult for good people to live peacefully. . . . Recently it is heard that the bandits' power has become more severe. They plunder and rape people in the daylight and kidnap the people for ransom. People cannot help but appeal to the officials. When the officials go in to arrest, an announcement is proclaimed in advance, and till the government [force] reaches the spot the local gentry usually tell a lie that the bandits have fled. Sometimes it is trickily said that the bandit is killed by putting another prisoner to death in order to substitute the case and yet actually the bandit does not die. When the case of plunder is not cleared up, the lost articles are not returned and the family of the suffering host is already bankrupt, he has to swallow his voice, sip his own tears and has no more strength to reappeal. Even if he does, and fortunately soldiers are dispatched to meet together and to arrest the bandits, nevertheless the soldiers in ordinary times all have connections with the bandits and at the very time they will set the latter free after getting a bribe and leave no footstep to trace. Sometimes, on the contrary, they take the pretext of calling them bandits to frighten the foolish villagers and forcing them to pay a heavy bribery. Otherwise, they will be burned and they will

15. Ibid.
16. Harrison, op. cit.

be tied up with fetters. . . . Today the bad soldiers and harmful government employees who foster bandits and set bandits free appear everywhere. This is another one of what your minister calls distress among the people.[17]

It is interesting to substitute "guerrillas" for "bandits" in his report.

The emperor and his advisers probably interpreted Hung's early raids as the work of bandits, and they may have misread other uprisings, such as the Nien Fei rebellion in Anhui and neighboring provinces, an extensive guerrilla movement led by the White Lotus society, and the Triad movement, which came to control much of Shanghai from 1853–56.

Even had the Peking government earlier recognized the threat, military weakness would have prevented effective action. As late as 1853, the viceroy of Hunan province complained:

. . . Our whole country swarms with rebels. Our funds are nearly at an end, and our troops are few. The commander of the imperial forces thinks he can put out a bonfire with a thimbleful of water. I fear that we shall hereafter have some serious affairs, and the great body of the people will rise up against us and our own followers will leave us.[18]

So grim was the situation from Peking's point of view, that, in 1854, the emperor authorized regional armies of defense, a move previously avoided because of the potential threat to central authority. Viceroys and governors either organized militias or built up existing illegal ones. Some of these in time performed excellent work, the outstanding example being Tsêng Kuo-fan's army in Hunan province. Backed by landed gentry, Tsêng recruited from villages and based training on Confucianist principles as strong as, if not stronger than, Hung's Christian principles. Stressing leadership and discipline, he fed and paid the troops regularly, forbidding them to live off the land. Although a scholar and bureaucrat, Tsêng seems to have had excellent strategic sense and, in a relatively short time, began claiming the initiative from the insurgents.

Peking also benefited both from Hung's failure to co-ordinate his own rebellion more fully with those of various other secret societies, and from Hung's alienating the Western powers.

England, France, and the United States played a complex, confusing, and sinister role in the internal affairs of China at this time. Continuing quarrels with Chinese port officials and merchants led to England's second war with China, an on-again-off-again affair involving France, Russia, and the United States, and finally terminated by Lord Elgin's Anglo-French force burning the complex of buildings known as the Sum-

17. Ibid.
18. Payne, op. cit.

mer Palace, an invaluable architectural masterpiece north of Peking—an "unnecessary act never forgotten or forgiven by the Chinese."[19]

The resultant treaties, again very unequal documents that favored the Western powers, increased foreign jurisdiction over Chinese waters, inland and seaboard ports, and trade; extended the foreign presence to the North, including Peking, and in the South inland to the larger cities of the Yangtze Valley; and legalized the opium trade.

Hung's announced reforms did not now look nearly so attractive to the Western nations, which began supplying arms to the Manchus and helping the emperor build the Ever Victorious army composed of Chinese, European, and American mercenaries. Commanded by Li Hung-chang, the new army, working in conjunction with regional armies, slowly pushed the Long-Hairs back to Nanking. Hung's heavenly kingdom fell in the summer of 1864. With his suicide and execution of his principal lieutenants, the movement quickly disintegrated.

The regional armies next put down neighboring rebellions. By 1866, the Manchu government could claim the end of the rebellion.

19. Harrison, op. cit.

Chapter 25

Cost of the Taiping rebellion • Failure of the Reformers • Continued foreign exploitation • Chinese resistance • The Boxer rebellion • Enter Sun Yat-sen • The 1911 revolution • End of the Manchus • Birth of the Kuomintang • The war lords rule • Sun Yat-sen's revolt • The Communists join the Kuomintang • Enter Chiang Kai-shek • His march north • He breaks with the Communists • His dictatorship

SUPPRESSION of the Taiping rebellion offered Peking rulers scant cause for rejoicing. Central China was bled white—some authorities believe that *the rebellion claimed forty million lives!* Internal chaos had helped Western powers to increase their grip on China's economy, and they now began shamelessly dividing the country into spheres of interest for further commercial exploitation. Virtually bankrupt, Peking was forced to borrow large sums from Western bankers in order to fight a costly campaign against Moslem rebels in northwestern provinces. Simultaneously, foreign states began chipping away at China's traditional "buffer" states: England in Burma, France in Vietnam, Russia in Manchuria, and Japan in Korea.

The rebellion also left the throne in precarious hands. Emperor Hsien Fêng's death, in 1861, transferred power to his six-year-old son, who ruled through a clumsy regency composed of his uncle, Prince Kung, and *two* dowager empresses: one the widow, the other a former concu-

bine and the heir's mother, who became Dowager Empress Tz'ŭ Hsi. Of the three, she proved by far the most powerful and certainly the most durable, her reign lasting until 1908. Vain and ambitious, she was also dangerous, almost constantly playing off one power faction against another to maintain herself in power.

But imperial power had greatly weakened. Regional armies, necessary to suppress the rebellion, now answered to their own leaders—to embryonic war lords such as Tsêng Kuo-fan, who thenceforth had to be persuaded rather than ordered to a course of action. Most of these new leaders were conservatives, however, and many of them supported Prince Kung in his attempt to effect the T'ung Chih Restoration.

The Reformers, as this group came to be called, recognized that China was powerless to contest foreign dominance so long as she remained industrially underdeveloped. The Reformers introduced a "self-strengthening" movement, an internal renascence founded on Confucianist principles, that produced some very real reforms in foreign affairs, education, and industrialization. This effort was enhanced by a group of young scholars who, educated at Yale, returned to China to preach the need for political, economic and social reforms along Western lines.[1]

Such enthusiasm was scarcely widespread, and the work of the Reformers resembled the Herculean task of cleansing the Augean stables. One after the other, their laudable goals fell victim to numerous and powerful counterforces.

Neither the dynasty nor ultraconservative Confucianist elements could accept widespread reforms. The dowager empress paid lip service only. As if the urgently needed measures were a bowl of cherries, she selected one or two to please her political palate, but soon brushed the course aside in favor of the meat of power.

But even this creature, with her distorted set of values, was not the supreme villain. That title goes to the foreign powers. What once was petty larceny turned now to grand larceny: from 1865 on, the ". . . mercantile, missionary, and ministerial" classes, in Sir Robert Hart's words, vied with each other in the humbling of the Chinese people.[2] A moral superiority difficult to believe (except that we still see it today) clothed the entire foreign presence. Diplomats and businessmen paid little heed to the work of the Reformers, whose reforms they considered of value only so long as they helped keep the Manchus in power and thus maintain the flow of golden eggs from the goose of state. Nor were missionaries any more sympathetic to the effort. Their self-imposed task was not limited to replacing what they considered mumbo-jumbo cultism of Buddhists, Taoists, and Confucianists with Christian gospel, but em-

1. Harrison, op. cit.
2. Ibid.

braced that of infusing all of China with Western culture. The prevailing conceit is only too plain in the words of one of them, Arthur Smith, who wrote in 1894:

> . . . What China needs is righteousness, and in order to attain it, it is absolutely necessary that she have a knowledge of God [!] and a new conception of man, as well as of the relation of man with God. . . . The manifold needs of China we find, then, to be a single imperative need. It will be met permanently, completely, only by Christian civilization.[3]

The representatives of Christian civilization at that time resembled a pack of blooded wolves in the final pursuit of quarry. England already had claimed the southwestern ramparts of the Chinese empire, namely Burma; France had claimed the south, namely Vietnam, from where she was pushing into Cambodia and Laos. In 1894, China collided with Japan in the north, a brief war, a Chinese defeat that emphasized Peking's archaic military system and administrative impotence. The treaty of Shimonoseki placed Japan on the Asian continent and further burdened Peking with enormous reparations.[4] Germany meanwhile forced China to award her virtual hegemony in Shantung province. The French acquired a lease on Kwangchowan, on the southwestern coast of Kwangtung, and began pressing into southern China. Russia forced China to grant permission for a railroad across Manchuria. Britain demanded and secured long leases on Weihaiwei and Kowloon. In 1899, Sir Robert Hart noted: ". . . The fact is everybody's for exploiting China. . . ."[5]

China's continuing decline naturally increased the already wretched plight of the Chinese people. If, somehow, a particular benefit seeped down to a community through the maze of official-foreign filters, then either flood, drought, locust plague, or corrupt soldiery quickly undid the good work, leaving the usual residue of misery and poverty.

The Chinese people reacted variously. In a land where life expectancy probably did not exceed twenty-five years, where infant daughters were disposed of at birth like unwanted kittens, in such a land survival was the main problem. Millions of Chinese sought survival from the worn and precious earth, and in so doing remained unwilling slaves to the "flat," Confucianist concept of government.

A lesser group, known contemptuously to their fellows as "rice-bowl Christians," came to accept the foreign presence: to adopt the new religion, to serve humbly in mines, factories, railroads, warehouses, and

3. Ibid.

4. It also brought Japan into conflict with Germany, Russia, and France. The three powers forced her to yield the strategic Liaotung area to China for a further enormous sum.

5. Harrison, op. cit.; see also Sir Robert Hart, *These from the Land of Sinim—Essays on the Chinese Question* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1903).

private homes of foreign masters. And because foreigners lived in insulated enclaves remote from real China, most of them accepted the comfortable premise of a placid people while failing to recognize the existence of underlying currents. These were caused by still another minority, a revolutionary minority, which in the best Chinese tradition was widening old channels and creating new.

Dissident groups of militant rebels, although scattered and disorganized, had continued to exist in post-Taiping decades. Their activities took two forms: uprisings against the dynasty, which, although invariably quelled, continued to occur, for example the preliminary Boxer risings in 1898–1900; and uprisings against foreigners, usually terrorist displays such as the dreadful Tientsin massacre of 1870, which spelled hatred with missionary blood.

Bandit depredations also existed and at times proved convenient to foreign powers—the murder of two German missionaries in Shantung province, for example, led to direct German military intervention and control of the area in 1897.

The throne answered all such incidents officially with virtual diplomatic prostration before foreign representatives, whose *amour-propre* was further soothed with enormous reparation payments which China could ill afford. Unofficially, the dowager empress probably encouraged some of the anti-foreign efforts. Certain secret societies such as the White Lotus were involved in their activities; the Boxers were a conglomerate led by the I Ho Ch'üan (Righteous Harmonious Fists), who directed the major rebellion of 1900, a movement seconded by the throne, which went so far as to declare war on the foreign powers, although the dowager empress may have done this to save the throne from the Boxers.

The Boxer movement, in addition to the I Ho Ch'üan societies, included small regional bodies, the outgrowth of provincial militias established to fight the Taiping Long-Hairs. Some authorities say that the name stemmed from the ancient sport of Chinese boxing; others hold that the prebattle ritual dance caused Westerners to think of boxing. The rebellion seems to have been internally inspired, free from outside influence. For the most part, the Boxers were ignorant peasants who practiced sorcery and superstition, actually believing that they were immune to bullets. In early 1900, they broke loose in northern China, attacking missionary settlements and slaughtering missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians. Although some provincial leaders put down the risings, others turned a blind eye, as did the throne, which in June sent government units to join rebels in besieging foreign legations in Peking. An international expedition, when finally formed, made short work of the besiegers, the war ending abruptly in August. Harsh peace

terms exacted an indemnity of six to seven hundred million dollars, including a principal payment of nearly $331 million in gold.[6]

The Boxer calamity did not spell the end of rebellion. Throughout the 1890s, leading members of the Chinese intelligentsia had been calling for necessary reforms. The outlook of these men varied greatly, and their failure to present a united front to the throne was the major reason for the continuing series of disasters. Chang Chih-tung, one of the most able, saw the major need as military reform, a thought abhorrent to the throne as a public confession of ". . . the corruption, incompetence and nepotism of the officer corps of the various armed forces, as well as the failures of the arsenals."[7]

Two outstanding scholars, K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, pressed for political, economic, and social reforms on what they called progressive Confucianist lines under dynastic supervision. In 1898, they persuaded the emperor, Kuang Hsu, to defy the dowager empress and the ultraconservative elements around him and issue the necessary proclamations. This, a sort of palace revolution in reverse, failed, because the emperor lacked a proper army to back him. The dowager empress, in league with Yüan Shih-k'ai, the viceroy of Chihli, who controlled the Northern Army, forced the emperor to abdicate and took over once again as regent. She executed six of the Reformers, and the others fled abroad. Here they found other dissidents, true revolutionaries such as Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who for years had been arguing for a fundamental change in favor of Western democracy.

In 1898, Sun Yat-sen was thirty-two years old. The son of a poor farmer in Kwangtung province, he spent his childhood in China. At the age of eleven, he went to Hawaii, where a brother sent him to an Anglican church school. At seventeen, he returned to China, but soon left in favor of medical school in Hong Kong, where he practiced for two years as a doctor before becoming a full-time revolutionist. Returning to Hawaii, he established the Hsing Chung Hui (Revive China Society), a movement of ". . . twenty small Chinese shopkeepers" pledged ". . . to expel the Manchus, recover China, and establish a republic."[8] After several futile attempts at revolution and some narrow escapes, Sun joined another revolutionary, Huang Hsing. In Japan they established the T'ung Meng Hui (United League), a small but militant group that called for a social and economic revolution.

This brought them in conflict with expatriate Confucianist reformers who wanted a carefully conducted political revolution with economic and social reforms to follow eventually. The United League wanted action: ". . . between 1907 and 1911 the *T'ung Meng Hui,* despite its

6. Harrison, op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

lack of a real organization in China, attempted eight armed revolts in Southeast China in an effort to capture the provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, or Yunnan for a base of operations."[9]

Their efforts failed for want of a true revolutionary force. Like the Confucianist reformers, they looked across a wide gulf to the ordinary people of China, the hodgepodge millions of peasants and coolies who in part constituted the provincial secret societies and armies that threatened the throne, itself a weakened and divided regency since the dowager empress' death in 1908.

Neither the T'ung Meng Hui nor the Confucianists prompted the 1911 revolt. The throne's arbitrary and unfair attitude in the matter of a provincial railroad question brought the people of Szechwan province to arms in autumn of 1911. The revolt quickly spread through the Yangtze Valley, where even army regiments mutinied. A thoroughly alarmed dynasty now called the former viceroy-strong man of Chihli province, Yüan Shih-k'ai, from retirement and gave him command of the Northern Army, with orders to put down the revolt.

This proved impossible: by mid-November, all but four provinces had seceded in favor of a provisional republic with headquarters at Nanking. Republican leadership consisted of provincial officials and army commanders with revolutionaries present as poor relations. Sun Yat-sen, who was in America when the trouble began, did not appear until the end of December. These disparate groups eventually hammered out a republican form of government that promised a constitution, a cabinet answering to a bicameral parliament, and a president, Yüan Shih-k'ai. The Manchus abdicated in February 1912, a virtually bloodless end to three centuries of bloody rule.

Unfortunately the new government answered none of China's problems. Despite republican trappings, Yüan headed a reactionary government supported by the foreign powers, the Northern Army, and a political bloc of conservatives called the Progressive Party. He was opposed principally by the T'ung Meng Hui, which, in 1912, became the Kuomintang, the dominant political party in the new parliament.

But the Kuomintang lacked popular appeal. Its leaders preached a muddled blend of social-economic reforms and the party comprised divisive elements, none holding the real support of the people or even much power. Yüan, with his Northern Army, shared real power with provincial military governors, each with his own army, and none held the people's interests at heart.

The people, in short, were left with reactionary and corrupt government at both national and provincial levels, yet general ignorance, lack of organization, and apathy prevented them from seeking another

9. Ibid.

change—they failed, for instance, to support Sun Yat-sen's two attempts at revolt in spring of 1913.

Sun and his followers already had recognized their early mistake in thinking that a constitution and parliament would hold Yüan in hand. Thoroughly alarmed at his steadily increasing reactionary rule, they now tried to check him by parliamentary authority.

The showdown came in autumn of 1913. As was the case with the Manchus, the growth of provincial powers reduced the central government's income to a trickle, and Yüan could get money only by loans—ruinous in the extreme—from foreign powers. That spring, Yüan had negotiated such a loan in the immense sum of £25 million. The governing conditions were so restrictive and humiliating that President Woodrow Wilson forbade American participation. When Yüan sought approval of this measure, the Kuomintang caused parliament to disapprove. In reply, Yüan dissolved the Kuomintang, whose key members fled to Japan.

This cleared the way for Yüan's dictatorship. But even a dictatorship —the simplest, if most repulsive, form of government—could scarcely thrive when subject either to threat of regional competitors, each backed by arms, or to continuing encroachments of foreign powers, particularly Japan, who used World War I to replace the German presence in Shantung province, a sinister prelude to the famous "Twenty-one Demands"—compliance with which would have reduced China to a vassal state. In 1915, probably with Japan's backing, Yüan stupidly tried to establish a new monarchy (with himself as emperor), an idea quickly abandoned because of widespread protest which split China, the southern half becoming a hotbed of revolution.

Yüan died in 1916, to leave China in the hands of provincial military governors, powerful war lords who ruled with scant heed of Peking. Between 1916 and 1926, the impotent central government was run by ". . . six Presidents . . . [who] had a total of nineteen Prime Ministers, none with a tenure of more than a year."[10] Whoever the president, he ruled only through the grace of local war lords, and a more squabbling bunch of dissembling chieftains probably never existed.

Anarchy spawned two other national forces. In 1917, Sun Yat-sen and his Kuomintang followers took advantage of the South's open break with Peking and returned to Canton to establish "the Military Government of the Republic of China."[11] Unable to gain a popular base of government, Sun depended in large part on the local military governor's support. His fortunes and those of his followers fluctuated accordingly, Sun at times taking refuge in Shanghai. During this period, Sun wrote the *San Min Chu I* (Three Principles of the People), a wooly but none-

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

theless influential dissertation calling for nationalism, democracy, and the people's welfare as goals for his party, now renamed the Chinese Revolutionary Party. As Professor Harold Isaacs has pointed out, up to mid-1919 ". . . his hope was to bring about the peaceful and benevolent transformation of Chinese society after first securing power for himself and his followers by purely military means. This was the aim of his long series of invariably fruitless military adventures and alliances."[12]

Meanwhile, considerable revolutionary activity had been building in the North. The immediate motivation was the disastrous Versailles decision that approved Japan's dominating presence in Shantung province, the outcome of one of those wretched secret agreements that England and France were forever signing. Despite China's presence at the peace table, the powers voted in Japan's favor. On May 4, 1919, students at Peking University rioted against the Peking government, burning the houses of pro-Japanese ministers. Governmental suppression of this and other strikes and demonstrations gave birth to a revolutionary May Fourth Movement, ". . . a catalyst that united large-scale organizations —students, labor, merchants, and guilds . . ." in an almost total rejection of the West and a reappraisal of traditional values.[13]

Having rejected the West and seeing the inability of political leaders to come to terms with reality, segments of this movement eyed the triumph of the Russian revolution and began moving toward communism. In 1920, the Socialist Youth Party emerged from the ferment in the Shanghai area. This, the first instance of organized communism in China, is the more interesting because of its non-ideological motivation: One of its two founders, an internationally trained scholar named Ch'ên Tu-hsiu, ". . . turned to Communism as the most efficient method for modernizing China"; his cofounder, Li Ta-chao, ". . . a fanatic nationalist, saw in Communism the weapon for destroying imperialism."[14] Whatever their reasons, the decision was welcome to Moscow, and in 1921 a Comintern agent, Voitinsky, helped them establish the Chinese Communist Party.

But another Comintern agent, Maring, already had recognized a more viable revolutionary force in Sun Yat-sen's Chinese Revolutionary Party. The May Fourth Movement had caused Sun to broaden his party's base by flirting with student and trade-union movements, in which he played increasingly influential roles. Maring's reports induced Lenin's government to send a top diplomat, Adolf Joffe, for lengthy talks with Sun. Joffe offered to help reorganize and arm the Kuomintang so that it could lead a revolution; although China would achieve ". . . national

12. Harold Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962).
13. Harrison, op. cit.
14. Ibid.

union and national independence,"[15] this was not to be a Communist revolution, since communism was ". . . unsuitable to Chinese conditions."[16]

Surrounded by mostly hostile war lords, looking at a hostile Peking government and hostile foreign powers, recognizing the Kuomintang as still disorganized and virtually bankrupt, Sun accepted Joffe's offer. Joffe planned to use the Kuomintang only as a stepping stone to an eventual Communist takeover, and almost immediately began arguing for a marriage of convenience between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.

Enter Chiang Kai-shek: thirty-four years old, a small, thin soldier whose varied and, in part, seamy career stood at odds with the Confucianist asceticism he so ostentatiously professed. Born in Chekiang province, Chiang had grown up in great poverty, his father, a small farmer, having died when he was nine. At the age of eighteen, he entered China's first military academy, at Pao-ting. An honor student, he was sent to Japan for further training. Here he fell under the revolutionary influence of Sun Yat-sen's teachings, and in 1911 participated in the overthrow of the Manchus; in the dismal aftermath of that effort, he ". . . disappeared somewhere into Shanghai's murky underworld."[17] For nearly a decade, he lived a quasi-covert life, apparently under protection of the notorious Green Gang, a highly organized group of cutthroats that would make the Mafia look like a boy-scout troop. After a brief stint of service with a "Fukienese warlord," Chiang came to the attention of Sun Yat-sen, with whom he quickly rose in favor.[18]

In 1922, Chiang headed a military mission to Moscow while two Russian Communists, Mikhail Borodin and Vasily Blücher (alias General Ga-lin), worked with Sun to reform the Kuomintang along Leninist, or pyramidal-command, lines.[19] In 1923, still another shift of regional power allowed Sun's return to Canton, where, strongly supported by the Comintern, he reorganized the Kuomintang into an independent political force with its own police and army elements.

A year later, Chiang Kai-shek, somewhat disillusioned with Soviet rule, returned from Moscow to set up the famous Whampoa military academy. Provided with arms, money, and advisers from the Comintern, he began training cadre officers for the new Kuomintang army. Also in 1924 Sun decided, against the wishes of many of his Chinese advisers, to admit Chinese Communists into the Kuomintang, thus beginning a twenty-five-year power struggle.

15. Isaacs, op. cit.
16. Schurmann, op. cit. (Vol. 2).
17. T. H. White and A. Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China* (New York: William Sloane, 1946).
18. Ibid.
19. This organizational concept is retained on Taiwan today.

Man's ego plays an enormous role in the affairs of man. Like many statesmen before and since, Sun refused to accept the possibility of his own death. He believed that he could control the Communists—". . . if Ch'en disobeys our Party, he will be ousted."[20] He probably planned to squash the Communists, once revolution became a fact, in exactly the same way the Communists planned to squash him—his death, early in 1925, precludes a positive answer.

Sun's error was Faustian; in fostering revolution, he contracted with the devil. He had asked the Kuomintang to be too much to too many people. Its membership ranged from ultraconservative elements—landlords and merchants, even war lords—to moderates, to left-wing liberals, to Communists, but with no single faction claiming a broad base of support from the people. Revolution filled the air, but Sun and his lieutenants failed to harness the human energy. This did not diminish revolutionary potential: if nothing else, rapacious landlords and greedy foreign powers kept that alive. The Soviet Government, now in the hands of Joseph Stalin, continued to deal overtly and covertly with the Peking government, with the Kuomintang, with the Communist element of the Kuomintang, and with the very powerful northern war lords. Other Western powers continued to exercise extraterritorial privileges while exploiting China's internal economy.

The major codicil in Sun's will was a promotion of party factionalism, not only among conservatives, moderates, leftists, and Communists, but in each of the splinter groups. Chiang Kai-shek's retention of power depended as much on rejection of extreme conservatism as on retention of communism, and from 1925 until his break with the Communists, in 1927, he constantly juggled the power factors, his success stemming far more from control of the army than from his ability to reconcile dissident groups. The only cohesive element at work during this period was negative: the inability of any group to carry out the revolution alone.

The revolution moved north in spring of 1926, but a more disparate revolutionary force never marched. The vanguard consisted of the People's National Revolutionary Army—three corps that totaled less than one hundred thousand soldiers, under the over-all command of Chiang Kai-shek.

Two of these corps marched north to the Wuchang-Hankow area on the Yangtze; the third, under Chiang's personal command, moved north up the coast toward Shanghai. Nationalist-Communist agents, such as the young Mao Tse-tung, had spent years preparing the Yangtze Valley by organizing sympathetic trade unions in the cities and peasant associations in the countryside. The Nationalists had also come to terms with the major war lord in the area, the famous "Christian General," Fêng Yü-hsiang, who baptized his troops en masse with a fire hose.[21]

20. Schurmann, op. cit.

21. A. A. Vandegrift and R. B. Asprey, *Once a Marine* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964).

The two corps on the left advanced with little difficulty and, in October, occupied Wuchang and began consolidation of the entire target area. On the right, Chiang ran into trouble with some local war lords and did not reach Shanghai until March 1927. Although the city was his for the taking—the work of local Communist agents—Chiang now paused.

For some time, Chiang had been receiving disquieting reports from the West. In January, the Kuomintang government had moved from Canton to Hankow, where, under the aegis of its forceful Russian adviser, Mikhail Borodin, it began consolidating power in the Yangtze Valley area, but scarcely in the manner desired by Chiang and his most powerful backers. The new government allowed its Communist elements full sway: prodded by professional agitators, labor unions and peasant associations seized and distributed private property—a violent period accompanied by a flow of both Chinese and foreign blood. In short, the revolution was assuming Bolshevik dimensions totally anathematic both to Chiang and to the middle-conservative elements of the Kuomintang.

For several weeks, Chiang hesitated. But when it became clear to him that the moment of truth was at hand, he acted quickly, decisively, and brutally. Leagued with conservative business elements of Shanghai, including foreigners and the notorious bandit gangs, on April 12, 1927, he launched a surprise attack against the area's Communists. This, the beginning of the infamous White Terror, quickly spread to other power centers; he followed it by setting up a Nationalist government at Nanking. Chiang's army undoubtedly would have fought the Hankow forces but for the war lord Fêng Yü-hsiang, whose army stood between them.[22]

Before either side could bribe Fêng, the Communists overplayed their hand. Joseph Stalin, fresh from his triumph over Trotsky, ordered the Chinese Communist Party (which was subordinate to the Comintern) to take over the revolution. This extraordinary order, naïve in the extreme, caused an immediate and terrible resentment throughout the Kuomintang. It virtually shattered the Communist movement. Borodin and other Soviet agents escaped to Russia; their Chinese opposites, those who survived the White Terror, went into hiding.

Chiang Kai-shek exploited this development by hammering the remaining elements of the Kuomintang into an embryonic Nationalist government, which by 1928 claimed control of China.

A brave claim. Internally, the Kuomintang remained greatly divided: war lords showing fangs too sharp to be ignored yapped in defense of sectional interests and foreign powers representing vast financial empires. Chiang was too strong to abdicate, too weak to protest. So

22. Malraux (*Man's Estate*), *supra,* has presented a striking picture of this turbulent scene.

he compromised: the highly vaunted revolution had stirred up the forces of power without removing the evils of their burden from the people. Chiang merely replaced Manchuism and warlordism with a dictatorship. His suppression of the Autumn Uprising of 1927—a peasant movement—was as thorough and heartless as any of the numerous Taiping suppressions.

And yet, ironically, Chiang was too weak to forge even an effective dictatorship. The slave of Confucianist thinking and the pawn of commercial interests, domestic and foreign, Chiang found himself blocked from reform on almost every side. The bulk of Chinese people remained miserable. Here and there, they continued to protest their misery. Here and there, small groups, led by Communists, waged guerrilla war. Here and there, the idea of social revolution lived on. Here and there, a few forceful leaders had survived to fight.

One of them was Mao Tse-tung.

Chapter 26

Mao Tse-tung • Childhood and education • Conversion to communism • Mao turns to the peasants • ". . . A revolution is not a dinner party. . . ." • The Autumn Harvest Uprising • Mao's defeat • Guerrilla warfare • Mao's formula • A winter of discontent • The Changsa defeat • Mao's shift in strategy • Chiang Kai-shek's "bandit-suppression campaign" fails • Mao's growth in strength • Falkenhausen's counterguerrilla tactics • The Long March to Shensi • Its accomplishments • Mao resumes the offensive • The United Front against the Japanese invaders

MAO TSE-TUNG was born in 1893, the son of hard-working peasants in Hunan province, in central China. As a "middle peasant," Mao's father, a harsh taskmaster and disciplinarian whom Mao loathed, was able to give his son the almost unheard-of luxury of a provincial education through high school level. Mao responded by reading whatever he laid his hands on, an eclectic assortment ranging from traditional Confucianist classics to the great Chinese historical novels and to translations of Western works in economics, political theory, and history.[1]

In these formative years, Mao learned more away from the classroom, where life was a constant fight for survival. In addition to normal

1. Stuart R. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967); see also Harrison, op. cit.; Schurmann, op. cit. (Vol. 3); Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962). Tr. and with an Introduction by S. B. Griffith. (Hereafter cited as Mao Tse-tung (Griffith).) Dr. Griffith's excellent introduction includes a biographical sketch of Mao; see also Payne, op. cit.

stresses, the recurring plagues, famines, and floods, the tax collectors, landlords, and bandits, Mao witnessed something of the revolutionary turmoil surrounding the fall of the Manchus. As a keen student, he also realized the new government's inadequacy to solve old problems, particularly those affecting hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants. Mao soon became a socially aware and resentful young man; service as a private soldier, as servant to officers in an army ridden with nepotism, corruption, and inefficiency, only increased his resentment. When he went to work in the Peking University library, in 1917, he was, at twenty-four years, the Chinese version of an angry young man.

Angry young men are prone to swallow morphia-ridden political panaceas in much the same way that country people take to cure-all elixirs. Mao found his nostrum at Peking. Under tutelage of hard-line Marxists such as Li Ta-chao, his library boss, and Ch'ên Tu-hsiu, Mao soon became a convinced Communist, ". . . a man who had discovered his mission: to create a new China according to the doctrine of Marx and Lenin."[2] In 1921, he helped organize the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai. Thenceforth he served as an activist in the revolutionary movement, which was still a joint Kuomintang-Communist affair.

In keeping with fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, the new Communist Party concentrated on organizing the Chinese proletariat into trade unions. It found a fertile field. The war had swollen the labor population to some two million persons, a miserably paid and ill-treated force particularly receptive to Communist propaganda. Party newspapers, youth movements, schools, clandestine meetings—each prospered in the factories and along the wharves and in the mines. An old party hack, Ho Kan-chih, later wrote that between 1922 and 1923 the party arranged ". . . over a hundred big and small strikes, with more than three hundred thousand workers taking part. Most of these strikes were crowned with complete success."[3] As a political agent, Mao Tse-tung found himself in the middle of this activity, eventually becoming chairman of the Hunan branch of the Trade Union Secretariat, a front organization. As such, he led ". . . the strikes of Changsha, the Anyuan Colliery, and the Shuikoushan Lead Mine."[4]

Despite this emphasis on the proletariat, the result of Comintern influence, some Chinese Communists had turned to organizing peasants of the central provinces. In 1921, P'eng P'ai started the first peasant association, in Kwangtung province; in five years, membership rose from a few thousand to 665,000, with other significant increases in Honan and Hunan provinces. Probably because of Mao's rural background, he was early assigned to agitation-propaganda activities in his home prov-

2. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
3. Ho Kan-chih, "Rise of the Working Class Movement." In Schurmann, op. cit., Vol. 2.
4. Ibid.

ince, Hunan. He excelled in this work and, in 1926, was elected chairman of the All-China Association of Peasant Associations.[5] But even Mao was surprised at the outbreak of peasant violence in support of the Kuomintang army's northern march. Early in 1927, he spent a month touring Hunan province. In a prescient report to the Central Committee, he emphasized the need for party reorientation, with concentration on peasant forces:

> . . . For the present upsurge of the peasant movement is a colossal event. In a very short time, in China's central, southern and northern provinces, several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back.[6]

In but months, Mao reported, membership of Hunan peasant associations had jumped from a few hundred thousand ". . . to two million and the masses directly under their leadership increased to ten million." Showing no sympathy for the victims of revolution to date, ". . . the local tyrants, the evil gentry and the lawless landlords," he mocked protests of conservative Kuomintang elements. If peasants on occasion were going too far, their excesses still did not match those of earlier governments. Besides,

> . . . a revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. A rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the power of the feudal landlord class.[7]

The break between Chiang Kai-shek and the Hankow government, followed by Chiang's general purge of all Communists, may have removed luster from Mao's enthusiasm, but it in no way dimmed his basic convictions. At great danger to his own life, he willingly participated in the Autumn Harvest Uprising, of September 1927. This abortive effort, which centered in Hunan province, caused him to question one of the Chinese Communist Party's basic tenets: that unarmed and untrained peasants could bring about revolution. In the event, he commanded four "auxiliary" regiments, but these were scarcely strong enough to stand against the Nationalist army. Disobeying party orders,

5. Schurmann, op. cit. (Vol. 2).
6. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), Vol. 1.
7. Ibid. Payne has pointed out that his words gain an added bite when the adjectives are identified with the Confucianist *Analects*.

he broke off the action to seek sanctuary with remnant followers in the Chingkang Mountains of southern Hunan-Kiangsi-Fukien provinces.[8]

Late in 1927, Chiang announced the end of the Communist threat. He was wrong: The Communists were down, but not yet out. Early in 1928, the capable Chu Teh joined Mao, as did other fugitive survivors. In a manner reminiscent of Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, who started the Taiping rebellion from the mountains of Kwangsi province in 1847, the two Communists organized fellow fugitives, local bandit groups and peasant volunteers into a small, rudely equipped guerrilla army to keep alive the almost defunct revolution.

Unlike Hung, Mao and Chu respected the need for a political base. They turned local peasant associations into *su-wei-ai,* or soviets, of ". . . soldiers, peasants, and workers which assumed administrative control over the Red areas."[9] They also established local militia forces which Mao called ". . . the Red guards and the workers' and peasants' insurrection corps." Mao later explained that the militia's job was ". . . to suppress counter-revolution, to protect the township government, and, when the enemy comes, to assist the Red army and the Red guards in war."[10] The first insurrection corps started as an underground force in Yungsin but became overt once the army won command of the area. At best, the work moved slowly: in the winter of 1928, according to Mao, the Red Guards possessed a mere 683 rifles of assorted calibers. Moreover, Communist methods of land sequestration and redistribution had antagonized a good many "rich" and "middle" peasants in the area.

Despite Communist weakness, the movement survived and grew stronger. Using the plow of propaganda to till fertile "poor" peasant soil into acquiescence if not wholesale support, Mao and his fellows relied on coercion, including terrorist methods, to gain financial support from local merchants and landlords. Intelligence provided by peasants enabled guerrillas to fight local provincial forces on their own terms, utilizing mobility and surprise—short, sharp actions that avoided pitched battles.

In these early, crucial months, Mao's guerrillas profited from Chiang's concentration on more immediate problems besetting the Kuomintang as well as from his patronizing attitude, which led him consistently to underrate his enemy, whom he contemptuously dismissed as "communist-bandits."

Mao and Chu, on the other hand, paid closest attention to Kuomintang power struggles, which so obviously influenced the amount of Na-

8. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
9. Schurmann, op. cit. (Vol. 2).
10. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (Vol. 1), *supra.*

tionalist army strength that would be used against them. As Mao wrote in 1928:

> . . . When splits take place within the ruling classes . . . we may adopt a strategy of comparatively venturesome advance and expand the independent regime over a comparatively large area by fighting. Yet all the same we must take care to lay on a solid foundation in the central districts so that we shall have something to rely upon and nothing to fear when the White Terror comes. When the political power of the ruling classes is relatively stable, as in the southern provinces after April this year, our strategy must be one of gradual advance. We must then take the utmost care neither to divide up our forces for venturesome advance in the military field, nor to scatter our personnel and neglect to lay a solid foundation in the central districts in the field of local work (including the distribution of land, the establishment of political power, the expansion of the Party, and the organization of local armed forces).

Mao regarded the instability of national rule as a prerequisite for setting up ". . . an armed independent regime," but success, in his opinion, also depended on:

> . . . 1) a sound mass basis [i.e., a willing peasant population]; 2) a first-rate Party organization [i.e., completely disciplined to pursue basic objectives]; 3) a Red army of adequate strength [as Mao later wrote, "Political power comes out of the barrel of a gun."]; 4) a terrain favorable to military operations [including a sanctuary area]; and 5) economic strength sufficient for self-support [i.e., to come from local sources such as landlords or merchants, from the people themselves, and from outside agencies such as the Comintern].[11]

While Mao was so theorizing, Communist success remained very limited. The ragged force euphemistically called the Red army suffered severe shortages of arms and equipment. Recruits reported literally with pitchforks, spears, and fowling pieces, weapons later replaced with captured rifles. Officers and soldiers alike received a ration of rice and five cents a day for ". . . cooking oil, salt, firewood, and vegetables"—a monthly payroll of more than ". . . ten thousand dollars, which are obtained exclusively through expropriating the local bullies [landlords and merchants]," and was not always met.[12]

In the freezing mountain sanctuary, soldiers shivered in light cotton clothing; over eight hundred lay ill from cold, malnutrition, and wounds but the army lacked doctors and medicine. To hold the ranks together, leaders relied on discipline engendered and maintained through ideology. A party political representative supervised each soldiers' council

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

at each command level down to and including the company; political indoctrination surpassed practical training in frequency and intensity, as is evident from Mao's 1928 report. This proved the more important because, in the relatively barren border areas, the White Terror had frequently cooled revolutionary fervor: "Wherever the Red Army goes," Mao wrote in 1928, "it finds the masses cold and reserved; only after propaganda and agitation do they slowly rouse themselves"[13]—and Mao held no intention of letting such apathy infect his army. His was scarcely an easy task, and his words reflect a winter of discontent: "We have an acute sense of loneliness and are every moment longing for the end of such a lonely life. . . ."[14]

Still, the Red flag flew and the ragtag army continued to elude government forces. In mid-1929, Mao and Chu moved from the remote Ching-kang Mountains to a new base in southwestern Kiangsi province. A more realistic land policy gained them considerably wider support here, and, with an influx of recruits, they reshaped their army to win a number of significant local victories.

But Li Li-san, Chou En-lai, and other members of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, long since operating underground in Shanghai, misread the limited success of their agrarian counterparts. Still under Russian influence and convinced that revolution must come from the proletariat, Li and his associates, in 1930, ordered Mao and Chu to begin a series of attacks against southern cities, which would be "prepared" internally by labor strikes and uprisings. This called for a complete reversal of Communist tactics to carry out a campaign for which the Red army was neither trained, organized, nor equipped.

Mao and Chu acquiesced for a number of reasons: they and their followers were still subordinate to the Central Committee, they needed arms and ammunition which victories would bring, and they still partially believed in mass revolution led by the proletariat. The first attacks succeeded, although at a cost in lives that they could ill afford. But at Changsha, in September, they suffered a nearly disastrous defeat. They ended the ill-fated campaign by retreating into the hills of Kiangsi; despite orders of the Central Committee, they refused any further attempt to bring about a proletarian revolution.

The campaign against the cities convinced Mao and Chu that victory must come from peasant and countryside, not worker and city. As Dr. Griffith has written, this was ". . . the single most vital decision in the history of the Chinese Communist Party."[15] Mao and Chu decided this in September 1930. A refutation of Marxism-Leninism, it was also a demonstration of where real Communist leadership lay in China, and

13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*

it helps to explain a great deal of the subsequent Chinese relationship with the Soviet Union.

Taking heart from the Nationalist victory at Changsha in the autumn of 1930, Chiang Kai-shek announced a "bandit-suppression campaign." Commencing in November, this looked better on paper than it proved in fact. Mao and Chu refused the Nationalist invitation to battle (except on their own terms), preferring a Fabian strategy designed, in Mao's later words, to lure the enemy deep and, with the aid of intelligence provided by peasants, destroy him piecemeal. This was particularly appropriate in view of Chiang's forces, which already were displaying deficiencies that he never could repair: riddled with inefficient and corrupt leadership, his divisions flailed over the land like locusts, further alienating peasants, the ill-treated, illiterate soldiers frequently deserting to the Communists. Attempts at reform were badly hampered by ". . . the political and ideological disunion within the Nationalist Party. . . . Between 1929 and 1932 three separate Nationalist governments were in some sort of operation."[16] Chiang's political concepts also hurt him: ". . . Since the Kuomintang was publicly against any rural reforms save such as could be comprehended within its vision of Confucianism, their return meant the return of the landlords."[17]

For these reasons, Chiang's first campaign fell apart at the seams. A second, equally unsuccessful effort failed in the spring of 1931. Chiang himself commanded an army of some three hundred thousand in the third campaign, but made little progress before having to march north to meet Japanese military incursions in Manchuria.

As Kuomintang fortunes plunged, Communist fortunes soared. Shortly after Chiang's precipitate departure in summer of 1931, the Comintern persuaded the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to proclaim existence of the Chinese Soviet Republic. On November 7, the Chinese Red army raised this flag at Juichin, in southwest Kiangsi, and Mao Tse-tung became the new republic's president. At this time, his area of operations covered a large part of Kiangsi and extended into Fukien, Hunan, and Hupeh—an area containing around 25 million Chinese. Mao's army had grown to an impressive sixty thousand, with recruits continuing to come in.

In 1932, Chiang returned to the attack in the South. His fourth "encirclement and annihilation" campaign succeeded only in capturing some small Communist bases in Hupeh province. Impressed by Communist resistance and somewhat humbled by the poor performance of the Nationalist armies, he prepared carefully for the fifth campaign, which he opened in October 1933. Advised by a German group of officers headed by able General von Falkenhausen, Chiang now committed his most

16. Ibid.
17. Harrison, op. cit.

loyal divisions as core of an expeditionary force of over half a million men supported by artillery and some two hundred airplanes. Drawing on the lessons of the Boer war, Falkenhausen advanced this force slowly and methodically, evacuating peasants from villages and consolidating gains by building a massive series of mutually supporting blockhouses.

Although Mao's army numbered perhaps 250,000, continuing pressure soon began wearing the ranks thin. Deprived of peasant support, and thus of information and food, Mao's people slowly withdrew into the hills. One by one, Communist bases fell. By June 1934, Mao held only three small areas, each encircled by Chiang's divisions.

To Mao and Chu, and indeed to the Central Committee, the exact form of the revolution now became academic. Unless leaders of the new Soviet Republic acted quickly, they and their army would be exterminated. They finally decided to seek sanctuary in the remote northern province of Shensi, whose hills already sheltered a small Communist group. Their actual destination, the loess caves of Pao An, lay twelve hundred miles away "as the crow flies." Since Nationalist divisions and war lords friendly to Chiang interdicted virtually the whole route, the Communists would have to escape around Robin Hood's barn: southwest deep into Yünnan, then north through the tortuous mountains of Szechwan, all together some six thousand miles of difficult terrain, much of it contested by war lords, Chiang's armies, and by hostile tribes.

In October 1934, like Xenophon's Greeks twenty-three centuries earlier, the Communists burned granaries, backpacked meager possessions, fought through Chiang's encircling army, and began one of the most extraordinary marches in man's history.

A fighting withdrawal, the Long March, as it has come to be known, lasted over a year. Professor Tibor Mende later wrote that the march

> . . . led across eleven provinces, over remote regions inhabited by suspicious peoples, through murderous marshy lands overgrown by grass, and in face of continuous danger from local and governmental forces. It is claimed that the three Communist armies who participated in the march crossed eighteen mountain chains and twenty-four large rivers, broke through the armies of ten war lords, defeated dozens of Kuomintang regiments, and took temporarily sixty-two cities.[18]

Of an estimated 130,000 persons who left Kiangsi, no more than thirty thousand arrived in Shensi—Mao Tse-tung's wife numbered among the dead.

The Communist ledger of hardship and sacrifice nonetheless held a profit column. The first and by far most important entry: the Long March established the Chinese Soviet Republic in a new, temporarily

18. Tibor Mende, *The Chinese Revolution* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1961).

safe sanctuary. In remote loess caves of Pao An (Protracted Peace), Mao reorganized battered ranks of party and army. Neither proved an easy task: Losses had been heavy, but survivors breathed the zeal of ideologically devoted men. This was the hard core. Some of the leaders are alive today, men whose unquestioned and varied talents were partly fired in the crucible of the Long March.

The Long March produced other advantages. As Mende and others have pointed out, stories of the epic retreat soon circulated throughout China to belie Kuomintang claims of total victory over the Reds. The Long March also brought Mao into contact with other Communist groups, whose civil and military leaders accepted his authority. The Communists perforce had to deal with a variety of peasant and nationalist groups, and lessons learned from such contacts played an invaluable role in later propaganda missions.[19]

Despite the chaotic, nightmarish quality of the march, Mao never lost sight of the future. The political factor remained paramount in his mind. For as his armies struggled over mountains and through rivers, he assigned small agitation-propaganda cadres to remain in likely areas to talk up the revolution. In time, he would send trained teams to reinforce these cadres, and he left secret caches of arms and ammunition for their later use.[20]

Considering the problems at hand, the Communists resumed operations in surprisingly short time. As his initial target, Mao chose neighboring Shansi province. In February 1936, three Red army columns, numbering some thirty-four thousand men, crossed the Yellow River, brushed aside provincial forces of the governor, Yen Hsi-shan, and occupied large areas, where they ". . . collected grain and money, shot rich landlords and tax collectors, recruited thousands of peasants for their armies, and began organizing the rural masses."[21] By their own account, they returned to Shensi with some eight thousand volunteer recruits, not only peasants, but students, bureaucrats, shopkeepers, workers, and soldiers.[22]

Mao was not yet out of trouble. His incursions into Shansi decided Chiang Kai-shek to complete the extermination campaign begun in Kiangsi. To carry this out, he deployed the Northeastern and Northwestern Defense Armies, a heterogeneous collection of some 150,000 troops, along the Yellow River under command of "Young Marshal" Chang Hsueh-liang, who established "Bandit-Suppression Headquarters" at Sian.[23]

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
22. S. B. Griffith, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967). (Hereafter cited as Griffith (CPLA).)
23. Ibid.

Chiang's fear of the Communists as the real threat to China was not shared by all members of the Kuomintang. A considerable faction disagreed outright, and for good reason: not only did the Japanese virtually control Hopei province, in the North, but they were slowly pushing into Kiangsu and Honan provinces, farther south. Worse yet, Chiang's failure to stem these incursions became Mao's gain. By taking up the cause of resistance to the Japanese invader, and in the process villainizing Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang, Mao gained a fantastic psychological advantage. As Professor Harrison has pointed out, the Communists ". . . appropriated nationalism from the Nationalists and made it a powerful Communist weapon."[24]

The denouement of this internal drama had already begun, the *deus ex machina* being the external force of the Soviet Union. Aware of Japanese aspirations on the Asian continent, Stalin had never broken with the Kuomintang, whose power he regarded as essential to checking Japan's invasion of China. Now, threatened by the rising prominence of Hitler in the West, he ordered Mao Tse-tung to make common cause with Chiang Kai-shek through a United Front.

Although such an alliance upset Mao's revolutionary timetable, this was in any event flexible and Mao stood to profit in other ways. Since 1932, he had been calling for war against Japan, and much of the Communists' popular appeal derived from this position. He had even found an ally of sorts in Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang, on whom Chiang Kai-shek was depending to hold Mao in check and eventually destroy him. The security derived from Mao's improved relationship with Chang in Sian probably explains why Mao was able to move his headquarters to the town of Yenan, which, in December 1936, became the capital of the Chinese Soviet Republic.

Chiang Kai-shek refused the notion of a United Front, despite considerable pressures from within the Kuomintang. In mid-1936, he ordered Marshal Chang to attack the Communist bases in Shensi, an order refused not only by Chang but by subordinate war lords. In December 1936, a furious Chiang Kai-shek traveled to Sian, where he ordered Chang ". . . to mount a full attack against the Communist bases in Shansi."[25]

Chang not only refused, but literally kidnaped the president of China and issued a manifesto calling for an end to civil war in favor of united action against Japan. Mao undoubtedly was involved in this move, although to what extent is not known. Professor Harrison believes that Chiang probably would have been executed but for Stalin's intercession on his behalf. Although details are lacking, Chou En-lai apparently pre-

24. Harrison, op. cit.
25. Ibid.

sented the Comintern position to Chang in Sian. As it turned out, Chang released Chiang Kai-shek toward the end of December.

Although Mao hated to let Chiang go—Edgar Snow wrote that Mao ". . . flew into a rage when the order came from Moscow to release Chiang"[26]—he hastened to make political capital from Chiang's release. In a much publicized letter to the Generalissimo, Mao reminded him that he owed his freedom to the Communists, who had intervened solely in order for China to get on with the war against the Japanese invader; if Chiang would cease fighting the Communists, Mao offered to call off revolutionary activities in return for a joint war effort against the Japanese.

Formal agreement between Nationalists and Communists emerged in September 1937, shortly after the Japanese captured Peking and Shanghai and began to fight toward Chiang's new capital at Nanking. But only for the moment was the very real threat of the foreign invader to overshadow severe internal antagonisms.

26. Edgar Snow, *Random Notes on China 1936–1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

Chapter 27

Mao's theory of "people's war" • His writings analyzed • Communist organization, equipment and training of guerrilla units • Their missions • Mao's debt to Sun Tzu • Secret of Communist tactics • Mao's "identification strategy" • His war against the Japanese invader

THE YEARS IN THE SOUTH that culminated in the Long March made Mao Tse-tung undisputed leader of the Chinese Communist Party. And now, in the loess caves of Pao An, the forty-three-year-old Communist leader began to frame the theory and doctrine of "people's war" —a thesis that would influence his world to an immeasurable degree.

As Professor Stuart Schram has pointed out, Mao did not arrive easily at this doctrine. Prior to the Long March, however, he had concluded that revolution in China depended ultimately on ". . . three essential principles . . . the central role of the army, the importance of rural base areas, and the protracted character of the struggle," and he also had tested and improved many of its strategic and tactical aspects.[1]

1. Mao Tse-tung, *Basic Tactics* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966). Tr. and with an Introduction by Stuart R. Schram. (Hereafter cited as Mao Tse-tung (Schram).)

Fundamental to the process was guerrilla warfare, and, in 1937, he defined its revolutionary role in a definitive work called *Yu Chi Chan,* or *Guerrilla Warfare.*[2] Mao followed this with a book titled *All the Problems of the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War.* In the same year, he delivered a series of complementary lectures on guerrilla tactics to a group of young officer cadets. Subsequently published under the title of *Basic Tactics,* they have only recently been translated into English.[3]

Although Mao paid lip service to the united front by naming the Japanese as the enemy in these works, his thoughts centered more on the Kuomintang armies. Too weak to fight the Japanese on his own, he would rely on the Kuomintang until the invader had been defeated; he would use one war as a means of growth to fight another, or, as he later put it, ". . . to drive out Japanese imperialism and build an independent, free and happy new China."[4]

Whichever the enemy, Mao looked on a country

> . . . half colonial and half feudal; it is a country that is politically, militarily, and economically backward . . . a vast country with great resources and tremendous population, a country in which the terrain is complicated and the facilities for communication are poor. All these factors favor a protracted war; they all favor the application of mobile [that is, orthodox] warfare and guerrilla operations.[5]

Mao carefully elaborated on this statement:

> . . . The concept that guerrilla warfare is an end in itself and that guerrilla activities can be divorced from those of the regular forces is incorrect . . . in sum, while we must promote guerrilla warfare as a necessary strategical auxiliary to orthodox operations, we must neither assign it the primary position in our war strategy nor substitute it for mobile and positional warfare as conducted by orthodox forces.

With regard to the whole war, ". . . mobile warfare is primary and guerrilla warfare supplementary; with regard to each part, guerrilla warfare is primary and mobile warfare supplementary."[6] Since Mao's force, known as the Eighth Route Army, was fighting "a part," he called for a basic strategy of "guerrilla warfare." But, he warned, ". . . lose no

2. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.* This work was translated into English in 1939 by S. B. Griffith, at the time a young marine officer and Chinese-language student in Peking, and was published in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in 1940 (and largely ignored by America's professional military body).
3. Mao Tse-tung (Schram), *supra.*
4. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works, supra.*
5. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
6. Ibid.

chance for mobile warfare [operations of regular armies] under favorable conditions."[7]

Whether fighting the Japanese or later the Kuomintang armies, Mao demanded a three-phase war. Phase One, as Dr. Griffith has described it,

> . . . is devoted to organization, consolidation, and preservation of regional base areas situated in isolated and difficult terrain. Here volunteers are trained and indoctrinated, and from here, agitators and propagandists set forth, individually or in groups of two or three, to "persuade" and "convince" the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside and to enlist their support. In effect, there is thus woven about each base a protective belt of sympathizers willing to supply food, recruits, and information. The pattern of the process is conspiratorial, clandestine, methodical, and progressive.[8]

Phase Two steps up the action:

> . . . Acts of sabotage and terrorism multiply; collaborationists and "reactionary elements" are liquidated. Attacks are made on vulnerable military and police outposts; weak columns are ambushed. The primary purpose of these operations is to procure arms, ammunition, and other essential material, particularly medical supplies and radios. As the growing guerrilla force becomes better equipped and its capabilities improve, political agents proceed with indoctrination of the inhabitants of peripheral districts soon to be absorbed into the expanding "liberated" area.[9]

Phase Three is decisive: the enemy's destruction by orthodox military operations which do not necessarily deny guerrilla operations but place them in a subsidiary role.[10]

The hallmark of this blueprint is flexibility. The phases are coactive: Phase Two and even Phase Three may concern one theater of operations, Phase One another. While the process normally proceeds upward, Phase Three may retrogress into Phase Two and even Phase One. Timelessness, or protraction, also plays an important part—a single phase may last two, ten, or twenty years.

Echoing Clausewitz, whom he had studied, Mao insisted on subordinating combat to an over-all political strategy:

> . . . Because ours is the resistance of a semicolonial country against an imperialism, our hostilities must have a clearly defined political goal and firmly established political responsibilities. Our basic policy is the creation of a national united anti-Japanese front. This policy we pursue in order to gain our political goal, which is the complete emancipation of the Chinese people.[11]

7. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works, supra.*
8. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

Guerrilla warfare cannot be separated from national policy:

. . . What is the relationship of guerrilla warfare to the people? Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, co-operation, and assistance cannot be gained. The essence of guerrilla warfare is thus revolutionary in character. . . . Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and co-operation.[12]

Mao returned to the political priority in a later chapter of *Yu Chi Chan,* a chapter that most of today's Western military commanders seem unable to understand. Some of Mao's generals seemed equally obtuse:

. . . There are some militarists who say: "We are not interested in politics but only in the profession of arms." It is vital that these simple-minded militarists be made to realize the relationship that exists between politics and military affairs. Military action is a method used to attain a political goal. While military affairs and political affairs are not identical, it is impossible to isolate one from the other.[13]

Mao's insistence on the overriding importance of the political factor resulted in his concept of the "three unities":

. . . These are political activities, first, as applied to the troops; second, as applied to the people; and, third, as applied to the enemy. The fundamental problems are: first, spiritual unification of officers and men within the army; second, spiritual unification of the army and the people; and, last, destruction of the unity of the enemy.[14]

The first of the unities represented a radical departure from oriental military tradition. Although admitting need for obedience in any army, Mao held that ". . . the basis for guerrilla discipline must be the individual conscience." Mao wanted only "pure and clean" volunteers "willing to fight." As opposed to discipline achieved through physical beatings or tongue-lashings, revolutionary discipline

. . . must be self-imposed, because only when it is, is the soldier able to understand completely why he fights and why he must obey. This type of discipline becomes a tower of strength within the army, and it is the only type that can truly harmonize the relationship that exists between officers and soldiers.

In Mao's army, ordinary soldiers, as well as guerrillas, must ". . . enjoy political liberty"—by which he meant that such questions as

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

". . . the emancipation of people must not only be tolerated but discussed, and propaganda must be encouraged." Further, ". . . officers should live under the same conditions as their men, for that is the only way in which they can gain from their men the admiration and confidence so vital in war. It is incorrect to hold to a theory of equality in all things, but there must be equality of existence in accepting the hardships and dangers of war." Through all this, ". . . we may attain to the unification of the officer and soldier groups, a unity both horizontal within the group itself, and vertical, that is, from lower to higher echelons."[15]

As quaint as all this sounds to the Westerner, it is really no more than the Napoleonic-Fochian concept that the moral is to the physical as three to one. But the reader should keep in mind that few commanders in history have been able to attain this ratio in practice, and that it formed a radical departure from the *Lumpensoldat* concept of China's feudal and Nationalist armies. In view of the Communist performance in Kiangsi, the survival of the inner core during the Long March, and some of the exploits of the Eighth Route Army against the Japanese and the Nationalists, no Westerner should summarily scorn it as just another of "Mao's thoughts." No less qualified an observer than Lieutenant Colonel Evans Carlson, U. S. Marine Corps, who ". . . traveled on foot for more than 2,000 miles [as an official observer] with Eighth Route Army guerrillas in 1937 and 1938," was deeply impressed ". . . by the uncomplaining endurance of the soldiers during long and dangerous marches behind Japanese lines. On one occasion, he recorded a march of 58 miles in thirty-two hours—a feat the more remarkable because it was performed in mountainous country by a battalion of 600 men. Most of the distance was covered in moonlight." Carlson later wrote: ". . . The explanation lay in the ethical indoctrination of the individual. Each man possessed the *desire* to do what was right; it was right to perform his duty."[16]

The army's "internal unity of spirit" must extend to the local people. Mao covered troop behavior among the population with three general rules:

1. All actions are subject to command.
2. Do not steal from the people.

15. Ibid.

16. Griffith (CPLA), *supra*. Carlson, a mystical sort of man with decidedly liberal views, was so impressed with Communist military performance that he later incorporated many of its tactical tenets into the Raider concept which he imposed on the U. S. Marine Corps, his chief ally being Lieutenant Colonel James Roosevelt. Two Raider regiments eventually emerged. Although these highly trained units performed well, particularly in the opening battles of Tulagi and Guadalcanal, most senior marine commanders objected to them as wasting resources, both men and material, in making elite units from units already elite. Cf. A. A. Vandegrift and R. B. Asprey, *Once a Marine, supra.*

3. Be neither selfish nor unjust.

He amplified these "rules" with eight "remarks":

1. Replace the door when you leave the house.
   [Visitors in the Chinese countryside frequently removed the doors to use as beds.]
2. Roll up the bedding on which you have slept.
3. Be courteous.
4. Be honest in your transactions.
5. Return what you borrow.
6. Replace what you break.
7. Do not bathe in the presence of women.
8. Do not without authority search the pocketbooks of those you arrest.[17]

Again, such behavior constituted a radical departure from that of both Nationalist and Japanese soldiers, justly detested throughout China for rapine and brutality. But, in Mao's mind, such behavior was essential to the spiritual unification of the army and the people:

> . . . Many people think it impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy's rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water and the latter to the fish who inhabit it. How may it be said that these two cannot exist together? It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element, cannot live.[18]

Finally, Mao charged the Eighth Route Army to destroy ". . . the enemy by propagandizing his troops, by treating his captured soldiers with consideration, and by caring for those of his wounded who fall into our hands. If we fail in these respects, we strengthen the solidarity of our enemy."[19]

The interdependence of the three unities is clear, and indeed essential to the concept of the peasant-guerrilla as the basis of the army:

> . . . Without question, the fountainhead of guerrilla warfare is in the masses of the people, who organize guerrilla units directly from themselves.[20]

Mao lists seven ways in which guerrilla units are originally formed. The "fundamental type" is formed from people automatically springing to arms to oppose the invader. This is the "pure" type of guerrilla warfare, earlier illustrated in this book:

> . . . Upon the arrival of the enemy army to oppress and slaughter the people, their leaders call upon them to resist. They assemble the most valorous

17. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.

elements, arm them with old rifles or bird guns, and thus a guerrilla unit begins.

Background and experience are unimportant. Only courage is essential:

> . . . That you are farmers is of no difference, and if you have education, that is so much the better. When you take your arms in hand, you become soldiers; when you are organized, you become military units.

Mao held for on-the-job training:

> . . . Guerrilla hostilities are the university of war, and after you have fought several times valiantly and aggressively, you may become a leader of troops, and there will be many well-known regular soldiers who will not be your peers.[21]

In addition to spontaneous resistance, guerrilla warfare may be fought by units assigned from the regular army, by a combination of regular army soldiers and peasant-guerrillas, by units of local militia, by enemy deserters, and by former bandits and bandit groups. Each category poses special problems in recruiting and organizing, but the catalytic agent is political and the effort worthwhile, since ". . . it is possible to unite them to form a vast sea of guerrillas. The ancients said, 'Tai Shan is a great mountain because it does not scorn the merest handful of dirt; the rivers and seas are deep because they absorb the waters of small streams.' "[22]

Mao's basic guerrilla unit, the squad, comprised nine to eleven men. Two to four squads formed a platoon, two to four platoons a company, and so on through battalion and regimental levels. These units operated within a "military area" commanded by military and political officers and divided into districts and counties. This dual command, military-political, extended to companies and even to platoons when operating independently. Auxiliary, or "self-defense," units, of rudely organized militia, performed local sentry duties, provided intelligence, arrested traitors, and prevented ". . . the dissemination of enemy propaganda." On occasion, they functioned as combatants and, in addition, were to

> . . . furnish stretcher-bearers to transport the wounded, carriers to take food to the troops, and comfort missions to provide the troops with tea and rice. If a locality can organize such a self-defense unit as we have described, the traitors cannot hide nor can bandits and robbers disturb the peace of the people. Thus the people will continue to assist the guerrillas and supply manpower to our regular armies.[23]

The small guerrilla unit did not require sophisticated arms. Two to

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

five Western-style rifles were sufficient for a squad, ". . . with the remaining men armed with rifles of local manufacture, bird guns, spears, or big swords." Members of militia and self-defense units ". . . must have a weapon even if . . . only a knife, a pistol, a lance, or a spear." Each guerrilla district commander should establish an armory to make and repair rifles and produce cartridges, hand grenades, and bayonets. However, ". . . guerrillas must not depend too much on an armory. The enemy is the principal source of their supply."[24]

Each guerrilla carried a minimum of clothing and equipment. Clothing must be procured by higher echelons, since it is an error to take clothes from prisoners. In general, equipment becomes more sophisticated as unit size increases. Larger units will carry telephone and radio equipment as well as propaganda materials, which ". . . are very important. Every large guerrilla unit should have a printing press and a mimeograph stone. They must also have paper on which to print propaganda leaflets and notices. They must be supplied with chalk and large brushes."[25] Medical services are also most important, and if Western medicines cannot be procured from "contributions," then local medicines must be used. The logistics requirement at all times is held to a minimum:

> . . . The equipment of guerrillas cannot be based on what the guerrillas want, or even what they need, but must be based on what is available for their use.[26]

Mao assigned a number of over-all missions, or "responsibilities," to guerrillas:

> . . . to exterminate small forces of the enemy; to harass and weaken large forces; to attack enemy lines of communication; to establish bases capable of supporting independent operations in the enemy's rear; to force the enemy to disperse his strength; and to coordinate all these activities with those of the regular armies on distant battle fronts.[27]

In discussing strategy and tactics essential to accomplishing such missions, Mao borrowed freely from Sun Tzu's thesis of the indirect approach (see pages 34–36):

> . . . Guerrilla strategy must be based primarily on alertness, mobility, and attack. It must be adjusted to the enemy situation, the terrain, the existing lines of communication, the relative strengths, the weather, and the situation of the people.

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid. Cf. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, supra:* ". . . The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armory of the modern commander."
26. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*
27. Ibid.

In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. In guerrilla strategy, the enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated.[28]

Surprise and deception are the hallmark of guerrilla tactics: ". . . Cause an uproar in the east, strike in the west." As Mao explained to smooth-faced cadets training to fight the Japanese in 1938: ". . . When the army wants to attack a certain place, it does not advance there directly but makes a detour by some other place and then changes its course in the midst of its march, in order to attack and disperse the enemy. 'The thunderclap leaves no time to cover one's ears.' "[29] Surprise offsets numerical weakness: ". . . Fierce wind and heavy rain offer a favorable occasion for a guerrilla attack, as do thick fog, the darkness of night, or circumstances in which it is possible to strike at an exhausted enemy." Above all offensive tactics, Mao favored ambush, ". . . the sole habitual tactic of a guerrilla unit."[30]

As opposed to orthodox warfare, which is frequently static, Mao wanted

. . . constant activity and movement. There is in guerrilla warfare no such thing as a decisive battle; there is nothing comparable to the fixed, passive defense that characterizes orthodox war. In guerrilla warfare, the transformation of a moving situation into a positional defensive situation never arises. The general features of reconnaissance, partial deployment, general deployment, and development of the attack that are usual in mobile warfare are not common in guerrilla war.

Instead of fixed defense, Mao calls for

. . . alert shifting . . . when the enemy feels the danger of guerrillas, he will generally send troops out to attack them. The guerrillas must consider the situation and decide at what time and at what place they wish to fight. If they find that they cannot fight, they must immediately shift.

Although the guerrilla will defend his own operational bases, these must be abandoned when necessary. ". . . We must observe the principle, 'To gain territory is no cause for joy, and to lose territory is no cause for sorrow.' "[31]

28. Ibid.; see also Sun Tzu, op. cit.: Dr. Griffith has made an excellent comparative study in his Introduction.
29. Mao Tse-tung (Schram), *supra.*
30. Ibid.
31. Mao Tse-tung (Griffith), *supra.*

Nevertheless, ". . . the operations of a guerrilla unit should consist in offensive warfare." Offensive tactics, he was careful to stress, demand ". . . careful planning . . . those who fight without method do not understand the nature of guerrilla action. A plan is necessary regardless of the size of the unit involved; a prudent plan is as necessary in the case of the squad as in the case of the regiment." Good planning depends on superior intelligence, and this can be gained only from the people, who, in turn, must withhold such from the enemy. In the end, it is peasants who give the guerrilla liberty of action essential to maintaining the initiative: ". . . When an army loses the initiative, it loses its liberty; its role becomes passive; it faces the danger of defeat and destruction."[32]

The validity of functional theory lies in practice. We have seen already that much of the Red army's success in occupying, consolidating and enlarging base areas lay in almost magical appeals of basic Communist social and economic reforms. In working with peasants of northern China, Communist agents undoubtedly exaggerated the quality of their wares—in another work, the author has described them as offering Barnum-style promises to people who had never seen a circus. But this scarcely lessened the impact of immediate reforms, which resembled an elixir that may not have cured the disease but at least alleviated considerable pain.

Communist magic rested on refutation: refutation of everything evil in traditional rule. Although the United Front temporarily tied Mao's hands in so far as seizure and redistribution of land were concerned, the Communists continued to abolish usury, reduce rents, and lighten taxes; the Red army no longer seized and executed landlords (at least not en masse), but it did grade them carefully as to productivity under the credo originally and ironically voiced by Dr. Sun Yat-sen: "Land to those who till it."[33] By refuting if not necessarily replacing evil, the Communists restored to the common peasant two emotional ingredients that make the difference between existing and living: dignity and hope. To the long-suffering peasant, the price tag of discipline, of unquestioned loyalty and obedience to the Party, seemed reasonable.

Discipline formed the foundation of the meticulous organization imposed on peasant communities and based on the village soviet, proceeding upward to district, county, provincial, and central levels. As Edgar Snow wrote in his classic work *Red Star over China:*

> . . . Under the district soviet, and appointed by it, were committees for education, cooperatives, military training, political training, land, public health, partisan training, revolutionary defense, enlargement of the Red

32. Ibid.
33. Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (New York: Random House, 1938).

Army, agrarian mutual aid, Red Army land tilling, and others. Such committees were found in every branch organ of the soviets, right up to the Central Government, where policies were coordinated and state decisions made.[34]

This activity swelled the rolls of the Communist Party, which also organized and propagandized village youth and even children. By so involving the peasant population, the Communists forged virtually indestructible base areas impervious to the adverse influence of both Nationalists and Japanese invaders. Professor Harrison offered a striking example of the success of what I call "identification strategy": In 1935, the "best" provincial governor in China, Yen Hsi-shan, of Shansi province, ". . . literally eradicated the Communists in his province," yet admitted ". . . that, given their head, 70 per cent of his people would go over to the Communists." The successful Communist invasion of Shansi the following year bore out his pessimism. Although he drove out the intruders with the help of Nationalist troops, in 1937 ". . . he invited them back to help fight the Japanese thrust at Shansi."[35]

The Japanese war also favored identification strategy. Professor Harrison goes so far as to call this invasion ". . . the real revolutionary force in China," and there is no doubt that Japanese occupation and fighting played a horribly destructive and divisive role that in the end favored Mao Tse-tung more than Chiang Kai-shek.

Nationalist armies, in retreating from Peking, Shanghai and Nanking in 1937, suffered enormous losses. Alone and increasingly isolated from foreign military aid (the Russians alone providing pilots, planes and money), Chiang Kai-shek was desperately trying to rebuild his army and could risk no part of it in a new campaign against the Japanese. In the north and north-central provinces, this left the field open to the Communists.

Under the terms of the United Front, the Red army became the Eighth Route Army, of three divisions comprising about forty-five thousand troops, under command of Mao's old Kiangsi comrade, the able Chu Teh. This army, by partially filling the military hiatus, served as an organized rallying point for national resistance. Mao also controlled perhaps another forty-five thousand troops, whose standards, though not blatantly unfurled, attracted numerous followers.

Adding to Mao's military largess, the Japanese army behaved in a manner to insure the popularity of Communist armies. Older readers will remember the infamous "Rape of Nanking," which shocked the civilized world in 1937. Such bestiality hallmarked the earlier Japanese invasion and occupation of Hopei province. The Japanese behaved in China precisely like Hitler's people in the Ukraine a few years later—

34. Ibid.
35. Harrison, op. cit.

as supermen dealing with inferiors. Naturally, any organized force wanting to fight against such treatment found immediate and widespread popularity among the people, particularly among those peasants already impressed with Communist land and tax reforms.

The Japanese also erred tactically. In the 1932 invasion of Manchuria and subsequently, their armies showed well—strong, splendidly equipped, tactically well disciplined, flexible, capable of long marches and devastating night attacks. With continuing prosperity, their military commanders, never self-deprecating, grew increasingly arrogant.

In September 1937, one of them, Lieutenant General Itagaki Seishiro, marched his division into an ambush cunningly laid by Lin Piao, commanding the 115th Division of the Eighth Route Army. In a brief but furious action, Itagaki suffered perhaps five thousand casualties besides losing most of his arms and supply trains, including the paymaster's money chests—the first major Japanese defeat and one trumpeted to the world by jubilant Chinese Communists.[36]

Mao was much too smart to try for a repeat victory of this nature. Instead, he concentrated on occupying and consolidating three major "base areas" in Shansi province. From here, his units fanned out to establish "guerrilla areas," which supported what Mao called "mobile-striking war"—guerrilla tactics which ". . . harassed and irritated the Japanese and tied thousands of troops, who might otherwise have been employed to better advantage, to static guard duties."[37]

The war continued in this fashion until 1940: Chiang and the Nationalists on the defensive outside of Chungking; Mao and the Communists, securely based in Shansi, on the limited tactical offensive with successes in the countryside but unable to contest Japanese control of the cities.

While Chiang's military fortunes waned, Mao's fortunes waxed—to the extent that, in 1940, he organized the New Fourth Army to fight south of the Yangtze, in Chekiang province. Already seriously alarmed at the growth of Communist power, Chiang reacted vigorously to this move. Ordering the New Fourth Army north, out of "Nationalist territory," Chiang ambushed it as it was crossing the Yangtze. Chiang then placed an economic embargo on Communist-held areas and followed this with troop operations against the Communists.

Mao, meanwhile, was facing another threat—from the Japanese general Tada Hayao, who took command of the North China Area Army in late 1939. As Kitchener had done in South Africa and Chiang in Kiangsi, Tada began systematic construction of forts, in this case by

36. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*
37. Ibid.

thousands of impressed coolies. This, his "cage policy," was described in an American military intelligence report:

> . . . Deep and wide ditches or moats were dug and high walls built along the sides of the railways and highways in Central and Southern Hopeh in order to protect them from attacks and, more important, to blockade and to break up the Communist base areas. At the same time, hundreds of miles of new roads with protecting ditches were built with the object of cutting up the guerrilla bases into small pieces which would then be destroyed one by one. The number of blockhouses along the railways and roads, manned by Japanese soldiers, was greatly increased. . . .[38]

Mao answered this threat in part by a massive guerrilla offensive, the "Hundred Regiments Offensive," launched in August 1940: this coordinated operation continued

> . . . with several interludes, for three months. In its overt aspects, the campaign was a success. Guerrillas made hundreds of cuts in rail lines; derailed trains, blew up small bridges and viaducts, attacked and burned stations; destroyed switches, water towers, and signal-control equipment, and otherwise seriously damaged and temporarily disarranged the railway system in North China. As a substantial dividend, Japanese garrison forces, necessarily concentrating on counterguerrilla operations and major restoration projects, were unable to get into the countryside to confiscate the autumn harvest. The Communists . . . reported more than 20,000 Japanese killed; 5,000 puppet troops killed and wounded; 281 Japanese officers captured, and 18,000 puppet prisoners. They claimed that almost 3,000 forts and blockhouses had been destroyed and large quantities of arms and ammunition taken.

As Dr. Griffith pointed out, these figures were undoubtedly exaggerated.[39]

The Communist offensive nonetheless hurt the Japanese. Tada's successor, General Okamura Yasuji, attempted to repair the damage, in the summer of 1941, with what he called a "three-all policy"—"Kill all, burn all, destroy all." As the year closed, Okamura's powerful mobile columns began pushing back Communist guerrillas in numerous areas. Simultaneously, Mao's relations with Chiang Kai-shek were worsening. By the end of 1941, China's chances for survival seemed remote, even if a rapprochement should occur between Nationalists and Communists.

Then, suddenly, the entire situation changed. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, which brought America into the war. China no longer stood alone against the Japanese enemy. This radi-

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.

cal shift in the power position was going to bring significant and indeed fatal consequences to the torn and bleeding country.

But this introduces another phase in the Eastern struggle. We must now return to the West and to revolutions of another sort, in which guerrilla warfare, unaided by Marxist motivation, also played a decisive role.

Chapter 28

The Rif rebellion • Spain and Morocco • Condition of the Spanish army • The Regulares and the Tercio • Spanish pacification policy • Early operations • Guerrilla resistance • Abd-el-Krim • Spanish defeat • The war continues • Africanistas versus Abandonistas • Primo de Rivera's "line"

THE 1904 TREATY that turned England and France loose in Egypt and Africa also opened northern Morocco to Spanish influence. In 1912, France formally placed this area under a Spanish protectorate.

It was not a great prize. Consisting of some eighteen thousand square miles, it supported no less than sixty-six tribes (subdivided into numerous clans and subclans), many of them tucked away into formidable mountain areas where they lived a way of life established long before the birth of Christ and where they spoke dialects often unintelligible to other tribes. Illiterate and poor, these peoples were nonetheless proud. Many tribes were also bellicose (bloody intertribal feuds were common), and they were also resentful of any foreign incursion into what they regarded as their country. Particularly was this true in two of the five major tribal areas, the Jibala, in the West, and the Rif, in the East.

Spanish proponents of an aggressive colonial policy in Morocco, par-

ticularly members of army and Church, argued that a successful conquest would help repair Spain's status as a world power after its disastrous defeat by America, and would also provide new markets and enormous mining profits and would secure the southern approach to the Spanish mainland.

Not everyone agreed: From 1904 on, Spain itself was divided: the Africanistas holding for conquest; ". . . the Spanish masses . . . either apathetic or apprehensive about engaging in further military action."[1] The latter were particularly wise. In trying to develop mining areas in the Rif, the Spanish stirred up local tribes and had to fight a brief but bloody war in the Melilla area in 1909, a Spanish "victory" of Pyrrhic proportions: Besides costing the Spanish some four thousand casualties, it aroused severe internal protest in Spain and also displayed to friend and foe alike the army's general ineptitude. Two years later, the army clashed with western tribes.

Spain thus acquired a restive protectorate in 1912. An ill-disciplined army coupled with a feckless colonization policy scarcely improved the situation, and World War I, which introduced German influence, created more friction points.

In the main, these existed in the West, or Jibala area, ruled by the powerful chieftain Ahmed er Raisuli, and in the East, or Rif area, ruled by Abd-el-Krim. Theoretically subordinate to the sultan's deputy at Tetuan, the khalifa, these rulers in practice all but ignored him, nor did they prove willing onlookers to Spanish invasion. Not that they ruled supreme: internecine tribal wars in the respective enclaves as well as traditional enmity between Jibilans and Rifians sharply circumscribed their powers. Nonetheless, they remained important forces, to be reckoned with by the wise, ignored by the foolish.

To bring peaceful unity to northern Morocco would have taxed the talents of ten Lyauteys. Spain lacked even one such. In 1919, Major General Dámaso Berenguer assumed the post of high commissioner, with headquarters in Ceuta. Berenguer came from an army family. A heavy man—some said fat—with a pleasant if brooding face, a sensitive mouth hidden by pointed mustachios, Berenguer, at forty-six years, was a man of considerable experience in Morocco, where he had campaigned for years and in the process had organized and trained a native constabulary: a paramilitary organization called the Regulares. He knew and admired Lyautey and tried to emulate his colonial policy:

> . . . he was convinced that the most prudent course lay in presenting a peaceful show of force. He neither expected nor wished to use this power against the Moroccans in the fashion of a conqueror. He did expect to establish an indigenous administration in Spanish Morocco and to achieve

1. Woolman, op. cit.; see also L. Bertrand and C. Petrie, *The History of Spain* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1934).

Spain's ends through it. Berenguer viewed the pacific occupation of the Spanish Protectorate as a political rather than a military problem.[2]

In attempting to carry out a sane policy, Berenguer faced innumerable disadvantages. The state of his army was dreadful. Most officers were venal martinets, the obese generals often unable to read a map.[3] Factionalism riddled junior-officer and non-commissioned-officer ranks; many units supported *juntas de defensa,* or military defense councils, which very nearly approached seditious intent. The troops were ill-trained, generally illiterate, peasants. Most of their pay was siphoned off by superiors. Badly disciplined, they lacked equipment, proper arms, essential services, even good food. Replacements and supply arrived in irregular driblets from the mainland. The war ministry, in Madrid, sent vacillating, often contradictory, orders, and both civil and military appointments frequently went to King Alfonso's favorites.

One of these, a contemporary of Berenguer, became his military commander, at Melilla, in the Northeast. Manuel Silvestre was a fire-eating colonel, a dashing cavalry officer whose body was said to hold the marks and scars of sixty wounds.[4] Silvestre's adjutant, on one occasion, stated command policy: ". . . The only way to succeed in Morocco is to cut the heads off of all the Moors."[5] Despite Silvestre's brutal and bellicose attitude, his troops were no better trained than Berenguer's, in the West.

To repair some of these military deficiencies, Madrid authorities organized an entirely new command, the Tercio, or Spanish version of the French Foreign Legion. Command went to Major José Millán Astray, a forty-year-old combat tiger whose claws dipped to necrophilia: ". . . Death in combat is the greatest honor," he wrote. "One dies only once. Death arrives without pain, and is not so terrible as it seems. The most horrible thing is to live as a coward." Known in Spanish history as the "glorious mutilated one," Millán Astray left an eye, an arm, and a leg in Morocco.[6]

One of Astray's commanders left a different sort of personal imprint. This was a young major, also holding a formidable combat record in Morocco: Francisco Franco-Bahamonde, twenty-eight years old in 1920, when the Tercio appeared, a little man, five feet three inches tall, un-

2. Woolman, op. cit.

3. A. Barea, *The Track* (London: Faber & Faber, 1943). Tr. Ilsa Barea; see also Rupert Furneaux, *Abdel Krim–Emir of the Rif* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967). Barea, who served as an engineer corporal, was undoubtedly prejudiced against the regular army, but his criticism in general is variously confirmed in other contemporary accounts and by later, serious commentators. Furneaux noted, for example, ". . . in 1920 the [Spanish] army's strength stood at 100,000 men and 12,000 officers, a disproportionate number whose ranks were headed by 690 generals and 2,000 colonels."

4. Furneaux, op. cit.

5. Woolman, op. cit.

6. Ibid.

interested in women or drink—". . . a first-class organizer, a harsh disciplinarian, and a fearless fighter." He once declared vigorously in his high-pitched voice: "I don't want medals. I want promotion."[7]

The Tercio was still forming in 1920, when Berenguer commenced military operations designed to extend Spanish hegemony into the hinterland of Morocco. His plan was simple: a western force, in all some forty-five thousand troops based on Ceuta, to march some fifty miles south to occupy the town of Chaouen in order to splinter Jibilan power; Silvestre's eastern force, of perhaps twenty-five thousand, based on Melilla, to march west to Alhucemas Bay in order to split the Rifian movement.

Berenguer's column moved out in September 1920. Before the expedition reached Chaouen, one General Girona, disguised as a charcoal burner, entered the citadel and persuaded the chiefs by threat and bribery to surrender. Two circumstances marred this neat piece of work: a surprise attack by local tribesmen, countered only with considerable casualties; and the execrable behavior of Spanish troops, the officers (by bringing in their own whores) vying with the men (who defiled mosques and otherwise insulted locals). Still, Berenguer had achieved his primary mission—a new base to support operations that in time would lead to Raisuli's capture. Neither he nor his staff seemed unduly concerned about a line of communications stretching some fifty miles over difficult terrain occupied by generally hostile tribes.

Silvestre's march west from Melilla also proceeded quite smoothly. Ignoring Berenguer's injunction of caution, the fiery Silvestre moved rapidly through country made more barren by a series of poor harvests. Spanish columns dealt quickly and ruthlessly with any opposition, burning houses and crops, collecting whatever cattle they could find—altogether a punitive display that quickly alienated the local populace.

By spring of 1921, Silvestre's vanguard stood on Sidi Driss, not far from its objective of Alhucemas Bay, to the west. His army already had advanced about eighty miles west of Melilla, its front extending south some thirty-five miles to Zoco el Telata, smack in the Rif hinterland. To consolidate this impressive advance, Silvestre depended on ". . . 144 outposts, blockhouses, and small forts,"[8] many of them isolated and weakly defended.

To garrison nearly a hundred fifty outposts including larger forts that required eight hundred or more soldiers, Silvestre spread his army of about twenty thousand Spanish and five thousand Moroccan Regulares rather thinly across the face of conquest, a minor blemish but one compounded by poor morale, lack of combat readiness, and by tenuous supply lines between relatively isolated posts. The relative ease of the advance had powdered over these imperfections, which Silvestre, in his

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.; see also Usborne, op. cit.

ardent desire to kiss victory, chose to ignore. Not only did he plan to push onto Alhucemas Bay but, according to an intimate, he relished the thought of battle: ". . . We need a victory so overwhelming that it will convince the Moors that they cannot afford the price of resistance to Spanish domination."[9]

Unknown to Silvestre, a coterie of spies were keenly observing the progress of his columns and the state of his local defenses, their reports (often delivered verbally, since illiteracy ruled) going to a twain of remarkable nationalists, the brothers Abd-el-Krim.

Mohamed and Mhamed Abd-el-Krim were the sons of a Rifian nobleman, a judge (some say schoolteacher) both anti-Spanish and anti-French, a not unnatural attitude for an educated Moroccan, and one undoubtedly accentuated by German propaganda during World War I. The elder Abd-el-Krim gave each of his sons a university education that resulted in a successful career in journalism for Mohamed and graduate study in engineering for Mhamed, ten years younger.

As a journalist in Melilla, Mohamed grew increasingly disillusioned with Spanish colonial policy, particularly its blatant intent to exploit Morocco's mineral wealth. Imprisoned by the Spanish in 1917, he escaped and returned to journalism, but in 1919 threw over his job, joined his father in the mountains ringing Ajdir, and summoned Mhamed from Madrid. In 1920, his father was poisoned to death in a tribal feud. But, by this time, the three had decided to raise a rebellion designed to oust the Spanish and create a Moroccan or at least a Rifian state, and now the surviving brothers turned to this task.

Neither brother was particularly imposing. Mohamed, traditionally known as Abd-el-Krim, at thirty-nine years of age was what London tailors describe as S&P—short and portly. Mhamed was taller and slimmer. Both were dark and both wore the standard Rifian dress, a dark-brown homespun wool *jellaba* with loose-fitting sleeves and a cowl, bagged trousers, grass sandals, and white cotton turban.

Abd-el-Krim affected a black beard and sweeping mustache. Small dark eyes flicked from an otherwise benign face to suggest a contradictory character: Abd-el-Krim would lovingly pat children on the head; but he would also stand by approvingly while Rifian guerrillas slit a Spanish officer's throat. Denied a hereditary charisma such as that bestowed, for example, on Attila, Shamyl, or Feisal, Abd-el-Krim seems to have relied on superior education and knowledge of Spanish ways to impress various tribal chiefs. In no way ostentatious, he used remoteness to impress the ordinary native, who in time willingly proffered him demigod

9. Ibid.

status.[10] Mhamed cheerfully played a subordinate (but key) role and remained not only loyal but of enormous help to his older brother.

The brothers needed all such strength to accomplish their self-appointed task. The territory called the Rif, an area about the size of Massachusetts, contained eighteen major tribes, divided and subdivided into several dozen, a bewildering complex whose jealous chieftains, some of whom covertly dealt with the Spanish, had to be alternately threatened and cosseted for support. In the formative days, money and arms constituted perennial problems. Building a regular army was out of the question. Instead, the tribes slowly accumulated rifles and bullets, either by barter from Spanish soldiers (such was the demoralized state of the Spanish army) or smuggled in from Algeria or French Morocco. This painstaking effort finally resulted in several thousand armed men, but these were greatly dispersed. According to one authority, Abd-el-Krim's original cadre, or *harka,* numbered only 125 men, but this number quickly increased.[11]

Until the spring of 1921, Silvestre heard only rumors of this guerrilla force. His attitude is best judged by his response at that time to Abd-el-Krim's warning for him to remain east of the Amerkan River. Silvestre told a friend: ". . . This man Abd el Krim is crazy. I'm not going to take seriously the threats of a little Berber *Caid* whom I had at my mercy a short while ago. His insolence merits a new punishment."[12] To Berenguer's word of caution, Silvestre replied, "I shall drink tea in Abd el Krim's house at Ajdir whether he wills it or not."[13]

In May 1921, Silvestre pushed a detachment across the Amerkan with orders to establish an outpost on the hill of Abarran. But now native auxiliaries, the Regulares, mutinied, and, together with local tribesmen, fell on the Spanish force, killing 179 out of 250. Other Rifian guerrillas attacked the Spanish base at Sidi Driss, inflicted about a hundred casualties, and disappeared.

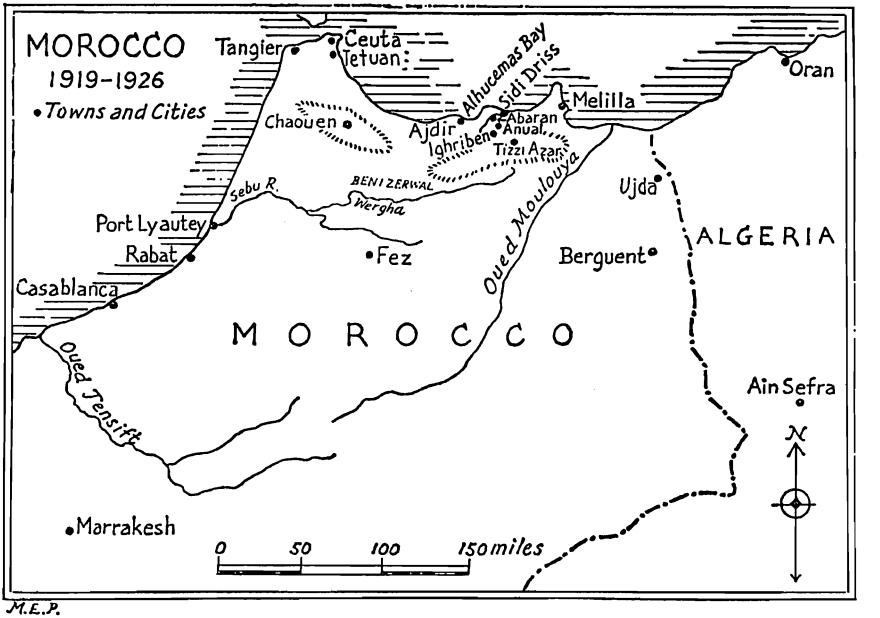
These opening strikes caused fierce argument between Silvestre and the high commissioner, Berenguer, who wanted his military commander to backtrack. Silvestre instead continued to expand by building a new

10. Vincent Sheean, *Personal History* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1936). At great personal risk, Sheean, an American newspaper correspondent, twice visited Rif country. On the first occasion, he was impressed by a group of tribal chiefs who ". . . spoke of the glory of Abd el-Krim, the splendor of his victories over the Spaniards, the certainty with which those who fought for Abd el-Krim would go to heaven and all others to hell. . . ." On the second occasion, when the Rifian bloom of victory was wearing off, Sheean wrote in his notebook of Abd-el-Krim: ". . . his courage is magnificent. His ideas have not changed, have even been reinforced by the present danger. From what I saw of him today I knew that I had no idea of him before. He has a grandeur, added to by the circumstances of horror and great danger. But in spite of this he is humorous, funny. . . ."

11. Furneaux, op. cit.

12. Woolman, op. cit.

13. Furneaux, op. cit.



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outpost three miles south of a small fort at Anual. When the enemy failed to contest this work, Berenguer's immediate panic subsided; a leading Madrid paper quoted him ". . . as saying that the Spanish people could be sure that the work of pacification in Morocco was proceeding successfully, with only isolated losses, and that therefore no new troops would be needed."[14]

Shortly after this comforting statement appeared, Abd-el-Krim's guerrillas struck again, this time an attack in force against the new outpost at Ighriben followed by attacks two days later against Anual. Ighriben quickly fell, as much from a water shortage as enemy fire. An alarmed Silvestre meanwhile hurried to the Anual base. Several factors, including an ammunition shortage, caused him to order a retreat on the following day. With this, all discipline vanished, the retreat becoming a rout with few survivors. Hatred of the past caused shame of the present: guerrillas fell on small groups of Spanish soldiers, jabbed and slashed bodies with knives and bayonets, gouged out eyes, cut off genitals and jammed them in the victim's mouth, ran stakes through helpless bodies. Silvestre disappeared, presumably tortured and killed.

The initial victories brought whole tribes to the Rifian banner. Guerrillas continued to strike luckless garrisons, sending survivors panic-stricken to Melilla. Here and there, senior officers corralled these hordes

14. Woolman, op. cit.

to make last-ditch stands, but the poor location of most of the posts, usually remote from adequate water supply and lacking ammunition and medical services, turned these makeshift positions into scenes of carnage that would have taxed the experienced talent of Goya to portray. In less than a month, guerrillas were fighting in the outskirts of Melilla.

But now Abd-el-Krim called off the attack. Authorities differ as to the reason. Furneaux argued that Abd-el-Krim wanted to avoid a bloody orgy of townspeople, which he realized would cost him international sympathy; Woolman argued that other factors such as lack of cannon and demands of the imminent harvest influenced the decision,

> . . . one of Abd el Krim's very few major errors, for with its [Melilla] possession or destruction he might have gained the time to create a Rifian state strong enough to defy Spain—and if he had, the course of history would have been very different.[15]

Abd-el-Krim could still claim a fantastic victory. In a few weeks, his guerrillas had eliminated Spanish presence in the Rif in ". . . the greatest military disaster suffered by a colonial power for twenty-five years, since the Abyssinians had destroyed an Italian army at Adowa."[16] The Spanish army admitted to over thirteen thousand battle deaths; the true figure probably approached nineteen thousand. The Spanish lost nineteen thousand rifles, several hundred machine guns and cannon, and over one thousand prisoners who were later ransomed for fat prices.[17]

Berenguer reacted by recalling his own expeditionary force and sending massive reinforcements to Melilla, an effort spearheaded by the recently formed Tercio. Though badly shaken, the Spanish Government sent Berenguer new troop levies, reinforced with armored cars and airplanes. By 1922, the high commissioner disposed of some 150,000 troops, but as Woolman has pointed out, Spanish policy perforce had changed ". . . from one of outright conquest to the far less ambitious one of limited occupation and political control through bribery of certain caids and chiefs."[18]

Increased numbers allowed Berenguer to occupy major towns and, in the West, to encircle once again the wily Raisuli. Berenguer's successor, General Ricardo Burguete, who took over in mid-1922, chose to make a deal with this powerful leader, in effect buying his "retirement" (at a monthly subsidy of twelve thousand dollars) in order to free troops from the Jibala area.

In the East, the Army reoccupied much of the territory evacuated

15. Ibid.
16. Furneaux, op. cit.
17. Ibid.: Abd-el-Krim used the ransom money to buy more arms.
18. Woolman, op. cit.

after the Anual disaster, but as they moved into mountain country, progress slowed and then stopped. Spanish troop reinforcements proved virtually useless in fighting guerrillas, which left the lion's share to the Tercio and Regulares, both outfits suffering a high proportion of casualties. Moreover, the Rifians were growing sophisticated. In March 1922, one group used a captured cannon to sink a Spanish warship in Alhucemas Bay; another band attacked and destroyed a force of armored cars. When, later in the year, Burguete pushed forward to Tizzi Azar as a preliminary move to an all-out-offensive, Abd-el-Krim's guerrillas fell on the outpost, a bloody action costing the Spanish about two thousand casualties and decisively ending their offensive plans.

Instead, Burguete decided on a blockade punctuated by naval bombardment. This punitive action failed, because villagers moved inland, nor did the blockade prevent money and arms reaching guerrillas from Tangier—Vincent Sheean has described the relative ease of traveling back and forth either by sea or land.[19]

This series of military failures widened the internal political rift that had long been developing in Spain between Africanistas, who demanded Spanish conquest of Morocco, and Abandonistas, an increasingly powerful group which wanted total withdrawal from the colony. The Abandonistas now won an important round by forcing Burguete's recall in favor of a civilian high commissioner. Unfortunately, neither this man nor another civilian successor could solve the "Moroccan question."

Spanish ineptitude and dissension contributed to the growth of Abd-el-Krim's ambitions. Early in 1923, he took the title of emir, or prince, of the Rif, and in June attacked the key position of Tizzi Azar—again held by the enemy—a failure that cost him heavy casualties and, incidentally, led to Franco's taking command of the Tercio.

The ensuing stalemate brought the Rifian Government to the conference table, in the bowels of a Spanish ship off the coast of Morocco. Since Abd-el-Krim wanted total Spanish withdrawal, and since the Spanish offered ". . . a kind of independence—economic and administrative —to the Rifian tribes," the talks came to nought.[20] Instead, the Spanish began to fortify the "Silvestre Line" in depth. Abd-el-Krim responded, in late August, by attacking a Spanish convoy, another costly tactical failure.

This seesaw state of affairs was working in Abd-el-Krim's favor. The war, which was costing Spain some £20 million a year, was causing virtual anarchy on the mainland, where, at Barcelona, a regiment des-

19. Sheean, op. cit.

20. Woolman (op. cit.) has offered an interesting sidelight on the Spanish attitude. The Spanish called Abd-el-Krim's delegate, Mohamed Azerkan, "Punto," because "as a boy he had cadged 'puntos'—cigarette butts—from the Spanish officers."

tined for Morocco mutinied in protest. And now, in late summer of 1923, Primo de Rivera, an army general and politician of extensive experience at home and abroad, brought off a bloodless coup and established himself as dictator of Spain.

A large man of keen wit and robust physical appetites—he was to die in Paris, ". . . his last hours divided between brothel and confessional,"[21]—Primo de Rivera at fifty-three years held a charismatic appeal that made him many things to many people. Reputedly an Abandonista regarding Morocco, he had been brought to power by a group of royalist generals. Soon after taking over, he announced withdrawal plans, which caused Marshal Lyautey, nervously looking on from French Morocco, to exclaim: "My God! An army retreats when it must but it does not announce the fact to the enemy in advance."[22]

Once installed, however, Rivera fell under army influence:

> . . . his military policy changed from one of outright disengagement in Morocco to one of aggression. . . . The new dictator promised "a quick, dignified, and sensible" solution to the Moroccan problem.[23]

Hollow words, these: Raisuli, in the Jibala, was becoming increasingly demanding in his "retirement," while, in the East, Abd-el-Krim continued to ride a wave of local and international popularity. As underdog biting the heel of Spanish colonialism, he attracted worldwide sympathy, particularly from nationalist leaders in other colonial countries, but also from French Communists; he probably received financial aid from British and German mining interests as well.

His power easily allowed him to retain initiative in the Rif and to extend operations into Jibala territory, his brother Mhamed being increasingly active in this area. But the Spanish also helped him win new tribes by an inane policy of bombing villages populated mostly by women and children.[24] To the Spanish claim that airmen dropped preliminary warning leaflets in Arabic and Thamazighth, Woolman has evidenced the telling point that most tribesmen were illiterate!

So successful was the guerrilla action, that Abd-el-Krim continued attacking throughout the summer, his total impact such that several Spanish outposts owned no more than the ground enclosed by wire. The entire picture so distressed Rivera, that after an inspection tour in 1924 he declared, ". . . Spain cannot continue to maintain her soldiers on

21. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961).
22. Furneaux, op. cit.
23. Woolman, op. cit.
24. Furneaux, op. cit.

isolated crags."[25] Coming full circle in thought, he announced withdrawal to a fortified line, telling an American correspondent:

. . . Abd el Krim has defeated us. He has the immense advantages of the terrain and a fanatical following. Our troops are sick of war, and they have been for years. They don't see why they should fight and die for a strip of worthless territory. I am withdrawing to this line, and will hold only the tip of this territory. I personally am in favor of withdrawing entirely from Africa and letting Abd el Krim have it. We have spent untold millions of pesetas in this enterprise, and never made a *céntimo* from it. We have had tens of thousands of men killed for territory which is not worth having. But we cannot entirely withdraw, because England will not let us. . . . England fears that if we withdraw, the territory will be taken by France. . . . They don't want a strong power like France here![26]

Contrary to the Spanish dictator's belief, England presented less of an obstacle to withdrawal than his own army, particularly fanatic Africanistas spearheaded by the Tercio. Only when Franco threatened to resign command of the foreign legion did Rivera modify his plans: a compromise that in the West placed the one-hundred-thousand-man army behind a fortified "Primo Line," the idea being to strengthen and reorganize units into a new striking force. Grudgingly accepted by the army, various withdrawals of outer posts began in September and were carried out under almost constant harassment by guerrillas. This effort culminated in evacuation of the important base of Chaouen, a forty-mile anabasis beginning in November and ending a month later at Tetuan, *the Rifians having pursued the rear guard, Franco's Tercio, to the city gates.* Rifian casualties were never published. Spanish dead numbered an estimated eight hundred officers and seventeen thousand men—some authorities say more.[27] The words of a Spanish officer survivor form a fitting epitaph: ". . . We made war against shadows, and we lost thirty men to their one!"[28]

For the time being, the Spanish army in the West was safe behind the "Primo Line": ". . . a series of typical blockhouses about a quarter of a mile apart, each built on dominating ground wherever possible and equipped with strong searchlights. The spaces between the blockhouses, particularly around Tangier, were usually mined."[29] All this did not much impress the American correspondent Vincent Sheean: After a lengthy stay with rebel hosts, he was ushered quite easily through the line at night.

25. Ibid.
26. Woolman, op. cit.
27. Furneaux, op. cit.
28. Woolman, op. cit.
29. Ibid.

Chapter 29

Abd-el-Krim and the great powers • French intervention • Rebel strength • The Rif offensive • Escalation • Abd-el-Krim's fall • Spain's "victory" • The spread of colonial uprisings • The Royal Air Force and pacification • Air Control versus Ground Control • Air Control analyzed

ABD-EL-KRIM'S PRIMARY PROBLEM was not the Spanish army but, rather, European powers that did not want an independent Moroccan state. His several overtures to the British to help him remove the Spanish presence were brushed aside; the British, after all, governed an enormous colonial empire and frowned on any trend toward self-government. Spain would not acquiesce, not only because Primo de Rivera was staking his political reputation on favorable settlement of the Moroccan question, but also because the government thought that Spain's international prestige rested on a favorable settlement.

Far more important, however, was the attitude of France, to whom the thought of an independent Moroccan state was particularly abhorrent. France had been having her own troubles with rebellious tribes in French Morocco: ". . . It was Lyautey's belief that tribes which had once enjoyed French rule desired no other, but events in the north had

already shaken this theory. . . ."[1] Even in 1924, France did not wish to test her strength in the rest of Morocco and in Tunis and Algeria. An independent Moroccan state would automatically void the sultan's overall authority—and that, in colonial administrative minds, would begin the end. Or, as Marshal Lyautey put it: ". . . A maggot-breeding spot in the Rif would be a grave threat to civilization and the peace of the West."[2]

Thus a political paradox emerged: Although Abd-el-Krim remained respectful of French military power and did not wish to antagonize France, his success in the North automatically brought him into conflict with his powerful colonial neighbor. When his expansion sloshed over into French Morocco, the French began to build a *casus belli.*

Already in 1924, Lyautey had crossed the Wergha River and created a northern front under the able General Chambrun, a line of intersupporting posts, backed by aircraft, that constituted a direct challenge to Rifian control of the disputed area. If Lyautey displayed some concern over the strength of the "Wergha Line," higher echelons refused to accept his pessimism, even denying his request for additional troops.[3] The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, expressed comfortable arrogance to an American correspondent:

> . . . You have seen the great Abd el Krim. These native chiefs . . . we know them well. They are really simple fellows. Properly handled, they respond to kindness. There is, of course, not the slightest chance that this one will ever attack us.[4]

Lack of military strength formed Abd-el-Krim's second major problem. His army was strong enough to contain the Spanish in two coastal enclaves, but not to drive them out of Spanish Morocco and certainly not to fight the French at the same time. He would never command a stronger army than that of 1925, but, out of a total force estimated variously at 80–120,000, he commanded perhaps a maximum 10,000 riflemen augmented by a pathetically small artillery unit of some 350 gunners. Although his combat areas featured strategically located supply dumps and were connected by a primitive telephone system, the work of a German renegade, his army remained primitive in the extreme.[5]

Neither did his political organization represent any great achievement. Despite a political "cabinet" of mostly young and keen revolutionaries, Abd-el-Krim remained a dictator whose respect for republican institu-

1. Usborne, op. cit.
2. Woolman, op. cit.
3. Usborne, op. cit.
4. Woolman, op. cit.
5. Ibid.; see also Usborne, op. cit. The German was Joseph Klems, one of the few European mercenaries employed by Abd-el-Krim. Klems supposedly inspired Sigmund Romberg's operetta "The Desert Song."

tions he claimed to admire diminished as his responsibilities increased. His command of the diverse northern tribes was never too secure, and it is problematical that he ever could have forged the cohesive state he talked about—any more than Feisal could have melded Syrian tribes into a viable political entity in 1918. Abd-el-Krim's widespread but relatively fragile political base probably explained his aversion to settlement with Spain on a partial-protectorate basis as opposed to his demand for total Spanish withdrawal.

His conflict with France centered on control of a border tribe, the Beni Zerwal. When this tribe opted for war against France, the Rifians were forced to a decision. Woolman marks this in the early months of 1925:

> . . . Provoked by French depredations, worried about his food supply, goaded by questions of honor and prestige, and lured on by his own overconfident advisers, Abd el Krim was drawn into the fatal decision to attack the French. . . . Fear and desperation must have been the deciding factors.[6]

The rebels attacked in April, their goal the major French base at Fez. Its capture, they believed, would force France to a reasonable settlement in the North. Abd-el-Krim's brother, Mhamed, commanded the operation, which involved an estimated four thousand tribesmen, with another four thousand in reserve. The dispersed attacks caught the French by surprise. Rebel units tore through Chambrun's careful defenses and, in a few days, advanced to a line some twenty miles north of Fez.

Supported by border tribes the French had expected to remain loyal, the rebels within a month wiped out northern French garrisons. Many fought literally to the last man:

> . . . By the end of June, the Rifians had taken forty-three of sixty-six French posts. They had captured an estimated 51 cannon, 200 machine guns, 5,000 rifles, millions of cartridges, 16,000 shells for cannon, 60,000 grenades, and 35 mortars with 10,000 shells. They had carried off at least seventy Frenchmen and 2,000 mercenaries as prisoners, and no one cared to report publicly how many French troops had been killed and wounded.[7]

On the surface, this represented a fantastic victory. In reality, it amounted to a painful sting, though of sufficient dimensions to bring a

6. Woolman, op. cit.; see also Furneaux, op. cit., who has pointed out that Abd-el-Krim attained unity ". . . by the employment of the powerful shame compulsion, the *aar*," which caused tribes to forgo feuds in favor of a common cause. The protective alliance, or *liff*, spread throughout the Rif and finally to the southern tribes, whose call for help against the French could not be ignored—thus, Furneaux has implied, Abd-el-Krim was hoist with his own political petard.

7. Woolman, op. cit.; see also Usborne, op. cit. Each source provides excellent details of the fighting.

combined Franco-Spanish peace offer. In July, these powers offered a guarantee of Rifian autonomy, but refused to create a Rifian state. Abd-el-Krim turned them down.

He probably erred. Lack of army organization and supply difficulties, not to mention tenacious resistance of the enemy, already were robbing him of momentum. He suffered a political setback from refusal of important tribes north of Fez to come over to him. And now French strength began to tell. In July, the government relieved Lyautey as military commander in favor of the able General Naulin. Marshal Pétain, the hero of World War I, inspected the entire front, his report causing Paris to dispatch one hundred thousand more troops. Meanwhile, French military commanders conferred with Spanish opposites to come up with a combined quasi-pincer operation: the French to drive north into the Rif, the Spanish to pull off a large-scale amphibious landing at Alhucemas Bay and drive in to Abd-el-Krim's headquarters at Ajdir.

The Spanish landing began on September 7. The following day, the first assault waves, men of the Tercio under Franco, set up a beachhead rapidly expanded to eight thousand troops including artillery, a force soon raised to twelve thousand. Despite Spanish air bombing and strafing, artillery fire and use of poison gas, the Rifians continued to resist the Spanish advance practically yard by yard. Rifian determination, coupled with rugged terrain, held the Spanish to small gains—an average four hundred yards per day at heavy cost in lives, but nonetheless the invaders pushed through to Ajdir, the Rifians retiring south. Farther east, another Spanish force pushed inland and, in October, joined a French column coming from the south.

Although the campaigns cost the Spanish and French heavily, by November French numbers had risen to over 300,000, Spanish numbers to 140,000 with reinforcements constantly arriving. The Rifians also had suffered heavy casualties—losses compounded by poor harvests and large areas of scorched earth. Typhus now scourged the sad, hungry tribes. Desultory winter operations further weakened Abd-el-Krim's army, for if guerrilla bands struck successfully here and there, he could not prevent the Franco-Spanish build-up from continuing, nor could he alleviate constantly increasing tribulations of the diverse tribes. Wanting also to take advantage of favorable public opinion in France and Spain (and other Western nations) to his cause, he bowed to the inevitable and asked for peace talks. Grudgingly the Spanish and French governments agreed to a conference at Ujda in April.

Abd-el-Krim's hopes for a reasonable peace were almost immediately dashed by increased European arrogance, not unnaturally, since the powers were negotiating from a military strength of about forty to one. While talks dragged on, French and Spanish army commanders shuffled troops for a final offensive. When the talks dragged to a halt in early May, the temporary allies struck, their armies within the month overrunning

most organized resistance in the central Rif. In late May 1926, Abd-el-Krim surrendered to the French. To the fury of the Spanish, they exiled him to the island of Réunion, in the Indian Ocean, giving him a comfortable estate and a generous annual subsidy—altogether a fortunate end, since capture by the Spanish undoubtedly would have meant execution.

Abd-el-Krim's exile did not end the campaign, which continued into 1927, with sporadic resistance up to 1934. But these were relatively minor actions, and Spain, by the end of 1926, could claim "victory."

The Spanish army's failure to subdue Abd-el-Krim's rudely armed and loosely organized tribesmen without French help emphasized the impotent state of Spanish arms, just as Primo de Rivera's dictatorship emphasized the puerile state of Spanish politics.

The military struggle in Morocco left Spain exhausted, sick in mind and spirit, a giant, disjointed body increasingly prone to disastrous factionalism and internal strife.

Rivera's attempts to repair political and economic deficiencies proved fruitless. With dissolution of his dictatorship, in January 1930, a power vacuum developed. King Alfonso's failure to fill it led to his self-imposed exile in 1931 and to the ill-fated Second Republic, with its equally ill-fated liberal constitution.

This was part of the price of "victory" in Morocco. It would result in catastrophic civil war in less than five years.

Spain and France were not the only great powers that had to fight guerrilla actions in the years following World War I. Uprisings and rebellions broke out in most colonial areas—even the United States became embroiled with guerrillas in the New World.

In occupying and policing mandated portions of the old Ottoman Empire, the British began to rely on air power. World War I had brought birth of the Royal Air Force (RAF), whose leader, Hugh "Boom" Trenchard, was a man of imagination, force and political shrewdness. Part of Trenchard's postwar task, a large part, was to justify RAF existence, not an easy job in view of innate hostility forcibly expressed (and often demonstrated) by army and navy, and in view of still unproven virtues of the relatively new weapon.[8]

Trenchard used any occasion to demonstrate air power's versatility. Of twenty-five operational squadrons, he based nineteen overseas, where they performed a wide variety of both peace-keeping and housekeeping tasks. In early 1920, he scored a significant success when RAF planes intimidated the Mad Mullah and helped end his rebellion in Somaliland. The RAF's main chance came a few months later, when

8. Andrew Boyle, *Trenchard* (London: Collins, 1962).

a small uprising in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) caught fire and spread despite suppression efforts by some sixty thousand British troops. (See map, Chapter 20.) Worried by political implications of the widening conflict, Britain's new Secretary of State for Colonies, Winston Churchill, sought Trenchard's help. The Chief of the Air Staff turned to with a will: Once again, the bomber worked magical effect against recalcitrant tribes and helped bring peace, though only after British forces had suffered some two thousand casualties and Whitehall had spent about £100 million.[9]

The total experience led Trenchard to argue for a new RAF mission, that of substituting air for ground power in keeping the king's peace in vast Middle Eastern reaches. Trenchard and his fellows contended that, in suitable operational areas, what they called Air Control would prove more effective than Ground Control. One of air power's most effective voices, Marshal of the RAF Sir John Slessor (who was very active as a young flier in those early days and whose arguments gain great strength from an innate charm and intelligence evident to all fortunate enough to know him), later wrote in his excellent book *The Central Blue:*

. . . The Ground Method is that traditionally employed by the Army for many years, and was indeed the only one in the days before the aeroplane. It involves invasion by a column on the ground, sometimes permanent but more often temporary, of his territory. There was an increasing tendency as time went on for the Air Force to be the spearhead or striking force, followed up by the Army as the occupying force; but the method was unaffected and remained that of invasion, the crushing of resistance by the enemy's fighting men, followed by occupation. The trouble was that the areas of undeveloped tribal territory within the Empire or on the fringes of British-administered territory were in those days so vast that occupation could not be complete. So the Ground Method really boiled down to one of temporary and partial occupation, with the establishment of garrisons at suitable places whence more or less mobile columns could be despatched into the tribal areas when necessity arose.

The job of these columns was to occupy temporarily the country of the offending tribe; if possible to inflict a sharp lesson in the form of casualties to their fighting men; to exact the necessary retribution in the form of fines or rifles surrendered or by destroying property or crops, and then withdraw. It was fatal to leave small detachments of troops unsupported in potentially hostile territory—for instance the overrunning of the little garrison of Rumaitha in the Iraq rebellion of 1919 increased the number of insurgents against us from 85,000 to over 130,000 in one night. That meant that even when we had garrisons right in the heart of tribal territory they had to live in one central strongly fortified cantonment—as at Razmak. When there was some tribal affair which had to be dealt with then, having dealt with it, the column

9. Sir John Slessor, *The Central Blue* (London: Cassell, 1956).

still had to withdraw behind the wire into cantonments. It was always the Air Staff contention that this method, known unkindly by its critics as "Burn and Scuttle" or "Butcher and Bolt" was very expensive and did not in fact achieve the object of maintaining order in these remote and inhospitable lands.[10]

Trenchard and his staff argued that air power by its mobility and fire potential could not only reach remote tribal areas immediately but that it could coerce far more humanely and at much less cost than ground power, though control of more developed areas such as Palestine would require ground operations.

Their general idea was to conduct gunboat diplomacy from the air. Trenchard believed that ". . . the mere presence of an apparently all-seeing, all-powerful mobile force, however small, would encourage the lawless to settle down and learn civilized ways."[11] Where tribes refused, they would be warned and, if failing to come to heel, they would be punished—their villages bombed and herds dispersed—until they changed their minds. By reacting selectively to tribal disturbances, Air Control would reduce the expense and unfavorable publicity attendant upon raising a punitive ground expedition. Slessor saw it as a sort of "inverted blockade" that kept the enemy from his country in order to win his submission without inflicting human casualties and with minimum material damage. In the words of the old RAF manual, it was to interrupt ". . . the normal life of the enemy people to such an extent that a continuance of hostilities becomes intolerable."[12]

These arguments greatly impressed Winston Churchill. Mesopotamia's fragile peace depended in part on Emir Feisal, who became king in late 1921. Wanting to prop up a weak throne at minimum expense, Churchill embraced the concept of Air Control (as, curiously considering his later writings, did Lawrence of Arabia, who was serving briefly as his adviser). Trenchard's plan, vigorously and successfully advocated by Churchill at the Cairo Conference in 1921, called for ". . . eight R.A.F. squadrons, a supply of armored cars, auxiliary services, several armored trains, an air ambulance unit and a few gunboats. . . . The main policing duties would devolve on Arab levies trained and led by British officers."[13] Essential to the plan was a resident commissioner and a group of civil political officers stationed in outlying areas.

Air Control did not immediately leave the ground. The army did its best to sabotage the operation—when Sir Henry Wilson refused to furnish troops, Trenchard organized his own ground forces, including

10. Ibid.
11. Boyle, op. cit.
12. Slessor, op. cit.
13. Boyle, op. cit.

armored-car units. The effort encountered other delays and some operational difficulties, not to mention an early misunderstanding as to punishment.

Shortly after operations had commenced, Trenchard instructed his Middle East commander, Geoffrey Salmond:

> . . . The air force is a preventative against risings more than a means of putting them down. Concentration is the first essential. Continuous demonstration is the second essential. And when punishment is intended, the punishment must be severe, continuous and even prolonged.

Trenchard insisted on numerous humane precautions, including leaflet warnings at least twenty-four hours before a raid. His biographer concluded that often a "demonstration" flight was enough to quell an uprising.[14]

One of Trenchard's and Churchill's principal arguments centered on RAF ability to mete out selective punishment. Trenchard's attitude was clear in an early letter written to a squadron commander in India who complained ". . . about the hazards of operational flying against turbulent tribesmen in the Himalayan foothills":

> . . . You state that it is impossible to see snipers. Nobody ever expected to see them and I should have thought this idea of looking for them ought to have been long since dead in India. . . . I admit all the hardships the pilots undergo . . . but I do feel so much . . . that the load must be borne without speaking about it. . . . Indiscriminate bombing should never be allowed. Surely this was dead five years ago.[15]

What the commander wants and what he gets are often different. Early in the Air Control experiment, some young political officers, wanting to make ". . . a special example . . . of an exceptionally unruly tribe," brought down winged wrath to the extent that the RAF report read:

> . . . The eight machines . . . broke formation and attacked at different points of the encampment simultaneously, causing a stampede among the animals. The tribesmen and their families were put to confusion, many of whom ran into the lake, making good targets for the machine-guns.[16]

Air Commodore A. E. Borton, commanding in Baghdad, noted that this gave ". . . a vivid if rather ferocious glimpse of the type of warfare we have to wage."[17]

It was the last type of warfare envisaged by either Trenchard or

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

Churchill, and the report brought a sizzling rocket from the latter to Trenchard:

> . . . I am extremely shocked. . . . If it were to be published it would be regarded as most dishonoring to the air force and prejudicial to our work and use of them. To fire wilfully on women and children is a disgraceful act, and I am surprised you do not order the officers responsible for it to be tried by court-martial. . . . By doing such things we put ourselves on the lowest level. Combatants are fair game and sometimes non-combatants get injured through their proximity to fighting troops, but this seems to be quite a different matter.[18]

This early aberration aside, subsequent results more than pleased most concerned persons. As Lawrence of Arabia had argued at the Cairo Conference, the new arms' deterrent effect generally sufficed to keep the peace. General Haldane, commanding the army in Iraq, was favorably impressed, as was the high commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, ". . . a humane man of pronounced liberal views," Boyle tells us, "zealous in his hatred of undue coercion." The British Government was also pleased: Where eighty battalions initially kept the peace in Mesopotamia and Palestine, three battalions eventually remained in Mesopotamia, a tremendous financial saving.

Other benefits resulted. We must remember that air power was in its infancy—Charles Lindbergh did not fly the Atlantic until 1927. Flying over trackless deserts and daily contact with frontier defense forces and political officers proved invaluable experience to future commanders. More than this, however, the need to patrol desert areas meant charting air routes, a time-consuming and frequently hazardous prelude that was nonetheless essential to British interests in the air age. The day's primitive machines, courageously flown in the most appalling extremes of weather with minimum navigational aids, foretold many future possibilities. The RAF carried mail, passengers, and supply; the planes helped centralize administration and they delivered civil officers to remote areas when necessary; they evacuated sick and wounded; in 1928, they flew over the Hindu Kush (familiar to Alexander the Great twenty-three centuries earlier) to evacuate the beleaguered British colony at Kabul. (See map 1, Chapter 9.)

A cost-conscious British Government judged Air Control operations so successful that it extended the plan to cover the Northwest Frontier of India, Trans-Jordan, the Aden protectorate, and, in a modified form, Palestine.

The concept of Air Control suffered from two major difficulties: it inherited the onus of enforcing a colonial policy that was becoming in-

18. Ibid.

creasingly less acceptable to world (including British) opinion; and it proved of limited application.

More-liberal minds of the period held that the sole justification for British control of Mesopotamia and ancillary territories—indeed, for British and great-power control of *any* area—was to bring more benefit than harm to the peoples concerned. Here as elsewhere in the British Empire, the overlords unquestionably improved the lot of some of these peoples. Introducing law and order of sorts in place of constant raids and small tribal wars was a major contribution, as was introduction in some areas of schools, hospitals and reasonably efficient administration.

This was fine—as far as it went. It could even have been noble, had Britain been prepared to invest time, effort, and money essential to preparing these peoples for eventual self-government. No such intention existed. Rather, it was colonialism on the cheap. All great powers practiced it, America included, as we shall see. It was exploitive in the worst sense—it was maintaining a primitive status quo in order to ease commercial exploitation of natural commodities, in this case primarily oil.

Within this framework, neither Air Control nor Ground Control could serve other than a holding, or deterrent, function. British rule was by force and coercion rather than consent, and when that force found physical expression, either by punitive columns or air-delivered bullets and bombs, it was rule by terror—more-selective terror than employed by ground columns, as Sir John Slessor argues, but nonetheless terror, as anyone knows who has had his house or town or city bombed. The British were ruling, in short, without the consent of the governed, and so long as this was the case, the instrument of rule did not much matter in the end: coercive rule builds and expands antagonisms into forces of rebellion which eventually explode. Like Ground Control before it, Air Control inhibited but did not stop native political ambitions. It helped produce short-term gains for long-term losses.

The second point is the limited application of Air Control. The psychological effect of air power—remember that the natives had never seen an airplane—played a major role in the new concept. When demonstration failed to keep the peace, we have noted that the RAF stepped up pressure by political or diplomatic warning, and if that failed, by overt punishment ". . . severe, continuous and even prolonged." We are told that in practice this meant bombing a village (after due warning) and dispersing a flock—economic pressure, in other words, which usually did the job.

Two observations follow: such pressure could be applied only in compatible environment, preferably desert, and such pressure proved effective only against fragmented tribal society, either nomadic or primitive agrarian. Air Control could not work in more-developed countries, such as Palestine, a limitation readily admitted by Sir John Slessor.

But what Sir John and other proponents failed to consider is the ra-

tionale behind the concept of Air Control. Deterrence all too often is a euphemism for blackmail by force. But what if a person or tribe or country refuses to be blackmailed? In the case of the Middle East, what would have happened had deterrence, warning, and physical punishment failed to bring around a tribe? Logically, the RAF would have had to continue punishment until the tribe no longer was capable of resistance. But this contradicts the principle of selective, or "humane," application of punishment, forwarded by air-power proponents, for if bombing one village and dispersing one herd do not work, then presumably punishment must embrace two villages and two herds and so on. This is the genesis of escalation, a subject we shall come to much later in this book. The point is that far from being selective in face of genuine resistance, Air Control would have had to resort to destroying villages and herds and starving people into submission. Carried to its logical conclusion, this is genocide.

Chapter 30

The British army and colonial uprisings • Sir Charles Gwynn's Imperial Policing *• The Moplah rebellion • Guerrilla warfare in Santo Domingo • American marine tactics • Guerrilla warfare in Nicaragua • Augusto César Sandino • American marine tactics: ground and air • The American effort analyzed • The Spanish Civil War • Guerrilla aspects • Hemingway and the ideological element • Stalin's attitude • International brigades*

BRITISH ARMY LEADERS never accepted the validity of the Air Control concept, in part because it threatened army pre-eminence, in part because application was so limited. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, empire forces faced a number of rebellions and small wars, several of which were analyzed in a book published in 1934: *Imperial Policing,* by Major General Sir Charles Gwynn.[1]

An army's police duties, Sir Charles argued, fell into three categories. The first was to fight small wars in order to establish or re-establish civil control (a subject brilliantly treated a half century earlier by another British officer, Charles Callwell—see Chapter 15). The second was to maintain or restore order when normal civil control either does not exist or has temporarily broken down. The third was to assist civil control

1. Sir Charles Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1934). See also Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing It On—Short Talks on Tribal Fighting on the North-West Frontier of India* (London: Gale & Polden, 1932).

without assuming governmental responsibility. Such was the advanced state of empire that the second task had now replaced the first in importance:

. . . The principal police task of the Army is no longer to prepare the way for civil control, but to restore it when it collapses or shows signs of collapse. Subversive movements take many forms and are of varying intensity; but even when armed rebellion occurs, it presents a very different military problem from that of a deliberate small-war campaign. There is an absence of a definite objective, and conditions are those of guerrilla warfare, in which elusive rebel bands must be hunted down, and protective measures are needed to deprive them of opportunities. The admixture of rebels with a neutral or loyal element of the population adds to the difficulties of the task. Excessive severity may antagonize this element, add to the number of rebels, and leave a lasting feeling of resentment and bitterness. On the other hand, the power and resolution of the Government forces must be displayed. Anything which can be interpreted as weakness encourages those who are sitting on the fence to keep on good terms with the rebels.

The British army was facing three main classes of disorder. One was the revolutionary movement ". . . organized and designed to upset established government." Another was rioting or other lawbreaking ". . . arising from local or widespread grievances." A third was communal disturbances ". . . of a racial, religious or political character not directed against Government, but which Government must suppress."

The first category particularly interested Sir Charles, who presciently observed:

. . . Revolutionary movements, again, may be divided into violent and, professedly, non-violent movements. The former may be on a scale which amounts to fully organized rebellion, necessitating operations in which the Government forces employ all the ordinary methods of warfare. More commonly, however, they imply guerrilla warfare, carried on by armed bands acting possibly under the instructions of a centralized organization, but with little cohesion. Such bands depend for effectiveness on the capacity of individual leaders; they avoid collisions of a decisive character with Government troops. Their aim is to show defiance of Government, to make its machinery unworkable and to prove its impotence; hoping by a process of attrition to wear down its determination. Their actions take the form of sabotage, of ambushes in which they can inflict loss with a minimum of risk, and attacks on small isolated detachments. By terrorizing the loyal or neutral elements of the population, they seek to prove the powerlessness of the Government to give protection, and thus provide for their own security, depriving the Government of sources of information and securing information themselves.

The suppression of such movements, unless nipped in the bud, is a slow

business, generally necessitating the employment of numbers out of all proportion to the actual fighting value of the rebels, owing to the unavoidable dispersion of troops and the absence of a definite objective. It becomes a battle of wits in which the development of a well-organized intelligence service, great mobility, rapid means of inter-communication and close cooperation between all sections of the Government forces are essential.

Normal military operations did not suffice to meet these challenges. The military police task differed fundamentally from normal, or orthodox, operations in that it had to achieve its object with *minimum* exercise of force. In carrying out the task, officers

. . . must be guided in most cases by certain general principles rather than by definite orders, and, as a rule, they have to decide what is the minimum force they must employ rather than how they can develop the maximum power at their disposal.

Training for such operations is therefore a difficult task: ". . . To a very large extent the Army must depend on traditional doctrines, on discipline, and on its own common-sense."

Just how difficult the task was, the author made clear in a series of chapter analyses beginning with the Amritsar riots of 1919 (see map 1, Chapter 9), which resulted from Mahatma Gandhi's arrest and which were ineptly controlled due to overreaction on the part of security forces, which killed a great number of people. A more intelligent application of force, however, resulted in satisfactory suppression of an ugly riot situation in Egypt in the same year.

The Moplah rebellion, of 1921, in the Madras District of India, was one of the most instructive from the guerrilla-warfare standpoint. This was a religion-biased uprising; almost immediately, a British army force using orthodox tactics ". . . broke the center of the rebellion" and arrested a principal leader, Ali Musaliar.

This prompt action ". . . eliminated the chief military objective" without ending the rebellion. But now the Madras government and its security forces seemed at a loss. Both civil and military officials interpreted an ensuing lull as rebel weakness. Instead of firm, positive action including rapid trial and sentencing of rebel leaders, authorities adopted a vacillating attitude, the Indian Government forbidding courts-martial of rebels (one result of the Amritsar debacle).

Moplah rebels meanwhile were organizing for further action. They were not well armed, and although they enjoyed protective terrain they lacked outside reinforcement (no Communist element was involved). Their object was to wage guerrilla warfare: not to fight the army, but ". . . rather to prove the impotence of Government" by sabotage and selective terror against Hindus. Incidents soon developed. By October,

the situation had deteriorated to the degree that the government was reporting to London,

> . . . active war against the British Government is openly being waged by a number of armed bodies . . . [estimated] from 8000 to 10,000 men whose policy is to avoid open encounter and to lie in ambush and snipe at the troops. The Madras Government also state that the Moplahs have spies everywhere, that their information is very much better concerning the movements of our troops than any information obtainable by our troops, and that they attack and plunder the houses of Hindus and maltreat the inmates as they will and are to a great extent masters of the country. . . .

The general commanding Madras District summarized the situation as it developed in October:

> . . . The rebel change of tactics from open to guerrilla warfare has developed steadily and increasing signs of more efficient and intelligent handling are apparent. More people become implicated as rebellion continues. New recruits are brought in by terrorization and attraction of loot. . . . Active rebellion is not adopted by every Moplah, but behind the bands ambushing, dacoity and looting is [sic] participated in by remainder as opportunity offers. In the intervals they revert to peaceful life. In the military sense the situation is not out of hand, but tendency will be for bulk of population to become part-time, as opposed to whole-time rebels, for active bands to become smaller, more elusive and numerous and for dacoity to increase. . . .

London responded by sending more troops. At this point, security forces had been operating by patrols based on various village centers, but now more extensive operations began, including at least one massive "drive" that failed. The author noted:

> . . . These [new] measures did not, however, by any means bring quick and decisive results; the rebellion was now too well organized and the temper of the rebels at white heat. Some surrenders took place, but on the other hand there were cases in which those that surrendered again took the field. The lot of those who rendered assistance to, or were in sympathy with, the Government became increasingly hard. Still the continuous pressure was bound to have effect in the long run. . . .

By early December, security forces had broken up the larger bands. To run smaller groups to ground now became the task of separate battalions assigned to specific areas. Simultaneously, security forces gradually transferred control to police and civil authorities and phased out altogether at the end of February. The tally was impressive: 2,300 rebels killed, 1,650 wounded, and 5,700 captured. Security forces claimed 39,000 "voluntary surrenders." The number of civil deaths caused by

rebel terrorist acts was unknown but high. Troop casualties numbered 137!

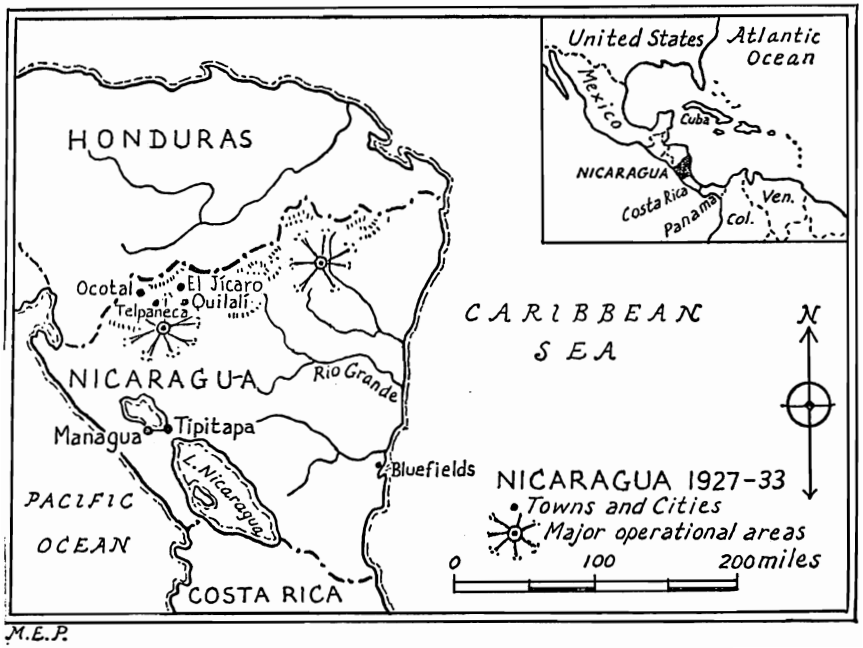
In analyzing the action, Sir Charles noted that the original rebellion had evolved into a small war,

> . . . that is to say, that the troops were called on to act with the maximum force they could develop under the conditions imposed by the terrain and the methods adopted by the enemy.

There was, however, no strategic objective the capture of which would decisively affect the enemy's operations, and the will of the Government could be imposed on the enemy only by a process of attrition and exhaustion, the result of a continuous unrelenting pressure.

Although in the nature of a small war, it may be noted that it opened with a purely police operation in aid of which a small detachment only of troops was called in. Similarly, it was left to the police to sweep up the last fragments of resistance when the troops had sufficiently restored order to permit the civil power to resume control. The military intervention, although it involved war-like operations, was in essence, therefore, police work on a large scale.

Sir Charles believed that the government's major error lay in limiting military powers under martial law, which hindered security forces in preventing neutrals from helping the rebels. He also pointed to a lan-



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guage difficulty which made troops dependent on police intelligence. Operations depended primarily on infantry, although on occasion trucks gave extra mobility and armored cars effectively patrolled roads. Artillery played almost no role and air power none. One tactical observation must be quoted, if only because of its similarity to Byzantine writings and to Bohemond's experience in 1098 (see Chapter 5):

> . . . It has been noted that punitive columns, more especially in the earlier phases of the rebellion, were always liable to be rushed or sniped on the march, and protective measures had to be adapted to the circumstances and nature of the country. The governing principle was that the column with its protective detachments should cover sufficient ground to prevent the whole column being rushed simultaneously, but each of its components required to be a compact body, in immediate readiness to stand a rush till it received assistance from portions not attacked. Distances between protective detachments and the main body were reduced in the interests of mutual support to the extent consistent with covering a sufficient area, and often did not exceed 100 yards. Compactness and instant readiness were points that admitted no relaxation in the protective bodies.

America meanwhile was involved with guerrilla warfare in attempting to pacify certain Caribbean and Central American countries. Almost perpetual revolution and troublesome banditry plagued most of these tiny places, and, in the first two decades of the century, American marines landed dozens of times, power demonstrations that often restored order either without shooting or with minimum force. Marine forces occupied such countries as Haiti and Santo Domingo and later Nicaragua, and, in these areas, local guerrillas challenged the American presence.

Although marines had brought peace of sorts to Santo Domingo by the end of World War I, trouble continued to break out. In 1919, a marine infantry-air expeditionary force landed to try to suppress local guerrillas, particularly in the eastern part of the area. The bulk of action consisted of small patrols which in 1919 fought ". . . 50 major contacts and at least a hundred lesser skirmishes" at a cost of three marines killed and four wounded.[2] Marine aircraft worked closely with these patrols, supplying information, flying in mail and supply, and evacuating sick and wounded. They also co-operated tactically, either strafing or bombing selected guerrilla targets.

Marine pacification involved two main efforts. One was to organize and train a native constabulary, the Policía Nacional. Simultaneously the marine commander wanted to break up the most troublesome guer-

2. Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Annapolis, Md.: U. S. Naval Institute, 1962).

rilla bands. In the eastern district, the marines employed a device we shall encounter again:

> . . . After blocking off bandit-infested areas, troops and *Guardias* rounded up virtually every male for a series of mass line-ups in which carefully hidden informers picked out known bandits. These line-ups were often conducted in the open at night under flood-lights while the informers were stationed in darkened tents. After five months of the "cordon system," nine successful roundups had been carried out, and more than 600 courtroom convictions for banditry resulted. Following this crackdown, the cordons were discontinued because of the resentment aroused by such methods among those who were innocent.[3]

The Americans also declared an amnesty period in which guerrillas could surrender without prejudice. They also formed and trained ". . . five special anti-bandit groups . . . from among Dominicans who had suffered at bandit hands." By spring of 1922, the country was reasonably quiet, and, in 1924, the American Government withdrew the last of its forces.

A few years later, another marine infantry-air task force landed in Nicaragua to prevent a revolution. President Calvin Coolidge sent a personal representative, Henry L. Stimson, to mediate between rival political parties. Stimson found a military deadlock and a country tired of civil war. He recommended the ". . . gradual political education of Nicaraguans in self-government through free elections" supervised by United States Marines. Marines would disarm both armies and maintain internal order while training a Nicaraguan constabulary to take over the policing task. Leaders of both parties accepted this solution, which unfortunately involved two unfounded assumptions, both basic: that all Nicaraguans would embrace the principle of free elections as a satisfactory method of choosing leaders; that the presence of American marines would insure peace.[4]

Within two weeks of the Peace of Tipitapa, renegade bands began raiding towns to plague marine detachments posted about the country. The most serious challenge came from a former officer, Augusto César Sandino, who, instead of turning in his arms, vanished with some 150 followers into the remote mountains of his home province, Nueva Segovia.

Brigadier General Logan Feland, commanding the marines, started after Sandino almost at once. He garrisoned such northern towns as Ocotal, Telpaneca, Quilalí, and El Jícaro, which served as bases for ag-

3. Ibid.

4. Bryce Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); see also A. A. Vandegrift and Robert B. Asprey, *Once a Marine,* op. cit.

gressive patrolling intended first to disrupt rebel operations, next to defeat them entirely.

Sandino was riding quite high at this point. In July 1927, he attacked the Ocotal garrison, of some thirty-seven marines and forty-seven *guardias*. Fortunately, an air patrol spotted the fight and summoned help: that afternoon, five De Havillands peeled off smartly to plaster rebel positions with twenty-five-pound bombs and strafe them with machine-gun fire. Surprised by this unheard-of tactic, Sandino lost fifty-six known killed, with an estimated one hundred wounded. The garrison lost one dead and five wounded. Two months later, Sandino attacked another garrison but was beaten off, again with heavy casualties.[5]

Despite Sandino's ability and willingness to attack fortified positions in strength, American officials refused to accept him as anything more than another bandit leader. The marines constantly underestimated his military strength and extent of civil following. Instead of reinforcing the marine effort, Washington recalled a regiment; simultaneously, the Nicaraguan Government assigned new Guardia Nacional units to more heavily populated areas.[6]

This was a mistake, because Sandino was much more than a bandit. A native Nicaraguan, he had fought with Pancho Villa in Mexico, where he subsequently worked, and caught the raging revolutionary fever. Along with tens of thousands of Nicaraguans, he deeply resented American overlordship reflected in Nicaragua's political system, which primarily served local politicians and such North American commercial interests as United Fruit Company. He returned to Nicaragua determined to fight for independence despite American intervention. He had revolutionary connections in Mexico and Honduras (and later the United States), he had virtually an automatic following of disgruntled Nicaraguan peasants, and he held a good grasp of guerrilla tactics. He built a fortified mountain base, Chipote, not far from Honduras.

In locating and trying to eliminate this headquarters, marine patrols found themselves in considerable difficulty. Sandino's guerrillas had grown up in the country. They knew the jungle and the peasants, whom they used in a variety of ways, not hesitating to gain co-operation by selective terrorism when necessary. More than once, marine patrols walked into well-laid ambushes, which they survived, though not without casualties, only through disciplined fighting ability and timely support in some cases from aircraft.

Early reserves brought a fresh build-up in marine strength, and in January 1928, an infantry-air attack captured Sandino's base but netted only a few prisoners. Marine and guardia units now garrisoned more towns and stepped up patrolling, including night work. Pressure con-

5. Robert B. Asprey, "Small Wars—1925–1962," *Leatherneck*, 1962.
6. Heinl, op. cit.

tinued on Sandino's guerrillas. By mid-1928, he had lost sixteen hundred men, who had turned themselves in under government amnesty (and who received ten dollars for each rifle).[7] But Sandino was patient, determined, wily, and intelligent. Despite shortage of arms, lack of money, generally poor lieutenants, and bad communications, he led marines a merry chase for more than five years. Though generally neutralized and often hard-pressed, he was still at large when the marines left the country.

The marines faced two major difficulties. One was the tactical environment, particularly the eastern area, where Sandino operated in ". . . swamp, jungle, banana plantations, mahogany forests, and occasional gold mines."[8] Getting Sandino meant sending patrols and expeditions, one after the other, through seemingly impenetrable terrain devoid of communications and any roads but an occasional trail where an ambush could await each turn. ". . . In one [cavalry] march which kept us afield 31 days," wrote a veteran captain, "we actually marched 23 days with four night marches besides, and in my last long spell afield, we actually marched 39 out of 45 days from home."[9]

Local commanders lacked sufficient men, horses, mules, rations, and equipment. Intense heat, broken only by torrential downpours, filled jungle country with anopheles mosquitoes and myriad ticks, which soon covered human flesh with festering, very painful sores. After marching for weeks under such conditions and usually falling into at least one ambush, an expedition such as Captain Edson's celebrated four-hundred-mile effort into the interior time and again would reach a reported enemy camp only to find it vacated. Marine operations served a major purpose, however. They kept Sandino disorganized while a viable Guardia Nacional was being trained, and, in so doing, they prevented him from disrupting national elections held in 1928, 1930 and 1932 (a brief spurt of democracy that soon yielded to military dictatorship).

Organizing and training an effective Guardia Nacional proved extremely difficult. Corruption ruled the country and its officials to the extent that when marines first took over the guardia, they could not persuade recruits that they would be paid—former guardia officers had expropriated payrolls as a matter of course.

Patient and determined work finally resulted in an organization of sorts. In 1929, guardia units commanded by marine officers and noncommissioned officers began replacing marine units, and in the following year took over most offensive duties, albeit with marine air support. After a brief time in Honduras, Sandino returned, now backed by left-wing groups in Mexico and the United States. The guardia, though not without faults, countered his new efforts. In early 1934, a year after ma-

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Asprey, op. cit.

rines had left Nicaragua, the guardia lured Sandino to Managua (some said the bait was a woman), where he was shot and killed.

Unfortunately, subsequent political events largely vitiated the American effort, in part because, both politically and militarily, intervention left so much to be desired. In discussing American operations in the Philippines, Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, and Haiti, the outstanding guerrilla expert of the Marine Corps, Colonel Samuel B. Griffith, wrote in 1950:

> . . . Each of these areas was almost totally undeveloped; each was isolated with relative ease; in none were guerrillas properly equipped, organized, or led. And yet the campaigns in each of them assumed considerable proportions, and absorbed a great deal more military energy than would have been necessary had there been a sound operational concept. No such concept was evident in Nicaragua, for example, where a few hundred poorly equipped "Sandinistas" made monkeys out of thousands of Marines and native troops for six years. There were isolated instances of success, which occurred when local commanders applied political, economic, and psychological weapons to the problem, or when they made themselves more mobile than the guerrillas. However, no district in Northern Nicaragua was "pacified" by military means alone.[10]

Guerrillas played a peripheral but still interesting role in the Spanish Civil War. As if in remembrance of things past, the war began with an army revolt in Morocco, at Melilla, where soldiers and members of the Civil Guard arrested all Republicans and Republican sympathizers and summarily executed the leaders. With the Nationalist flag hoisted, the rebellion spread the following day to the mainland. (See maps, Chapters 9 [Map 3] and 28.)

Lines were quite clearly drawn. The bulk of the army, about forty thousand men, sided with rebel officers, but these soldiers for the most part were two-year conscripts of more use for garrison than for combat purposes.[11] About two thirds of the Civil Guard, or some twenty-two thousand men, opted with the rebels, as did about one thousand Assault Guards, fourteen thousand Carlist Requetés, fifty thousand Falangist irregulars, and thousands of volunteers. But the rebel mainstay consisted of the Army of Africa, of which about sixteen thousand soldiers of the Tercio and Moroccan Regulares stood ready to come to the mainland under Franco's command.

About a third of the army, some twenty thousand conscript troops, scattered and ineffectual, remained loyal to the Republic. About two hundred officers remained loyal, including thirteen generals. Major military strength consisted of trade-union militias, including the paramilitary

10. Samuel B. Griffith, "Guerrilla," *Marine Corps Gazette,* August 1950.
11. Thomas, op. cit.

Asaltos, reinforced by bands of untrained and generally unarmed workers and peasants. Most of the navy remained loyal.

The first phase bore a certain resemblance to 1808 uprisings against the French. In trying to defend legitimate government against regular army, Civil Guard, and paramilitary Falangist units, badly armed and organized Republican forces relied primarily on guerrilla warfare—almost as if the Nationalists were a foreign invader like Napoleon's armies in 1808. Anarchist, socialist, and Communist leaders begged the government to arm the workers; other voices called for a genuine people's war. In invoking the memory of 1808, the Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri, famous as La Pasionaria, broadcast a demand for ". . . resistance throughout the country, urging the women of Spain to fight with knives and burning oil, and ending with the slogan, 'It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees! *No pasarán!*'*"[12]

In these confused days, Spain became a mélange of battles. In the cities, regular-army garrisons attempted to overcome Republican forces and in places succeeded. In other cities, the Republicans held, their ragged units reinforced by angry workers or by peasants streaming in from the countryside, their weapons hoes and flails. In smaller cities and villages, hastily organized guerrilla bands of workers and peasants sometimes fell on surprised local garrisons, usually shooting the lot.

This early fighting fitted the 1808 pattern and could have inspired a latter-day Goya to another *Dos de Mayo,* which depicts the revolt against Murat's soldiers, or to that other great canvas in the Prado which shows postrebellion executions, or to any of the famous *Los Desastres* etchings. Extreme cruelty crowned these many battles. The British authority Hugh Thomas later estimated that a month of fighting cost perhaps a hundred thousand Spanish lives and hundreds of thousands wounded.[13]

But the war quickly veered from the 1808 situation. Readers of Ernest Hemingway's classic novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* will remember the old crone Pilar describing an initial uprising in her village.[14] After eliminating the army garrison, local guerrillas rounded up middle-class "fascist" citizenry, forced them to run a gantlet of flails and finally flung them over a cliff to their deaths. Hemingway based this brutally dramatic scene on an uprising in the Andalusian town of Ronda, ". . . where 512 people were murdered in the first month of war."[15]

* "They shall not pass"—the famous rallying cry of the French at Verdun in 1916.

12. Ibid.; see also Dolores Ibarruri, *They Shall Not Pass* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1966).

13. Thomas, op. cit.

14. Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (London: Penguin Books, 1955).

15. Thomas, op. cit.; see also Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

Brutality aside, the significance lies in the temper of the Republicans, for they were simultaneously defending Republican government against Fascist rebels and rebelling against middle-class liberal participation in that Republican government. In a more quiet way, Elliott Paul described the same ideological play in his account of the Nationalist conquest in Ibiza, *Life and Death of a Spanish Town,* but probably the best fictional account of the political turbulence, at least on the Republican side, is offered in André Malraux's *L'Espoir* (*Days of Hope*—an artistic *tour de force*).[16]

Any resemblance to the strategic situation of 1808 soon ceased. The war quickly escalated. Germany and Italy vied in supplying rebels with arms and men; Republicans received weapons from Mexico and France, planes, tanks, and artillery from the Soviet Union and Comintern-recruited voluntary battalions.

In short order, civil war assumed many conventional aspects. Communiqués began to speak of lines, offensives and counteroffensives planned by professional staffs and executed by divisions and brigades supported by aircraft, tanks, and artillery.

Armies of both sides expanded: the Nationalists to perhaps six hundred thousand, the Republicans slightly less. German pilots tested Douhet's theories of strategic bombing, eliminating the town of Guernica to determine psychological and economic effects of mass bombing of civilians. Up in the Basque country, fliers worked out "carpet bombing" techniques. German advisers working with Nationalist armies realized the futility of committing armor in pinchpenny packets. In these and other ways, the Spanish war presaged World War II.

Despite such conventional trappings, two factors make the war of interest for our purposes: one is the overtone of guerrilla warfare, the other the role played by Russian communism.

Republican armies never did attain full growth, the result of a deficiency in arms and training but also the result of earlier guerrilla orientation. At outbreak of war, union militias lacked formal military training. Volunteers often trained on the way to the front; a fortunate few received an eight-day course in Madrid. The Fifth Regiment, which became famous in the Sierra fighting, started with two hundred survivors from earlier Madrid battles; by the end of August 1936, this regiment had fielded sixteen thousand volunteers.

Individual charisma played an important role in Republican forces, but this bore a definite political tint. One character prominent in the early fighting was a former Anarchist terrorist and professional killer, Buenaventura Durruti, who led an Anarchist column from Barcelona

16. Elliott Paul, *Life and Death of a Spanish Town* (London: Peter Davies, 1939); André Malraux, *Days of Hope* (*L'Espoir*) (London: Penguin Books, 1970). Tr. S. Gilbert and A. MacDonald.

to "liberate" Saragossa. Prevented from reaching this city, he went on the defensive in the area of Pina. There his violence ". . . had made him actually loathed by the peasants . . . and his column had been forced to leave by their silent hate."[17] A few months later, he was shot and killed, presumably by one of his own gang.

El Campesino fared much better. This was Valentín González, a large, physically strong peasant whose heavy, black-bearded face became a symbol of resistance throughout Republican ranks. When Nationalists first marched on Madrid, El Campesino rounded up ". . . 29 men, two lorries, rifles and one machine gun." A consummate showman, he named his command Group Chapaev, after a popular guerrilla leader of the Russian revolution. Reinforced by volunteers, he deployed his men in the Somosierra passes against Franco's oncoming columns. In time, Group Chapaev grew to become the 46th Division, but its commander, who remained intensely individualistic and obstructive to the over-all effort, retained two companies of guerrillas for special operations.[18]

The paucity of arms, particularly of artillery, tanks, and aircraft, stamped many Republican units with semiguerrilla characteristics. A Republican veteran of the Basque fighting offered a splendid picture of his army:

> . . . We were a strange army composed of students, mechanics and peasants, led by a handful of regular officers. We wore navy blue coveralls, and we used whatever weapons were handy—French rifles, which were last used during the Franco-German War of 1870, and the most up-to-date rifles from Czechoslovakia. . . . We also had homemade dynamite bombs—three sticks of dynamite in a tomato can with a sixteen-second fuse. We lit the fuse with a cigarette.[19]

Such armies fought for months in the Basque hills:

> . . . We fought best at night. We would dig into the hills, and send out scouting parties to find the weak points of the enemy, and push them back. By night we advanced, but during the day, without supporting artillery, airplanes and tanks, we were often forced back. Yet we could not afford to retreat, because there was so little ground to retreat to. . . .[20]

No army could stand forever against such odds, but the Nationalist task was never easy. After the Republicans fell in the Asturias, ". . .

17. Thomas, op. cit.
18. Robert Payne, *The Civil War in Spain* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962).
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.

18,000 maintained themselves as guerrilla forces in the Leonese mountains, so delaying new offensives by the Nationalist armies."[21]

Franco's armies in the South did not face the extensive guerrilla action familiar to Napoleon's armies, and for several reasons. Much of the south-central Spanish countryside was barren and sparsely populated, devoid of roads. Nationalists advanced in columns, and effective resistance could only have come from contiguous terrain, particularly mountain passes.

The people living in and around cities, towns, and villages did not form a homogeneous body defying an invader. To a great many persons on Nationalist lines of march, Franco and his generals appeared as liberators, and these persons, Monarchists, Carlists, and Fascists, did not hesitate to identify Republicans. Similar groups existed in larger cities, where the famous Fifth Columns performed limited acts of sabotage, provided information to Nationalists, and emerged from hiding when their armies moved in. Advancing Nationalists showed virtually no compassion to consolidating gains. Potential cadres of resistance fell to swift, brutal action—Republicans, including prisoners of war, were marched to the nearest bull ring, lined up, and shot.

Some escaped. Hemingway based his guerrilla band, immortalized in *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* on a realistic situation. His assortment of Republican fugitives chose a cave high in the ". . . forested slopes of the Sierra de Guadarramas 60 miles north-west of besieged Madrid and behind the Fascist lines."[22] Similar small bands existed in the same area, but a number of difficulties prevented these guerrillas from realizing their full potential.

One was lack of training and supply: Robert Jordan, the idealistically motivated American who joined them, backpacking in his own dynamite in order to blow a vital bridge, was a forerunner of allied teams who brought skills and arms to World War II guerrilla bands.

Another problem was Nationalist use of airplanes to find and attack guerrillas forced into the open—readers may remember the gripping scene of El Sordo's band trapped on a hilltop.

A third problem was lack of communication and control: the Republican general, Golz, ordered Jordan to blow the bridge on a certain hour of a certain day; in the event, the main attack aborted, but no method existed to cancel Jordan's orders, which meant a needless waste of lives, including his own.[23]

21. Thomas, op. cit.: Sporadic guerrilla resistance lasted in the Cantabrian Mountains until 1939. Remnants of Republican bands made a serious effort at a comeback in the Pyrenees in 1945–47.

22. Baker, op. cit.

23. Ibid.; see also Thomas, op. cit. Hemingway based the character of General Golz on one General "Walter," who was the Polish Communist general Karol Swierczewski. He based the tactical situation on an actual Republican offensive

Jordan's own failure and Golz's failure and the Republic's failure were foreshadowed when Karkov, the Pravda correspondent, told Jordan in Madrid that although things were better and that reliable units were emerging in the army, the basic problem remained:

. . . "But an army," Karkov went on, "that is made up of good and bad elements cannot win a war. All must be brought to a certain level of political development; all must know why they are fighting, and its importance. All must believe in the fight they are to make and all must accept discipline. We are making a huge conscript army without the time to implant the discipline that a conscript army must have, to behave properly under fire. We call it a people's army but it will not have the assets of a true people's army and it will not have the iron discipline that a conscript army needs. You will see. It is a very dangerous procedure."[24]

It was a very dangerous procedure in another sense. The Communist attempt to capture the Republican cause and subvert it to the Soviet Union's political convenience presaged the future as much as dive-bombing or armor warfare, though in a far more subtle, in a political, way. Nowhere was the dualism of communism better illustrated than in Spain, nowhere the intricacy of Soviet thought better displayed.

Far from appealing to Stalin, the Spanish Civil War came at a most inconvenient time. Since 1934, he had been moving toward an alliance with Britain and France against the threat of Hitler and Mussolini: The Soviet Union had joined the League of Nations, had signed a defense pact with France, and had ordered the Comintern to push a policy of the Popular Front, whereby local Communists allied with left-wing and liberal-middle-class parties against Fascism. A Nationalist or Fascist victory in Spain naturally held little appeal to the Kremlin. But a Socialist-Communist victory, as Thomas has pointed out, would have antagonized the U.S.S.R.'s important potential allies Britain and France, and might even have led to war. Still consolidating his internal rule (the massive purges were to resume in 1937), Stalin was not ready for war.

All this explains why Stalin did not exactly leap into the Spanish fray. Although he sent food, raw materials, and money, he at first refused to send arms. Under extreme pressure, he dispatched professional Comintern agents into Spain besides authorizing an international Comintern movement to provide "humanitarian" aid to Republicans. Only when Italo-German military aid to Nationalists became widely reported, did Stalin change his mind and dare to circumvent Franco-British non-

planned along the Segovia front. Although Colonel Dumont's XIV International Brigade broke through Nationalist lines at San Ildefonso, the attack ran out of steam at La Granja, due in part to jealousy between Walter and Dumont, and possibly also to betrayal, as Hemingway suggested.

24. Hemingway, op. cit.

intervention policy, and then only under further pressure from non-Russian Communists.

Military supplies did not begin trickling into Spain until late September 1936. Soviet aid eventually reached respectable proportions, including several hundred aircraft with pilots and ground crews, tanks, artillery, trucks, and military advisers and instructors, but it was given grudgingly and paid for, in advance, with Spanish gold.

Stalin's opportunistic attitude contrasted with that of non-Russian Communist members of the Comintern. This amazing organization exerted an influence both inside and outside Spain far beyond anything suggested by its limited numbers. Through a maze of "front" organizations, which fooled a great many non-Communist liberals, the Comintern recruited, trained, armed, and equipped perhaps forty thousand foreigners who served at one time or another in one of seven international brigades.

No matter the slapdash character of these units, particularly in early days, their formation bespoke a determined and disciplined effort, which, allied with the small but disciplined Communist Party in Spain, very nearly captured the Republican cause. This was a classic example of exploiting liberal idealism, and it was not lost on Hemingway, whose American protagonist, Robert Jordan,

> . . . fought now in this war because it had started in a country that he loved and he believed in the Republic and that if it were destroyed life would be unbearable for all those people who believed in it.[25]

Jordan was not a Communist, but he willingly had placed himself

> . . . under Communist discipline for the duration of the war. He accepted their discipline for the duration of the war because, in the conduct of the war, they were the only party whose program and whose discipline he could respect.[26]

No matter that the effort failed, that Jordan and many others of his kind died, that the Republicans suffered ultimate defeat. As German and Italian air and ground officers returned to their respective countries rich in battle experience, Communist survivors also returned rich in another kind of battle experience. They were still too weak to launch revolutions in their own countries. They would need another war for that. But they were prepared to wait, and as it turned out, they hadn't to wait for long. Less than six months after the close of the Spanish Civil War, World War II began.

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.

Chapter 31

World War II • German and Japanese victories • Guerrilla warfare begins • Allied support of resistance movements • Special Operations Executive (SOE) • Office of Strategic Services (OSS) • The British-American policy analyzed • The Communist element • Reasons for a quantitative approach • Churchill and Roosevelt

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1939, Hitler loosed the full force of Germany's infantry-armor-air power against Poland, whose army was so obsolete that Polish cavalrymen *armed with lances* charged German tanks. In less than a month, the *Wehrmacht* overran this tragic country in violent demonstration of a new type of warfare, the *Blitzkrieg,* or lightning war, which Western military leaders failed to comprehend.

After a winter of uneasy quiet, Hitler moved again, this time occupying Norway in order to gain naval and air bases. On May 10, 1940, he struck. Denmark quickly capitulated, Holland fell to aerial bombing and paratroopers, German armored columns pushed through the supposedly impassable Ardennes in a giant sweep into France.

In fourteen days, German armored columns encircled allied armies in northwestern France, forcing the British to evacuate nearly a third of a million men from Dunkerque. Meeting only scattered resistance,

the Germans continued south across the Aisne and the Seine. On June 16, Marshal Pétain surrendered the French army.

Hitler followed this victory with an air offensive against England. By breaking the back of the Royal Air Force, he hoped to soften the island's defenses for an across-the-channel invasion. His plan buckled before a determined aerial defense—the famous Battle of Britain—from which the Spitfire fighter emerged superior to the Messerschmitt; in early October 1940, the *Luftwaffe* conceded its first defeat, a crucial one in that heavy German losses of aircraft and pilots could not readily be replaced.

Hitler's ally Mussolini next launched two offensives: one against Greece, the other against the British in North Africa. By early 1941, the Italian dictator was in severe trouble in each theater. To rescue him, Hitler sent an armored force under General-leutnant Erwin Rommel to Africa; in early April 1941, a German army invaded Yugoslavia, pushed through in five days and, with forces based in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, went on to conquer Greece and seize Crete by a daring, if costly, airborne assault.

With this flank protected, Hitler turned east: in late June 1941, three powerful German armies invaded the Soviet Union. By early November, vanguard divisions had pushed seven hundred miles, to within fifteen miles of Moscow. But now cold weather and a Russian counteroffensive forced them on the defensive along the entire front.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers flying from a secretly concentrated task force of aircraft carriers attacked Pearl Harbor, America's major Pacific naval base. Within hours, the bulk of the American battleship fleet had been sunk. In ensuing weeks and months, Japanese ground, air, and sea forces seized allied bases throughout the Pacific and Southeast Asia. French Indochina, Siam, and Malaya at once capitulated; Singapore fell, then Burma, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, Guam, Wake. By spring of 1942, the enemy was threatening Australia from nearby New Guinea and from bases in the neighboring Solomon Islands.

By spring of 1942, then, battle lines east and west were drawn. For the next three years and more, mighty armies, giant naval fleets, and vast air armadas clashed again and again in a global war without precedent.

And a global war that spawned an immense variety of irregular-warfare operations. For, whatever the conquest, whoever the conqueror, the clash of fundamental ideologies combined with brutal occupation policies resulted in resistance that varied from the lone saboteur to guerrilla armies. Wherever possible, hard-pressed allied powers eagerly embraced such movements, their general policy being to help anyone willing to fight the enemy. Technological advances, particularly the airplane, the portable radio transmitter, the parachute, and the sub-

marine, enabled them in time to support almost any group anywhere.

No real precedent existed for the over-all situation—massive global war: massive global resistance. To exploit the potential, England established "an independent British secret service" known as Special Operations Executive (SOE). America followed suit with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Russian support of guerrillas either inside or outside the country became the Red army's responsibility, but with numerous political ramifications. In China, Chiang Kai-shek similarly controlled his guerrillas, though much less effectively; Mao Tse-tung continued to use guerrilla forces as the keystone of political-military operations earlier described.

As might be expected, guerrilla operations world-wide varied considerably in size, composition, motivation, mission, and effectiveness. Such were differences in enemy strength and counteractions, in political environments, in guerrilla leadership, and in allied assistance and supervision, that one resistance action often bore only generic resemblance to another.

This lack of cohesive operation lessens neither the single nor the collective value of the experience and its contribution to guerrilla warfare. Neither does it eliminate some "constant" factors that can be retrieved from various operational theaters, which we shall get to in a moment.

But since we are still living with some results of allied support of various resistance groups, we should examine first not only its genesis and extent but the reasons for it.

The immense task of supporting resistance movements and of trying to form them into a cohesive weapon that would fire at allied will fell to an organization not heretofore seen in warfare. This was a British group, Special Operations Executive (SOE), which functioned under the Ministry of Economic Warfare, itself activated only in 1939 and later directed by a prominent laborite and socialist, Dr. Hugh Dalton. The interested reader will find detailed information on this mysterious and complex organization in two serious works: M. R. D. Foot's *SOE in France,* an official but nonetheless lively and at times controversial work; and E. H. Cookridge's *Inside SOE,* which offers a more dramatic and wider survey of SOE operations. Literally dozens of works complement these two, and many are listed in the respective bibliographies.[1]

SOE traced from a small research section of the British General Staff, the GS-R, which in 1938–39 prepared two anticipatory pamphlets, *The Art of Guerrilla Warfare* and *Partisan Leader's Handbook.* At this time, only a few British officers realized the potential of guerrilla warfare—a

1. M. R. D. Foot, *SOE in France* (London: HMSO, 1966); E. H. Cookridge, *Inside SOE—The Story of Special Operations in Western Europe 1940–45* (London: Arthur Barker, 1966).

surprising fact in view of British military history, particularly the small wars of the nineteenth century, the Boer war, Lawrence's campaigns, the Irish rebellion, and the Palestine fighting of the 1930s. One who did was a forty-five-year-old lieutenant colonel, Colin McVean Gubbins, a regular soldier decorated for bravery in World War I who subsequently served in the Irish rebellion and in India during the riots. In the 1930s, he made personal reconnaissances in Poland and the Baltic States, where he envisaged the possibility of guerrilla actions, and in 1939 he headed the intelligence section of a British mission to Warsaw and narrowly missed capture by the Germans. He next organized, trained, and commanded the first Striking Companies, which fought in Norway and later became the Commandos. Gubbins and a few men with similar backgrounds were called to SOE, where most of them subsequently served with great distinction—as did many civilians with nonmilitary backgrounds.

But, for every Gubbins, a thousand regular officers existed who, wedded to orthodox military tradition, disdained irregular warfare. Cookridge later described early confrontations of regulars with "the others":

> . . . The horrified generals, brigadiers, admirals and air marshals were confronted by men some of whom had never heard a shot fired in anger, and who talked about politics, ideologies, psychology and subversion. Employing saboteurs and guerrilla leaders was alien to the traditions of Sandhurst men. Many of them were still fighting the last war but one, and dreamed of the Charge of the Light Brigade. . . .[2]

And not alone Sandhurst men! At a time when German bombers were battering Britain, Air Marshal Portal objected to an SOE operation designed to ambush and kill German pathfinder bomber pilots. Portal wrote to a responsible official:

> . . . I think that the dropping of men dressed in civilian clothes for the purpose of attempting to kill members of the opposing forces is not an operation with which the Royal Air Force should be associated. I think you will agree that there is a vast difference, in ethics, between the time honored operation of the dropping of a spy from the air and this entirely new scheme for dropping what one can only call assassins.[3]

Such service delicacy in part prompted Winston Churchill to place SOE under the Ministry of Economic Warfare rather than either the War Office or the Foreign Office. In July 1940, the new minister, Hugh Dalton, called for a "democratic international":

> . . . We must organize movements in enemy occupied territory comparable to the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, to the Chinese guerrillas now oper-

2. Cookridge, op. cit.
3. Foot, op. cit.

ating against Japan, to the Spanish Irregulars . . . in Wellington's campaign or—one might as well admit it—to the organizations which the Nazis themselves have developed so remarkably in almost every country in the world. We must use many different methods, including industrial and military sabotage, labor agitation and strikes, continuous propaganda, terrorist acts against traitors and German leaders, boycotts and riots. . . .[4]

In approving the formation of SOE, Winston Churchill exhorted Dalton: ". . . And now set Europe ablaze."

In more prosaic language, SOE was ". . . to create and foster the spirit of resistance in Nazi-occupied countries" and, once a suitable climate of opinion existed, ". . . to establish a nucleus of trained men who would be able to assist 'as a fifth column' in the liberation of the country concerned whenever the British were able to invade it."[5] In time, the first task fell to a sister organization, the Political Warfare Executive (PWE).

From the very beginning, SOE proved politically promiscuous. As Foot wrote,

. . . the body's task was to help break Nazi power, and its politics were simply anti-Nazi; they did not favor or disfavor any other political creed at all. . . . SOE was ready to work with any man or institution, Roman Catholic or masonic, trotskyist or liberal, syndicalist or capitalist, nationalist or chauvinist, radical or conservative, Stalinist or anarchist, gentile or Jew, that would help it beat the Nazis down.[6]

The American equivalent to SOE, the Office of Strategic Services, or OSS, was the brainchild of a World War I hero and civilian attorney, William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan.[7] OSS began life as the Office of Coordinator of Information. Personnel experienced in irregular warfare were virtually non-existent. For nearly forty years, America's armed forces had fought almost no irregular-warfare campaigns. Few persons, if any, remembered lessons learned in the Philippine insurrection at the turn of the century. Pershing's Mexican-border expedition was more a matter of a cavalry force marching hither and yon than one fighting guerrilla warfare. Although marines saw considerable action in Nicaragua and Haiti in the 1920s, this was limited to a handful of officers and men (see Chapter 30). As one result, the organization was slow in getting organized; as another, it recruited numerous officers who later proved unsatisfactory.

4. H. Dalton, *The Fateful Years* (London: Muller, 1957).
5. Foot, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. S. Alsop and T. Braden, *Sub Rosa—The OSS and American Espionage* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1963); see also R. Harris Smith, *OSS—The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (London: University of California Press, 1972).

Transformed into the OSS by a presidential order of June 1942, it became a federal agency responsible for covert operations in enemy-occupied areas. As such, it naturally came together with SOE in London, where it embraced SOE's politically promiscuous policy, not alone in Europe but in the Balkans and Middle and Far East.[8]

In the turbulent years of their existence, SOE and OSS enjoyed numerous successes and suffered numerous failures, and we shall look at some of these shortly. A good many persons, including most professional military officers, have held subsequently that failures overshadowed successes. The greatest error, according to later critics, lay in indiscriminately arming various resistance groups, some of which were politically antagonistic to the West.

While reserving judgment for the moment, we must point out that although SOE and OSS played the executive role in arming and supporting these groups, the ultimate responsibility belonged to Churchill and Roosevelt, as well as to certain of their strategic advisers, civil and military, who placed short-term military goals ahead of long-term political goals.

Winston Churchill set the Anglo-American pace in this respect by demanding British support of anyone willing to kill Germans. As he once said, ". . . If Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favorable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons." By the time OSS emerged as an entity, America had accepted this policy and quite naturally enlarged it to include the Japanese.

In retrospect, in view of complicated and greatly varying local political situations, it seems far too simple a policy, altogether unworthy of the British, who were scarcely naïve in international politics.

Its chief disadvantage centered on the dissidents themselves. Although many of these were patriots willing to die for love of country, most of them wanted fundamental political changes in that country once the war ended. In many countries—not all—the most determined opponents of Fascist conquerors were Communists, who wanted postwar control.

Two decades of attempted suppression had inured local Communist parties to an underground existence ideal for the present situation. Where advantageous terrain existed, such as in Yugoslavia, the raised standard, hastily painted over in nationalist colors, attracted thousands of well-meaning citizens, of whom many, in the end, became converts.

In countries less suitable for guerrilla warfare, Communists operated more covertly. Their infiltration and organizational ability, in almost all cases, paid immense dividends by insinuating party members into responsible resistance roles while superb propaganda techniques won new adherents to the cause: in virtually all cases, they ended the war in a

8. Foot, op. cit.

far stronger position than they began it—as witness Communist attempts to take over France and Italy in immediate postwar years.

Similarly in the Far East, SOE armed dissident groups, in some cases nationalist, in some cases Communist, in Burma and Malaya. OSS furnished arms and equipment to Mao Tse-tung in China and even to Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and in supplying guerrillas in the Philippines, they inadvertently supported the Communist movement there.

Why were Churchill and Roosevelt willing to play games with the devil?

Britain's initial position, established and maintained by Winston Churchill and graced by Cabinet and government, is not difficult to understand. After the fall of France, the island kingdom literally stood alone, resources of empire as yet unharnessed, the Soviet Union allied with Germany, the United States just beginning to awaken. A desperate Churchill stared at a doomed England. Unlike Dr. Faustus, who wanted mere knowledge, Churchill demanded survival.

But after light entered these dark days, after the U.S.S.R. was fighting Germany and after the U.S.A. had come into the war, why did the game continue?

Although mystery still shrouds the issue, the key reason—and one all too often overlooked—centered on the possibility of developing an atomic bomb. Background development of this weapon is complex—the reader can study it in such works as Leslie Groves's *Now It Can Be Told* and Lewis Strauss's *Men and Decisions*.[9] According to Strauss, the term "atomic bomb" first occurred in a letter to him from the brilliant Hungarian immigrant Leo Szilard. Commenting on a nuclear breakthrough by two German physicists, Drs. Hahn and Strassmann, Szilard wrote on January 25, 1939:

> . . . I see, however, in connection with this new discovery potential possibilities in another direction. These might lead to a large-scale production of energy and radioactive elements, unfortunately also perhaps to atomic bombs. . . .[10]

A month or two later, Szilard, working with such colleagues as Drs. Teller, Zinn, Wigner, and Fermi, suggested to Strauss the possibility of a nuclear "chain reaction," a suggestion that by March 1939 changed to a distinct possibility with chances "above fifty percent." Similar investigations meanwhile were occupying other scientists, such as Dr. Blackett in England and Dr. Joliot-Curie in France, not to mention those in Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries.

9. Leslie Groves, *Now It Can Be Told* (London: André Deutsch, 1963); Lewis Strauss, *Men and Decisions* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

10. Strauss, op. cit.

By spring of 1939,

. . . Szilard was gravely worried by the possibility of an early German success in producing a new weapon based on nuclear fission. The liberation of vast energy from a quite small amount of material had suggested to him the feasibility of making a weapon which would utterly dwarf any chemical bomb and with which, should Hitler be the first to achieve it, the conquest of Europe would be quickly accomplished. . . .[11]

This led to the famous "Einstein letter" to President Roosevelt, in autumn of 1939. After reviewing atomic research to date, Einstein stated the probability of achieving ". . . a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium," a new scientific phenomenon which ". . . would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable—though much less certain—that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed. . . ." Einstein left little doubt of German interest:

. . . I understand that Germany has actually stopped the sale of uranium from the Czechoslovakian mines which she has taken over. . . .[12]

The incubus of the Germans developing an atomic weapon grew after the invasion of Norway, in spring of 1940. By midsummer,

. . . the eagerness shown by the Germans to capture a Norwegian plant producing heavy water gave color to the apprehension that *the German military establishment was vigorously engaged in some kind of atomic weapon project.* We knew that several kilograms of heavy water were produced daily at Trondheim. . . .[13]

Just when Roosevelt communicated these fears to Churchill is not clear in published records. In any event, Churchill was well served scientifically. In early 1940, a group of civil and military experts—they would be known as the Maud Committee—convened at Oxford to begin trying to determine if an atomic bomb could be made and if the venture would be worth the trouble![14]

Enough progress in atomic physics had been made on the continent and in England for everyone to know the value of heavy water, deuterium oxide, for experiments in atomic energy. When Germany invaded France, French scientists managed to spirit away their supply of the precious stuff to England. But British intelligence soon learned that German scientists in the Norsk Hydro Elektrisk plant near Vemork, just west of Rjukan, had ordered Norwegian engineers to increase heavy-

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.; my italics.
14. R. W. Clark, *The Birth of a Bomb* (London: Phoenix House, 1961); see also Cookridge, op. cit.

water output to three thousand pounds a year.[15] In late 1941, SOE learned that this figure had risen to ten thousand pounds for the next year. Continuing intelligence estimates heightened allied apprehensions regarding German manufacture of a bomb. According to Admiral Strauss,

> . . . the fears in 1941 and later that the Germans would be first with an atomic bomb were reinforced by Hitler's frequent and cryptic references to devastating "secret weapons. . . ."[16]

The Norwegian effort led to a British Combined Operations plan to blow up the hydroelectric plant. In late November 1942, two gliders attempted to land special teams in the area, a disastrous failure in which most participants were either killed in crash landings or executed by the Germans. A later effort by a very brave Norwegian team partially closed down operations, and later RAF raids continued to damage the plant. In early 1944, a Norwegian agent, Knut Haukelid, who had participated in the earlier raid, learned that the Germans were shipping a half year's production of heavy water to Germany. Haukelid and two companions managed to plant explosives that blew up the ferry and destroyed fifteen thousand liters of heavy water.[17]

The allies did not know that in 1943 Albert Speer, Hitler's armaments chief, already had drastically limited nuclear research. A shortage of heavy water further hindered German scientists, whose researchers in any case were lagging far behind their Western counterparts. Strauss does not state when the veil began to part, but does remark that,

> . . . as the war with Germany drew to a close, it became more and more clear that the apprehensions as to what the Germans were doing in atomic energy had been exaggerated.[18]

By this time, however, England and the United States long since had embarked on quantitative support of dissident peoples.

Juxtaposed to this overriding and eminently justified fear of Germany producing an atomic weapon were the dominant personalities of Roosevelt and Churchill. Each was convinced of his ability to control the world's destiny: a splendid egotism reinforced by a host of erroneous information furnished by outstanding specialists of both countries; by cunning Communist strategy which downplayed Communist preeminence in certain areas; and, in Roosevelt's case, by an anti-colonial attitude distinctly at odds with Churchill's imperial desires. Above all, an

15. Ibid.
16. Strauss, op. cit.
17. Clark, op. cit.; Cookridge, op. cit.; see also Knut Haukelid, *Skis Against the Atom* (London: William Kimber, 1954).
18. Strauss, op. cit.

egotism that completely ignored the possibility of death—either natural or political—of either leader.

In view of these quixotic personalities and the momentous issues at stake, the initial decision to support whoever would kill Germans (or Japanese) is perhaps defensible if only on grounds of survival. It was on just such grounds that Stalin ordered Communist parties everywhere to form united fronts with bourgeois groups against the Fascist enemy—and such is the universal desire for survival that one must wonder if Stalin would have insisted on making political hay of the resistance in Eastern Europe had he been apprised of the possibility of German production of an atomic bomb.

But, once the danger passed, and, in the case of the atomic threat, Strauss marks this in 1944 at the latest, a re-evaluation by Western powers was in order. In view of the momentous forces of war then swirling over the world, it was perhaps expecting too much for concerned governments to have stopped for a moment to cast critical eyes on resistance movements and to ask themselves: where are we going and why? Such were the day's operational confusions, such the political ignorance of the allied powers, that intelligent examination might not have changed allied resistance policies for the better. This we shall never know, because these policies were not re-examined. Like Topsy, the resistance effort continued to grow.

Chapter 32

European resistance analyzed • The complex political element • German occupation policy • German errors • Growth of underground movements • Resistance in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Italy, and Norway

DURING MOST of World War II, resistance forces in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, and Italy concerned themselves with a more subtle type of guerrilla warfare than practiced, for example, in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

In the former countries, a variety of factors hindered attempts to build operational guerrilla armies. Lack of suitable terrain for sanctuary purposes, inadequate internal communications, conflicting national temperaments and political attitudes—each sharply influenced resistance efforts. While attempting to build secret guerrilla "armies" that would emerge at the appropriate time to fight in conjunction with allied land armies, these partisans operated either as individuals or in small groups to carry out tasks of terror, subversion and sabotage. Equally important missions included securing and transmitting intelligence on enemy strength, activity, and movements, and in helping allied soldiers, princi-

pally downed airmen, to evade capture while escaping to neutral countries.

In performing these manifold missions, resistance members in all countries constantly risked imprisonment, torture, deportation, and death. Although many participants died and, in many instances, records were lost or destroyed (or not kept), sufficient sources survived to give us a good insight into operational aspects of this type of warfare and the numerous factors that created and sustained it.

The indigenous populations of occupied countries formed the most important factor. A pleasant fiction persists in Western thinking that the political situation in occupied countries was of a black-and-white composition: a few traitors, but the bulk of the population violently anti-Nazi.

Unfortunately, it was not this simple.

Each of the above-named countries did contain citizens who either overtly or covertly embraced the Fascist cause—the quisling, or outright traitor, element who argued primarily that fascism was necessary to defeat communism or socialism, the collaborator who came to terms with the enemy for other reasons.[1]

These groups often differed radically within themselves. Some quislings and collaborators, motivated by a pathological fear of communism, desired German control; others wanted more local autonomy under some sort of protectorate arrangement. Other motivations played a part. As C. M. Woodhouse later wrote of the Greek resistance:

> . . . The worst that can be said against the Greek collaborators, which is bad enough, is that they acquiesced in the occupation either for personal gain, or because they believed that the Germans had won the war, or because they saw no hope of survival for themselves and millions of others except by collaboration.[2]

For every citizen so inclined, thousands regarded fascism as the antithesis of civilization. But this group, too, differed within: some anti-Fascists—the *attentistes,* or fence-sitters—refused to take a stand; some preferred mild accommodation to the enemy to avoid reprisals; others, under no circumstances, would permit the conqueror an easy occupation. Of the latter group, some fought solely for unselfish motives; a good many, including most Communists, used the effort to strengthen the party's position in postwar years.

The extremists did not represent majority feeling. Hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of people found themselves in the middle, perhaps loathing the conqueror but rationalizing that the conquest was an

1. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1956). Professor Seton-Watson has differentiated among no less than five major types of quislings and collaborators (pp. 106–7).

2. C. M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord* (London: Hutchinson, 1948).

accomplished fact and that one had a duty to support one's dependents. This middle group, people generally bewildered by war's overwhelming forces, comprised a wide range of attitudes: citizens who accommodated the enemy for profit, or from fear, or because, in their minds, no reasonable alternative existed, or for an ulterior motive of serving him with one hand and stabbing him with the other, or for gaining time in order to plan escape to an allied country or to a guerrilla refuge.

These internal groups varied considerably from country to country. Norway, for example, whose citizen Vidkun Quisling inspired a new word in the English language, presented a relatively conservative example, with only a small Communist party to complicate matters. An interesting play of forces still occurred, the wartime equivalent of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People,* a sad and tragic situation well portrayed in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Moon Is Down.*

France furnished a much more desperate example, the inevitable reaction of a country tired, sick, and divided even prior to the German invasion. As Michael Foot asked:

> . . . What was there in fact in France in the way of political resistance? At first, as serious French historians admit, there was very little indeed, but plenty came with time. Time brought many controversies. Was it best to accept the fact of German domination and collaborate, or to follow the aged marshal [Pétain] in an attempt at an independent policy, or to resist? If to resist, with what object—to restore the Third Republic, or one of the monarchies; or to build a new kind of France, and if so with marxist or Christian or agnostic inspiration? And under American or British or Russian or purely French sponsorship? And under which French military leader? Differences about which side to take in these numerous disputes split French society asunder, from top to bottom; not since the Dreyfus affair at the turn of the century had such cleavages opened between teachers and students, priests and congregations, parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives.[3]

The conflict between acceptance and resistance has recently (1971) been examined in a brilliant television production, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié,* which treats the German occupation of a small town, Clermont-Ferrand.

Despite a confused and divided citizenry in occupied countries, the German conqueror everywhere faced a certain amount of *natural* resistance—fanatical patriots of every political party who would prostrate themselves to the enemy only in death, the incredibly brave civilian counterpart to Polish cavalrymen who charged German tanks with lances.

In overcoming such resistance and in consolidating occupation, German conquerors naturally tapped pro-Fascist sections of the population.

3. Foot, op. cit.

These generally included important industrialists and prominent businessmen who either inclined toward or embraced a Fascist form of government, but it also included a less desirable element—quasi-Nazi groups containing the scum of society just as did the original storm-trooper units in Germany. In utilizing the bullying tactics of this element, the Germans at once offended a considerable portion of citizenry otherwise prepared to remain acquiescent.

The Germans also offended by their almost unbelievable display of the arrogance of power. The true Nazi, and in 1940 a good many more of these existed than in 1945 and subsequently, doubted not that Germany shortly would rule the world. Military and civil governors quickly began turning their newest acquisitions into German satrapies.

Regarding all foreigners as inferior, they practiced patronizing attitudes that endeared them to no one, nor did they hesitate to invoke severe occupation policies: inconvenient curfews and travel restrictions; confiscation of houses and buildings; strict rationing; hurtful taxes; impossible production norms; plundering of private and public property; arrest and deportation or outright elimination of Aryans and non-Aryans, with emphasis on Jews and Communists.

While these actions did not necessarily create resistance movements, they did aid incipient movements to survive by enlisting sympathies of otherwise apathetic citizens.

As resistance survived and developed, the conquerors replied with most-brutal reprisals: mass arrests, imprisonment, torture, deportation to forced-labor and concentration camps, and summary executions, including those of hostages and innocent persons. The striking scene of German reprisals against guerrillas in Warsaw offered in Anatole Litvak's contemporary film *The Night of the Generals* became relatively commonplace in other occupied countries.

The Germans complemented this effort by introducing wholesale conscription for service either in armed forces or for labor in factories at home and abroad. Besides further alienating the general population, this drove thousands of young men to mountain and forest sanctuaries, where some of them in time formed effective guerrilla bands such as the French *maquis*.

In total, then, German policy not only helped resistance movements to survive but enabled them to grow at a time when England and the Soviet Union were able to offer little or nothing in the way of material help.

Perhaps the outstanding lesson of this period of European resistance is the innate booby trap contained in reprisal philosophy. Reduced to its simplest terms, reprisal illustrates the fallacy of answering lawless behavior with lawless behavior—and this seems to be a universal *bête noir* of the military mind.

One story of Czechoslovakian resistance, possibly apocryphal but of-

fered as truth by a former British intelligence officer who recently related it to the writer, illustrates this point. Contrary to general belief, the Germans were not badly received when they took over most of Czechoslovakia. Perhaps for this reason, occupation authorities did not rule as harshly as elsewhere, and thus did not face as much of a resistance problem. Although members of the intelligentsia and a large number of the middle class suffered under occupation, workers and peasants, in general, fared reasonably well—or well enough so that they did not indulge in spontaneous resistance.

Lack of resistance is said to have greatly annoyed the exiled president, Eduard Beneš. Beneš allegedly was responsible for a plan to assassinate the German governor, Reinhard Heydrich, the theory being that this act would cause widespread reprisals, which would turn the citizenry against the occupying enemy. With Winston Churchill's alleged cognizance and co-operation, Beneš arranged for SOE to drop a team of specially trained Czech volunteers into the occupied country. Whatever the details, Heydrich *was* assassinated, in the spring of 1942, by an SOE-supported operation, and this did cause widespread reprisals, such as the destruction of Lidice, a mining village, all of whose inhabitants were either executed or deported. The German storm eventually passed but it embittered a large part of the population, which in part supported a resistance movement lasting until the war's end, though not to the intensity desired by Beneš![4] Czech resistance remained segmented:

> . . . Those who resisted most, and suffered most, were the intellectuals and the civil servants and army officers of the old republic. . . . The 38,000 executions of Czechs during the six years of Nazi rule came mostly from the middle class.[5]

Czechoslovakian resistance also suffered from internal political differences, lack of suitable terrain, poor communications with allied countries, and energetic German security measures.

Although guerrilla bands appeared in Moravia in late 1944, they seem to have accomplished but little. The main resistance centered in Slovakia, where, in mountain reaches of the center and north, a secret Slovak army as well as a guerrilla movement slowly formed. (See maps, Chapters 7 [Map 1] and 34.)

4. Private information; see also Seton-Watson, op. cit., who noted that German repression became more severe in the autumn of 1941. After sabotage of a munitions plant and power station, Himmler appointed Heydrich as Protector, or governor: ". . . For eight months Heydrich conducted a regime of terror, with firing squads, concentration camps and deportations to forced labor"; see also Charles Wighton, *Heydrich—Hitler's Most Evil Henchman* (London: Odhams Press, 1962); Miroslav Iranov, *The Assassination of Heydrich* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974). Tr. Patrick O'Brian.

5. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

A Russian partisan, Sidor Kovpak, had sent in Slovakian partisans in 1943 to work up partisan warfare in Slovakia. In June 1944, mixed partisan detachments of Czechs and Russians began parachuting in:

> . . . by the end of August, thirty such detachments, averaging a score of men each, had arrived. They served as a stiffening and organizing element for the local partisan forces which the underground Communists in Slovakia were organizing.[6]

By August, a partisan force totaling perhaps eight thousand was in full operation. With Soviet armies pushing over the Carpathians, the German high command sent troops into the previously unoccupied area. Two divisions of the secret army almost at once defected to the Germans. The remainder, including guerrillas, attempted to hold an area known as Free Slovakia. Unfortunately, Western allies could not effectively supply this force. Although the Russians sent in another three thousand partisans and some ammunition,[7] they refused a large-scale supply effort, nor did the Red army advance as planned—a situation which, as we shall see, was similar in some ways to the Warsaw rising of the same period. German attacks subsequently overran Free Slovakia and forced the guerrillas to the mountains, where most of them perished.[8]

The political factor even more strongly influenced the Polish resistance movement. A substantial portion of the population, particularly peasants and urban socialists, while remaining opposed to communism, nonetheless wanted a new postwar political order. This forced reactionary leaders, mainly army officers at home and abroad, into an uneasy alliance that, coupled with Communist diversions, frequently dissipated the total resistance effort.

As in other occupied countries, Germany did her best to generate maximum resistance. In that part of western Poland annexed to the German Reich,

> . . . all available industrial and agricultural resources were to be fully exploited and expanded for the benefit of the Reich. At the same time the population was to be germanised. Jews and the most intractable Poles, especially members of the intelligentsia, were deported to the General Government [the rest of Poland]. Large numbers of able-bodied male Poles were deported to other parts of the Reich to work in factories or fields. . . . The Polish language was not permitted in administration or schools within the annexed territories. . . .[9]

6. J. A. Armstrong (ed.), *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).
7. Ibid.
8. Seton-Watson, op. cit.; see also Blair, op. cit.
9. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

What was left of Poland, the area called General Government, was to be stripped. Governor-General Hans Frank at the Nuremberg trials voiced German policy: ". . . Poland shall be treated as a colony; the Poles shall be the slaves of the Greater German World Empire."[10]

Jews could not be tolerated. By spring of 1943, over three hundred thousand had been deported from Warsaw alone; in April, the German army attacked the remaining one hundred thousand unarmed Jews living in the Warsaw ghetto and eliminated them. The Germans established special concentration camps where Jews from Poland, central Europe, and western Russia were murdered—one estimate places the figure at four million.[11]

The ruthless German policy almost immediately generated widespread Polish resistance. Sikorski's government in exile in London remained in reasonably close contact with indigenous resistance forces, which it directed ". . . to build up a secret government, administration, army, press and even law courts and schools."[12] Resistance in general became the responsibility of the Home Army and of special groups, including guerrilla detachments, formed by various political parties.

Although the Home Army and other units performed some effective guerrilla actions, the long distance from England hindered supply by air. Nor was terrain particularly suited to guerrilla operations: the forests, where some guerrilla groups existed, were generally remote from major German installations and lines of communication. Poor internal communications also tended to prevent co-ordinated actions. But these deficiencies could in part have been overcome had Soviet Russia played a true allied role.

Unfortunately, she did nothing of the sort. Her attitude became clear as early as 1940, when she siphoned off a portion of General Anders' army-in-exile, placed it under command of a Polish Communist, Lieutenant Colonel Berling, and affixed it to a puppet exile group called the Union of Polish Patriots. Russia also made common cause with the indigenous Communist movement, which supported a People's Army and which, joined with the Union of Polish Patriots, formed the Lublin Committee, in July 1944. Meanwhile Russia had been dropping Polish and Russian saboteurs inside Poland, an effort that frequently brought German reprisals. In turn, local peasants, on occasion, fought these saboteurs—to German advantage.

Mainly for these reasons, Polish resistance consisted of sporadic, small-scale actions while local patriots built an underground army supplied with weapons either flown in from England or manufactured in un-

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.; this figure was taken from Wilhelm Höttl's later testimony. Although Höttl is notoriously unreliable, no doubt exists as to the huge number of victims; see also H. Krausnick, *Anatomy of the SS State* (London: Collins, 1968).

12. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

derground factories or captured or stolen from the Germans. General Anders later estimated the size of this force at 380,000, of whom 40,000 were in Warsaw.[13]

When Russian armies approached the Vistula, in early August 1944, the Home Army rose in Warsaw, unfortunately a premature action, the result either of poor communications or a Communist trap designed to eliminate organized resistance to a postwar Communist take-over.[14] Whatever the reason, the Home Army, supported by most Warsaw civilians, fought off joint attacks of five German divisions for sixty-three days before surrendering. Although Polish resistance continued in the western provinces, the Warsaw disaster took the heart from it.

In addition to internal political differences, terrain also played an important role in shaping European resistance, as we have seen already in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Poland. Lack of natural sanctuary greatly inhibited initial resistance groups, which were little more than cells, lacking head, tail or body. Holland, Denmark, Belgium, and France offered few suitable areas for guerrilla operations, the exceptions being mountainous regions in Belgium and France. But these, and other sanctuaries in Poland and Czechoslovakia, did not lend themselves to raids essential to procure weapons and supplies.

The mountains of northern Italy proved more hospitable, and here large guerrilla groups eventually did form. But here also an ugly political factor existed. In 1944, when allies began supporting the Italian resistance in the North, it rested in a Committee of National Liberation of Northern Italy, with operations run by a Corps of Volunteers of Liberty, both organizations containing strong Communist elements. Such was the day's feeling, such the overwhelming priority awarded to purely military considerations, that the allies never hesitated in supplying quantitative aid even though one of the two resistance chiefs of staff was Luigi Longo, the Communist who had served with distinction in Spain.[15]

This resistance movement grew to perhaps ninety thousand members, who could not have survived without allied support delivered through SOE and OSS missions, which operated in separate areas. Whether the return on this considerable investment was adequate is debatable. Although the resistance hindered Kesselring's operations and final with-

13. W. Anders, *An Army in Exile* (London: Macmillan, 1949).

14. Ibid.; according to Anders, he and his military colleagues in London advised against the rising, but the civil government, generally at odds with the military (and themselves), disagreed and authorized it; see also Foot, op. cit.: For a long period, SOE was the "sole liaison" between the Polish ministries of interior and national defense, "an impossible but typical Polish situation"; see also Seton-Watson, op. cit., who has suggested a Russian dilemma that could explain the Soviet failure to advance, and even to refuse the use of Soviet airfields to allied supply planes.

15. Blair, op. cit.

drawal, Communist guerrilla groups used a large portion of arms and money in consolidating their own positions. As one result, the Italian Communist Party became the most powerful in postwar Europe and still represents a major force in Italian politics.

Norwegian sanctuaries offered a different problem, in that mountain retreats actually proved hostile to guerrillas. As C. N. M. Blair has pointed out, food to feed guerrillas had to come either from thinly populated valleys easily controlled by small German garrisons or from air drops made difficult by distance and adverse weather conditions.[16] Until the end of the war, guerrilla operations in Norway consisted of small groups sometimes buttressed by teams parachuted in for special operations. Meanwhile, SOE was arming a secret army, the Milorg, which, by early 1944, was administered in eleven districts ". . . with an effective strength of 33,000 well-disciplined and armed men."[17] At war's end, this organization threw off its wraps, accepted German surrender, and maintained order until the government-in-exile returned.

Without arms, equipment, or food, and without organization, communications, or training, early resistance groups created little more than nuisance value—but a value greatly enhanced by German overreaction, as explained above. But it was up to SOE, and later OSS, to exploit the potential of these groups, an effort that encountered numerous difficulties, frustrations, and failures, but one that also paid handsome dividends.

16. Ibid.

17. Cookridge, op. cit.; an interesting "non-violent" resistance also developed and played an important role in over-all resistance—see Magne Skodvin, "Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance During the German Occupation." Adam Roberts (ed.), *The Strategy of Civilian Defense* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967).

Chapter 33

French resistance in World War II • The political caldron • De Gaulle and the BCRA • Conflict with SOE • SOE's early difficulties • The German occupation policy • Growth of resistance • German errors • Rise of the maquis *• Guerrilla warfare increases • SOE/OSS special units • Guerrilla support of allied landings • The cost*

FRANCE was SOE's most important target in Europe, and SOE almost at once found difficulty in trying to work effectively in that country.

The reader will recall that, after the fall of France in 1940, a considerable body of French soldiers managed to escape either to England or to Algeria. In London, this group formed the nucleus of the Free French under a dynamic officer, Charles de Gaulle, who was not then known outside the French Army. In Algeria, a similar group formed somewhat later under General Giraud, De Gaulle's rival. In France itself, Nazis or no Nazis, the political caldron never stopped bubbling, and this was even more the case when Germany split the country into Occupied and Unoccupied France, with Marshal Pétain heading the *État français,* or what the allies called Vichy France.

Just how responsible SOE officials overlooked this political turbulence is difficult to imagine, particularly in view of unsettled French politics of the 1930s. But overlooked it was. As Professor Foot wrote,

. . . at first SOE's staff was ingenuous enough to imagine that all anti-German Frenchmen would work happily together; this was at once discovered to be wrong. Strong anti-Nazi elements in Vichy France refused to have any dealings with General de Gaulle, who in turn rejected anything and anybody that savored of co-operation with Pétain's regime.[1]

General de Gaulle had his own ideas for developing French resistance, a subject on which he was particularly touchy. As he later wrote,

. . . The most urgent thing was to install an embryo organization within the national territory. The British, for their part, would have liked to see us simply send over agents with instructions to gather, in isolation, information about the enemy with reference to defined objectives. Such was the method used for espionage. But we meant to do better. Since the action in France would be carried on in the midst of a population which would, we thought, be teeming with well-wishers, we meant to set up networks. By binding together hand-picked elements and communicating with us through centralized means these would give the best return.[2]

De Gaulle assigned the function to an amateur, the brilliant Major André Dewavrin, who, under the alias of Colonel Passy, headed the *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action,* or BCRA.

BCRA conflicted with SOE almost immediately. SOE had established Section F to build resistance groups inside France. It now established another section, Section RF, to work with BCRA.[3] But the British soon discovered highly restrictive aspects of French policy:

. . . to the Gaullists, the question of who was to be in power in France after the Germans had been driven out was always *the* question; and they necessarily mistrusted bodies of armed men at large in France of whose allegiance they were uncertain.[4]

The British Government and SOE did not view the situation through the same politically colored glasses. Section DF, for example, which was trying to establish escape routes in France for downed airmen, did not give a hoot about the politics of those Frenchmen willing to risk their lives for this vital effort. And, while SOE attempted to appease De Gaulle with Section RF, it nonetheless retained Section F, whose agents

1. Foot, op. cit.
2. Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1955), Vol. 1 of 6 vols. Vol. 1 (Text and Documents) tr. J. Griffin; Vols. 2 and 3 (Text and Documents) tr. R. Howar.
3. Foot, op. cit.; see also Cookridge, op. cit.; Bickham Sweet-Escott, *Baker Street Irregular* (London: Methuen, 1965); Eric Piquet-Wicks, *Four in the Shadows* (London: Jarrolds, 1957).
4. Foot, op. cit.

worked secretly with other politically aligned resistance groups. The bulk of these agents were non-French and, according to Foot,

> . . . knew little of French politics and cared less; and when they had a political aim at all, beyond helping in the overthrow of Hitler and Pétain, it was simply that of the British War Cabinet: to give the French every chance of a quite unfettered choice of their own system of government once the war was won.[5]

Free French discovery of Section F's separate existence created a furor. In De Gaulle's words,

> . . . A regular competition therefore started immediately, with us appealing to the moral and legal obligation of Frenchmen not to join a foreign service, and the British using the means at their disposal to try and gain for themselves agents, and then networks, of their own.[6]

Hard feeling continued—but so did Section F. At this time, SOE held the most important cards: It got first crack at arriving French refugees, who, if suitable for resistance work, were often recruited without BCRA knowledge. It also owned the few arms and delivery systems available, all training centers, and, not least, the money. Later, when the United States entered the picture, Roosevelt's antipathy to De Gaulle further strengthened SOE's hand.

In time, Section F ". . . built up almost a hundred independent circuits—networks of subversive agents on French soil; it armed several scores of thousands of resisters, who fought well."[7] Communists numbered among those armed, but, seeing which way political winds blew, quickly came to terms and remained in uneasy alliance with the Free French. Similarly, BCRA and SOE eventually worked quite well together. The one needed the other, they both needed Communists, and Communists needed them.

SOE faced other difficult problems. A year after the organization's inauguration, one of its members, veteran diplomat Bruce Lockhart, commented in a letter to Anthony Eden on "inter-departmental strife and jealousies." Professor J. R. M. Butler, Britain's official military historian, later wrote: ". . . In its early months SOE suffered from the suspicions of an upstart felt by older organizations, and was embittered by personal animosities."[8]

The disruptive tendency was probably inevitable, considering the nature of the organization, the prima-donna temperament of many of its

5. Ibid.

6. De Gaulle, op. cit. (Vol. 1); Vol. 1 (Documents) contains an acrimonious exchange of letters between De Gaulle and Anthony Eden on the subject.

7. Foot, op. cit.

8. J. R. M. Butler, *History of the Second World War, Grand Strategy* (London: HMSO, 1957), Vol. 2.

members and the complexity and secrecy of its functions. A sometimes ludicrous hush-hush atmosphere developed: that expressed in American intelligence circles by the satirical security classification TOP SECRET BBO—burn before opening. Duplication also existed, mainly the result of the private battle of Giraud and De Gaulle in Algiers for control of the Free French. This caused SOE to establish Section AMF to work with the Free French in Algeria, and this meant more forces at work in the French interior.

SOE personnel usually encountered a frosty reception from the Foreign Office, whose junior diplomats ". . . as a rule regarded the organization with disdain. . . ."[9] The Foreign Office only grudgingly consented to one of SOE's most spectacular early successes, the capture of an enemy liner off the west coast of Africa in the spring of 1941. In the case of SOE operations inside Vichy France, diplomatic disdain frequently turned to alarm.[10]

Nor was the covert organization always popular with the armed forces, which ran their own intelligence-collection operations and even their own escape routes, a conflict well brought out in Airey Neave's recent book *Saturday at MI-9*.[11] The armed forces also organized special operational forces such as Commandos, which sometimes operated independently, sometimes in conjunction with SOE. Operational conflicts on occasion resulted:

> . . . On one notorious occasion an SOE-controlled group reconnoitring the dockside at Bordeaux for an attack that night saw its targets sink under the impact of limpet mines—provided, ironically enough, by SOE—planted by canoe-borne marines [Commandos]. . . .[12]

A final complication occurred in the form of America's equivalent to SOE, the Office of Strategic Services, or OSS. The new organization consisted of three sections: research and analysis, intelligence collection, and special operations. As was the case with SOE, OSS grew too rapidly and recruited too many persons, some of whose qualifications were more suited to drawing-room soirées. Its fundamental and continuing enmities with other American organizations—the armed forces, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of State—often resulted in wasteful duplication of facilities and operations, the classic example being in the China theater, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter.

OSS at first did not collide with SOE, at least not in western Europe. In autumn of 1942, an agreement between American and British chiefs of staff fused special operations of each organization in northwestern

9. Foot, op. cit.
10. Ibid.
11. Airey Neave, *Saturday at MI-9* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969).
12. Foot, op. cit.; see also R. H. Smith, op. cit.

Europe into a section called SOE/SO, an arrangement reflected in Algiers by a combined Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ). In time, OSS won its operational spurs to indulge in operations sharply at variance with SOE, though not so much in France as in Italy and the Far East. A ranking SOE official later wrote:

> . . . By the end of the war their [OSS] bitterest detractors would be forced to admit that they had become quite as good as the British at getting secret intelligence and at carrying out special operations, and I personally thought they were doing better.[13]

SOE would have suffered major problems even under ideal circumstances if only because of the state of the art at the time: political naïveté, operational inexperience, communications difficulties, limited delivery means, top-heavy organization. But the quantitative approach it insisted on resulted in a duplication of covert operations, which sometimes severely complicated basic SOE missions, generally resulting in reduced efficiency and sometimes in operational catastrophes both in France and elsewhere.

Some catastrophe was perhaps unavoidable in the political confusion of the day. One example is the premature uprising of the Warsaw Poles, another the Slovak rising of 1944—previously discussed.

But other failures resulted from operational inefficiency including downright carelessness. A major SOE operation in the Netherlands furnished a striking example. For two years, a German *Abwehr,* or army intelligence, agent used a captured code to lure allied agents to destruction by means of false radio messages, a sorrowful but dramatic tale told by the officer responsible, Colonel H. J. Giskes, in *London Calling North Pole.*[14] Another Abwehr agent, a German sergeant named Hugo Bleicher, trapped numerous allied agents in France by posing as Monsieur Jean or Colonel Henri, again a sad but immensely dramatic tale told in Bleicher's book *Colonel Henri's Story.*[15]

Considering the extent of the German effort, the thousands of agents and secret police and scores of military units involved, such successes were remarkably few and almost always hinged on concentrating on agent communications. One of the most valuable lessons offered by French resistance is the relative ease with which resistance members operated in occupied areas, where by no means all of the civil population was friendly to the allied cause. A large number of postwar memoirs underlined this lesson, my own favorites being George Millar's *Horned*

13. Sweet-Escott, op. cit.; R. H. Smith, op. cit.
14. H. J. Giskes, *London Calling North Pole* (London: Arthur Barker, 1966).
15. Hugo Bleicher, *Colonel Henri's Story* (London: William Kimber, 1954). Ed. Ian Colvin.

Pigeon and *Maquis,* Peter Churchill's *Of Their Own Choice,* and Bruce Marshall's *The White Rabbit.*[16]

Although concerned allied organizations and incredibly brave agents can take some credit, much of it must go to the enemy, whose inept occupation procedures for the most part not only failed to exploit the divisive environment but caused many Frenchmen to take a stand, if only of inert sympathy, in favor of the resistance.

The Germans at first behaved themselves. As Blake Ehrlich wrote in *The French Resistance:*

> . . . After the armistice of June 25, 1940, the Germans made every effort to show themselves to be "correct." . . . The serenity, the charity, the unity of the Germans, even the radiant health, elegant uniforms and superb machines of the soldiery, left the French with little resource. . . .[17]

Eric Piquet-Wicks, who served in Section RF and was close to Passy, later wrote of "a certain lethargy" in the unoccupied zone in the early years. General de Gaulle noted that, in 1940, although some indications of resistance feeling appeared,

> . . . no sign led one to suppose that French people in appreciable numbers were resolved on action. The enemy, wherever he was, ran no risk in our country. As for Vichy, few were those who contested its authority. The Marshal [Pétain] himself remained very popular. . . . At bottom, the great majority wanted to believe that Pétain was playing a deep game and that, when the day came, he would take up arms again. The general opinion was that he and I were secretly in agreement. In the last resort, propaganda had, as always, only slight value in itself. Everything depended on events. . . .[18]

A small natural resistance, those who would never quit, did exist. Ehrlich cited one Berthe Marquaille, who hid soldiers left behind at Dunkerque and later helped them to escape; denounced by a neighbor in her village of Lézennes, she was executed by the Germans. A small group in Nancy helped evacuate nearly seven thousand escaped prisoners of war in a year and a half; the group later became an important resistance *réseau,* or network.

As early as August 1940, the Germans responded to acts of sabotage by ordering a curfew and seizure of hostages. This solved very little, and continuing repressive measures served to expand isolated and unco-ordinated resistance nuclei. Anti-German posters appeared, un-

16. George Millar, *Horned Pigeon* (London: William Heinemann, 1946); George Millar, *Maquis* (London: William Heinemann, 1945); Peter Churchill, *Of Their Own Choice* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952); Bruce Marshall, *The White Rabbit* (London: Evans Brothers, 1964).

17. Blake Ehrlich, *The French Resistance* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1966).

18. De Gaulle, op. cit. (Vol. 1).

derground newspapers multiplied, sabotage continued.[19] The German invasion of Russia brought French Communists to life. Peculiarly prepared for resistance work, as De Gaulle later wrote, ". . . by their organization in cells, the anonymity of their hierarchy and the devotion of their cadres," they believed in striking whenever and wherever possible, violence that brought savage reprisals and enlarged the resistance.

In August 1941, Pétain admitted the growing problem in a radio address:

> . . . From several regions of France I can feel an evil wind blowing. Unrest is taking hold of people's minds. Doubt is seizing their souls. The authority of the Government is being called in question. Orders are being carried out badly. A real uneasiness is striking at the French people.[20]

In September 1941, resistance fighters killed the colonel commanding Nantes garrison, an officer in Bordeaux, and two German soldiers in Paris. The Germans shot forty-eight French citizens in Nantes and fifty in Bordeaux in retaliation. A month later, De Gaulle broadcast from London:

> . . . It is absolutely natural and absolutely right that Germans should be killed by Frenchmen. If the Germans did not wish to receive death at our hands, they had only to stay at home. . . . But there are tactics in war. War must be conducted by those entrusted with the task. . . . For the moment, my orders to those in occupied territory are not to kill Germans there openly. This for one reason only: that it is, at present, too easy for the enemy to retaliate by massacring our fighters, now, for the time being, disarmed. On the other hand, as soon as we are in a position to move to the attack, the orders for which you are waiting will be given.[21]

Resistance elements controlled by Gaullist officers generally conformed to these orders. Other units, including most Communist maquis, did not. Continued reprisals and German behavior in general helped resistance to grow, as did inept enemy propaganda and German refusal to release over a million French prisoners of war being used as a labor force in Germany. The creation of and reliance on special French police forces such as Joseph Darnand's Service d'Ordre de la Légion—which in 1943 would become the brutal and hated *Milice*—also did much to antagonize an increasingly restless population.[22]

19. The importance of the clandestine press during the German occupation has generally been overlooked and deserves more study. See, for example, George Tanham, *Contribution à l'Histoire de la Résistance Belge* (Brussels: University of Brussels Press, 1971), Chapter 5.

20. De Gaulle, op. cit.

21. Ibid.

22. Ehrlich, op. cit.; Foot, op. cit.: Darnand's original organization was a fascist group supposedly composed of loyal gentlemen but in reality, in George Millar's words, claiming ". . . the scum of the jails, brutalized of the most brutal, cream

In mid-1942, the Germans erred seriously by introducing a forced-labor scheme, the dreaded STO, or *Service du Travail Obligatoire,* under which men of military age were taken to Germany. Although the Germans shipped twenty thousand men a week from Paris, thousands more fled to the hills and mountains, there to form the famed maquis.[23] A recruiting leaflet of the time suggests their over-all frame of mind:

. . . Men who come to the maquis to fight live badly, in precarious fashion, with food hard to find; they will be absolutely cut off from their families for the duration; the enemy does not apply the rules of war to them; they can not be assured any pay; every effort will be made to help their families, but it is impossible to give any guarantee in this matter; all correspondence is forbidden.

Bring two shirts, two underpants, two pair wool socks, a light sweater, a scarf, a heavy sweater, a wool blanket, an extra pair of shoes, shoe laces, needles, thread, buttons, safety pins, soap, canteen, knife and fork, flashlight, compass, a weapon if possible, and also if possible a sleeping bag. Wear a warm suit, a beret, a raincoat, a good pair of hobnailed shoes.

You will need a complete set of papers, even false, but in order, with a work card to pass you through road-blocks. It is essential to have food ration tickets.[24]

German occupation of Vichy France in response to allied landings in North Africa further extended the meaning of the war to the French nation—in other words, it stirred up what Lyautey would have termed an "asleep" area and forced people to take a position for or against resistance.

German security services, the Abwehr and Gestapo, were not up to the increased task. German countermeasures suffered from competing counterespionage organizations and police forces whose ". . . senior staffs were obsessed by service intrigues, and their junior staffs were often as incompetent as they were cruel. . . ."

. . . The nature of the Nazi state machine ensured that many German counter-espionage agents were more interested in promoting the status of

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of the offal." According to Ehrlich, each member swore ". . . to fight against democracy, against Gaullist dissidence and against the Jewish leprosy." Darnand became head of Vichy police, ". . . with power over all law enforcement agencies under French control." In 1943 his "legion" became the Milice, described by Ehrlich as ". . . a fully equipped little army of young Frenchmen, with special spy services to uncover resistance and to infiltrate resistance movements. They were noted for their joyous viciousness. . . ." Foot notes that they ". . . lived and worked in their home towns and villages, and used their local knowledge expertly. . . . They might be found at work in any part of France. . . ."

23. Ibid. *Maquis* ". . . is a Corsican word for the dense brush of the hill country, to which Corsicans historically repair when they are in trouble."

24. Ehrlich, op. cit.

their own organization as compared with its rivals at home than in actually coping with the activities of allied agents in the field.[25]

As early as October 1942, the German high command was becoming apprehensive, Hitler himself ordering:

. . . In future, all terror and sabotage troops of the British and their accomplices, who do not act like soldiers but rather like bandits, will be treated as such by the German troops and will be ruthlessly eliminated in battle, wherever they appear.[26]

Hollow words, these. By the end of 1942, Marshal von Rundstedt noted:

. . . It was already impossible to dispatch single members of the Wehrmacht, ambulances, couriers, or supply columns without armed protection to the First or Nineteenth Army in the south of France.[27]

SOE did not actively promote guerrilla warfare at this time, but instead was trying to build a secret army by furnishing necessary arms and equipment to the newly formed maquis. Among the problems, logistics loomed large. SOE's original plan for building secret armies in France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia had called for organizing, training and arming 130,000 underground fighters. In spring of 1941, the British Chiefs of Staff rejected the plan, which would have required 8,000 sorties by the RAF, as "utterly unrealistic."[28] SOE countered with a proposal to arm 45,000 men in France and the Low Countries, but that would have required 2,000 RAF bomber sorties at a time when the RAF was averaging only that number per month.[29] With aircraft at a premium, French resistance received only meager arms and supply during 1942.

Progress nonetheless resulted. In February 1943, when Commander Yeo-Thomas (the White Rabbit), Colonel Passy, and Pierre Brossolette slipped into France, they found five distinct resistance groups. Of the Gaullist formations, the Organisation Civile et Militaire was the most highly organized and had the best security. The Front National, a Communist organization that supported the Franc-Tireurs et Partisans, or FTP, without question ". . . formed the strongest and most effective Resistance group. . . . They claimed to carry out roughly 250 attacks and to kill between 500 and 600 Germans every month."[30] In time, the FTP furnished nearly a third of the maquis. Although they refused

25. Foot, op. cit.
26. Ibid.: In North Africa, Rommel refused to pass on this order to his subordinates.
27. Ibid.
28. Cookridge, op. cit.
29. Sweet-Escott, op. cit.
30. Marshall, op. cit.

to relinquish control of their units, they agreed to join the other organizations in establishing a secret army commanded by General Delestraint —a co-operation prompted more by need for recognition, arms, and money than by patriotism.

In June, the Gestapo, which had penetrated the National Committee of Resistance, suddenly struck. General Delestraint (known as General Vidal), was shot: ". . . The national organization was shattered and Resistance groups throughout the country suffered heavy losses."

Despite this major setback,

> . . . the second line of the leadership and the hard core of local and regional groups had survived. Surprisingly, only a small percentage of supplies were lost. Elated by the capture of many prominent Resistance leaders, the Germans had failed to find the hideouts and dumps of arms, ammunition and explosives which SOE had been delivering on an increasing scale. In many areas, reception committees, reorganized and led by local leaders, continued to welcome new supplies and new SOE instructors, liaison officers and radio operators from Britain.[31]

In October 1943, the German commander-in-chief in France, General von Rundstedt wrote to Hitler, noting ". . . with alarm the rapid increase in rail sabotage." In September, he reported, ". . . there were 534 very serious rail sabotage actions, as compared to a monthly average of only 120 during the first half of the year." Vichy police reported ". . . more than 3,000 separate attempts by Resistance saboteurs to wreck the railway system, of which 427 resulted in very heavy damage while 132 caused derailment with serious loss of German troops." Continuing destruction forced the Germans to import 20,000 German railway workers, and ". . . SS units had to be diverted from the front to guard stations, locomotive sheds, workshops and thousands of miles of track by day and night."[32]

London still did not want a general uprising. In August 1943, SOE planners had stated the secret army's mission during allied landings:

> . . . a preliminary increase in the tempo of sabotage, with particular attention to fighter aircraft and enemy morale; attacks on local headquarters, simple road and telephone wrecking, removal of German explosive from mined bridges likely to be useful to the allies, and more and more sabotage as the air battle reached its climax; and then, simultaneously with the seaborne assault, an all-out attack on roads, railways and telephones, and the harassing of occupation troops wherever they could be found by any available means. This last injunction was bound to lead in places to guerrilla; but guerrilla was not called for in the original plan. . . .[33]

31. Cookridge, op. cit.
32. Ibid.
33. Foot, op. cit.

Some resistance units, particularly those dominated by Communists, refused to lie low and insisted on striking the enemy wherever possible. One source reported that, between June 1943 and May 1944, 1,822 locomotives were destroyed or badly damaged, 200 passenger carriages destroyed and 1,500 damaged, 2,500 freight wagons destroyed and 8,000 damaged.[34]

In January 1944, some maquis chiefs refused to obey De Gaulle's instructions to lie low until D-Day, and guerrilla activity notably increased. In words reminiscent of a French marshal in Spain in 1810, Von Rundstedt later wrote:

> . . . From January, 1944, the state of affairs in Southern France became so dangerous that all [German] commanders reported a general revolt. . . . Cases became numerous where whole formations of troops, and escorting troops of the military commanders were surrounded by bands for many days and, in isolated locations, simply killed off. . . . The life of the German troops in southern France was seriously menaced and became a doubtful proposition.[35]

In the first three months of 1944, guerrillas destroyed 808 locomotives (as opposed to 387 destroyed by allied air action).[36]

French and British planners in London meanwhile incorporated guerrilla warfare into plans for the Normandy landing: Plan Green to sabotage all railway lines; Plan Violet all telephone lines; Plan Tortoise all main roads. In mountainous districts, ". . . the Resistance must create redoubts and mobilization centers from which the personnel could be reinforced when the moment came."[37]

Special command teams, the Jedburghs, would help the secret army. Each team consisted of two officers—French, British, or American—and a sergeant radio operator, with each man trained in guerrilla tactics:

> . . . Their objects were to provide a general staff for the local resistance wherever they landed, to co-ordinate the local efforts in the best interests of allied strategy, and where possible to arrange further supplies of arms.[38]

Special Air Service, or SAS, units, consisting of thirty to sixty ". . . heavily armed, Commando-trained men," complemented this effort. So did Operational Groups, or OGs,

> . . . airborne commandos of thirty-two men, who could be split up into two or four independent groups. They are trained for special missions, the de-

34. Cookridge, op. cit.
35. Foot, op. cit.
36. Cookridge, op. cit.
37. Robert Aron, *De Gaulle Before Paris—The Liberation of France June–August 1944* (London: Putnam, 1962). Tr. H. Hare.
38. Foot, op. cit.; see also Alsop and Braden, op. cit.

struction, or indeed the protection, of some precise objective and came directly under headquarters in London. Once their particular mission had been carried out, the O.G. had orders to join the nearest F.F.I. and assist them in their ordinary activities.[39]

The Aloès Mission completed the list; this was a complete headquarters that would go into action after the landings. Jedburgh, SAS, and OG units were to parachute into rendezvous areas prearranged with resistance groups.

In March 1944, De Gaulle formally created the French Forces of the Interior, or FFI, to which SOE/OSS became subordinated; in the subsequent battle for France, FFI, however, remained subordinated to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF).

A lack of aircraft had continued to hinder the supply effort. As late as November 1943, Yeo-Thomas inspected a maquis camp in the Department of the Lot:

. . . The thirty men in the camp were disciplined, well fed and happy. Divided into groups of five each commanded by an NCO (*"Sixaines"*), all the armament they possessed between them consisted of one Sten gun with a hundred rounds, three French rifles with five rounds each and ten revolvers with ten rounds each: there were no grenades at all. The available arms were used by all in turn for instructional purposes, drill, weapon-stripping and field craft exercises by night. Lack of ammunition prevented target practise.[40]

In a second guerrilla camp, of thirty men, he found only one rifle and ten rounds of ammunition.

Yeo-Thomas was largely responsible for persuading Winston Churchill to divert more planes to the effort. Increased American air force participation also helped. In the first six months of 1944, in addition to large shipments of explosives and ammunition, SOE dropped into France 45,354 Sten guns, 17,576 pistols, 10,251 rifles, 1,832 Bren guns, 300 bazookas, and 143 mortars.[41] On D-Day, June 6, 1944, about twenty thousand resistance fighters were fully armed; another fifty thousand were armed ". . . in some degree."[42]

French and SOE views of commitment differed. In spring of 1944, De Gaulle's headquarters sent an agent into France with instructions to various resistance leaders:

. . . he explained to them that it would be folly to mount a general action. The liberation of territory by the Allies, even on the most favorable suppo-

39. Aron, op. cit.
40. Marshall, op. cit.
41. Cookridge, op. cit.; see also Foot, op. cit.: SOE logisticians eventually hit on four categories of transport aircraft "loads." The smallest, Load A, consisted of 12 containers that held 6 Bren guns, 36 rifles, 27 Sten guns, 5 pistols, 52 grenades, field dressings, and several thousand rounds of ammunition.
42. Cookridge, op. cit.

sition, could only be progressive. The Resistance operations in France must therefore be launched in succession, district by district, and on orders from London. In no circumstances were they to assume the nature of a general insurrection, but to be limited to local sabotage operations and such guerrilla warfare as the Allied authorities might require. . . .[43]

In the event, prearranged signals from the SOE, broadcast by BBC, called for a general insurrection.

Commencing in June, in one week guerrillas cut or blew up over one thousand railroad lines to prevent eight enemy divisions from immediately entering the battle of the beaches. On June 6, the German high command, for example, ordered the Second SS Panzer Division to march from Montauban to the Normandy beachhead, normally a three-day effort. Confined to roads because of railway sabotage and constantly attacked by maquis, the division did not arrive at Alençon until June 18. The Eleventh Panzer Division, hastily summoned from Russia, reached the French border in eight days but required another twenty-four days ". . . to cross France from Strasbourg to Caen."[44]

Not all maquis units prospered. A maquis of about five hundred Frenchmen and sixty Spanish stationed on the Plateau des Glières fought a thirteen-day withdrawal against several battalions of German troops in February 1944.[45] As the French had feared, premature action on D-Day sometimes cost dearly. Some small groups, such as a fifteen-man unit in Caen, were captured and executed to a man the day after D-Day. On D-Day, a Corcieux maquis, of thirty-four men, attacked a German garrison of several hundred soldiers at Taintrux, in the Vosges area, a failure costing most of them their lives and bringing severe reprisals on the civilian population.[46] In other areas, notably near Saint Marcel, in Brittany, pitched battles developed between large maquis forces reinforced by SAS and OG units. On June 18, a powerful German force attacked and drove the maquis from its redoubt area, but at a cost of over five hundred German dead. On June 24, maquis on Vercors Plateau fought off a large-scale German attack but suffered severe casualties before withdrawing.

In general, the maquis served brilliantly, not only on and immediately after D-Day but throughout crucial summer months. On July 18, 1944, a pro-Nazi French official complained by letter to Ambassador Otto Abetz:

. . . It is no longer possible today for private persons or for Wehrmacht vehicles to travel along the roads of France. It is impossible to go freely from

43. Aron, op. cit.; Professor Foot has informed me that ". . . those BBC messages calling out resistance all over France were sent on Eisenhower's direct order, against the advice of his technical advisers of several levels and nationalities.

44. De Gaulle, op. cit. (Vol. 2).

45. M. J. Bird, *The Secret Battalion* (London: Muller, 1965).

46. Aron, op. cit.

Paris to Lyons, from Lyons to Bordeaux, from Paris to Châteauroux, from Châteauroux to Angoulême. . . . The roads of Brittany are impractical. Behind the Normandy front, the Chief of Staff of the Army, whose headquarters are at Le Mans, has told me that German convoys are far from safe owing to particularly active maquisards. The roads from Paris to Nancy and Verdun, and from Paris to Mézières, have been cut by the Maquis, that is to say that within a short distance from the German frontier the men of the Maquis attack officers of the Wehrmacht. . . . The Maquis forces are so numerous that one is forced to the conclusion that, since the month of May, a veritable mobilization has taken place in the towns and villages of central France, as well as in the south and southeast.[47]

According to the historian Robert Aron, between July 10 and August 4 in the department of Côtes-du-Nord, the maquis put 2,500 Germans out of action, cut 300 telephone and high-tension lines, effectively sabotaged railways, derailed 40 trains, ambushed 50 convoys and captured 200 vehicles, burned 10,000 gallons of German gasoline, and captured a prison and liberated 32 Frenchmen condemned to death.[48]

Similar actions took place throughout France. One resistance veteran later wrote a classic account of a maquis ambush:

. . . in a few minutes an unending stream of armored cars, motorcars, motorcyclists, lorries and occasional tanks appeared . . . the speed of advance was extremely slow—about five miles an hour—and there were frequent halts to remove a tree trunk, investigate a supposed trap, or reconnoitre the roadside. All this was a sure proof—if we needed one—that the maquis guerrillas were feared, and were succeeding in their main intention of delaying the enemy. The troops we saw were both German infantry and *miliciens*. . . .

As guerrillas watched, noise of a distant ambush caused the convoy to halt, and then from the left a small maquis section opened fire:

. . . My two companions and myself opened fire immediately; one of us had a rifle, the other two had carbines. We fired as rapidly as possible into that mass of sprawling men. . . . It was difficult to distinguish between dead and living, and for one whole minute there was every sign of confusion and panic.

Then a curious thing happened. It seemed as if the whole division went into action against us. Small arms, heavy machine guns, mortars, small pieces of artillery, began plastering the woods on our side of the road over a space of at least five hundred yards, and although trees and bushes on our flanks and rear were churned up, nothing dropped near.

It was so typically German! They found it difficult to locate us, they

47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.

thought we were more numerous than we were, so they shot at anything moving—even a branch in the wind. They were using a sledge-hammer to crack a walnut—and missed the walnut!

. . . after a period of less than five minutes . . . we ourselves decamped. . . . I looked back once . . . two parties could already be seen fifty yards from the road coming up to encircle us and progressing by "movement and fire" alternately. . . . They continued to fire in our direction with all calibres, long after we left that wood behind. . . .[49]

Postwar writings frequently compared accomplishments of conventional and unconventional arms. Detractors of irregular warfare, usually professional soldiers, sometimes caused the proponents to indulge in unfair comparisons: Foot, for example, wrote that

. . . Bomber Command frequently lost in a night more men than F Section lost in the entire war; once it lost in a night more people than F Section ever sent to France. The command's total of dead (47,268 on operations) was more than four times as great as SOE's total strength. . . .[50]

This is an example of the numbers game that was to become increasingly popular in the irregular-warfare era. It fails to include the civil population. Bombings, particularly mass night attacks, may kill numerous civilians and may on a Dresden or Hiroshima or Nagasaki occasion wipe out populations, and bombers may suffer heavy casualties.

But this does not reduce costs, direct or indirect, of clandestine operations and guerrilla warfare. French resistance paid a premium price for each operational success whether a piece of vital intelligence, an escaped pilot or a blown-up train. The organizations lost over five hundred agents, generally ghastly deaths; the Germans arrested and tortured hundreds more. In addition, from October 1940 to December 1941, according to official French figures, the Germans arrested 4,500 French men and women suspected of being resistance workers; they arrested 37,609 in 1942 and about 50,000 in 1943.[51] General de Gaulle later wrote that:

. . . with the co-operation of a considerable number of officials and a mass of informers, 60,000 persons had been executed and more than 200,000 deported of whom a bare 50,000 survived. Further, 35,000 men and women had been condemned by Vichy tribunals; 70,000 "suspects" interned; 35,000 officials cashiered; 15,000 officers degraded under suspicion of being in the resistance.[52]

49. Foot, op. cit.
50. Ibid.
51. Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, *France During the German Occupation 1940–1944* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957). Tr. P. W. Whitcomb. 3 vols.
52. De Gaulle, op. cit. (Vol. 3).

M.E.P.

According to Robert Aron, some twenty-four thousand maquisards were killed—a high percentage in view of their total strength of two hundred thousand. French headquarters in London distributed over 15 billion francs to resistance forces; the cost to SOE and OSS must have been astronomical. SOE and OSS dropped more than half a million small arms and four thousand larger weapons, many of which fell into enemy hands.[53]

53. Ibid.; see also F. O. Miksche, *Secret Forces—the Technique of Underground Movements* (London: Faber & Faber, 1950): ". . . During the war the following

France paid another internal price—that of revenge. Maquis units summarily executed an estimated 6,675 collaborators before the liberation, another 4,000 after. Tribunals subsequently condemned 2,071 persons to death (De Gaulle commuted 1,303 of the sentences); the courts also passed 39,900 prison sentences.[54]

Resistance is not an easy task.

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arms supplies were parachuted into France: 198,000 Sten guns, 128,000 rifles, 20,000 Bren guns, 10,000 carbines, 58,000 pistols, 595,000 kilograms of explosives, 723,000 hand grenades, 9,000 mines, 20,700 bazookas, 285 mortars."

54. De Gaulle, op. cit. (Vol. 3).

Chapter 34

German invasion of Russia • Ukrainian apathy • The Red army and guerrilla warfare • Stalin calls for guerrilla resistance • Early guerrilla operations • Guerrilla problems • Germany's extermination policy • German counterguerrilla tactics • Kaminski and Vlasov • German intransigence

FEW INVADING ARMIES in history have received the spontaneous welcome accorded to Hitler's powerful legions in some areas of the Ukraine in 1941. Instead of sniper fire or Molotov cocktails, Panzer commanders received floral bouquets from cheering civilians who greeted the Teutonic host as "liberators" from Soviet rule. Ukrainian nationalists in eastern Galicia actually rose against their Soviet masters, ". . . a revolt savagely repressed by the retreating Red Army and NKVD [secret police]. . . ."[1] If local reception was less enthusiastic in other areas, in general it was at first pacific, the population showing every desire to accommodate itself to the new masters.

This halcyon state of affairs sprang from a variety of reasons: general hostility of border peoples to the Soviet regime; Kremlin failure to plan effectively for partisan resistance; the surprise, speed, and weight of the

1. Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1957).

German advance, which in many areas temporarily neutralized small guerrilla groups that managed to form.

The touchy international political situation helped explain the Kremlin's reluctance to plan extensive guerrilla resistance. Red army planners obviously respected the potential. Shortly after the 1917 revolution, the father of the Red army, Frunze, demanded ". . . the spirit of offensive maneuver" but stressed need for ". . . preparation for conducting partisan warfare in the territories of possible theatres of military activities":

> . . . Therefore one of the tasks of our General Staff must be working out the ideas of "little war" in its application to our future wars with an enemy technologically superior to us.
>
> An important part will be played by partisan operations, which should be prepared for action on a large scale, and certain army units should be educated systematically in the spirit of such operations.[2]

Subsequent Red army planners stressed regular army operations, but did not exclude guerrilla warfare. Prior to World War II,

> . . . military textbooks and courses in Red Army academies analyzed partisan operations of the Civil War period and occasionally referred to partisan activity in other periods or countries. . . . Historical and political journals, especially those concerned with the history of the Communist Party, printed lengthy articles on the Red partisans of the Civil War.[3]

Although the government organized and partially equipped small guerrilla bands in some border areas, lack of organization and official fears greatly restricted the project. The Kremlin had no wish to create a Frankenstein monster of armed peasants, any more than the Spanish Republican Government had wanted to arm workers in 1936. Civilian morale also entered: to prepare for partisan warfare bespoke retreat of regular forces, an admission of weakness which did not square with Kremlin infallibility.

In the event, the Kremlin tried to make up for lost time. Five days after the German invasion, the head of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, ". . . gave fairly detailed instructions on partisan organization to a provincial Party secretary. . . ."[4] In early July 1941,

2. R. L. Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War—Soviet Military Doctrine* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954).

3. J. A. Armstrong and K. DeWitt, "Organization and Control of the Partisan Movement." In Armstrong, *supra*. The German use of the word *Partisanen* abruptly halted when authorities learned that the Russian word signified "fighters for freedom." Instead—shades of Chiang Kai-shek and Ngo Dinh Diem—they began to use *Banditen*.

4. Armstrong, op. cit.

in a backs-to-the-wall broadcast to the Russian people, Joseph Stalin ordered:

. . . In areas occupied by the enemy, guerrilla units, mounted and on foot, must be formed; diversionist groups must be organized to combat the enemy troops, to foment guerrilla war everywhere, to blow up bridges and roads, damage telephone and telegraph lines, set fire to forests, stores, transports. In the occupied regions conditions must be made unbearable for the enemy and all his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step and all their measures frustrated.[5]

In early July, a new army command charged with partisan warfare ordered political leaders in combat areas to organize guerrilla units:

. . . Generally they were to operate only at night and from ambush. Their mission was to attack troop columns and assemblies, motorized infantry, camps, transports of fuel and ammunition, headquarters, air bases, and railroad trains previously halted by rail demolitions.[6]

Special diversionary units were to carry out sabotage, ". . . cutting telephone lines, firing fuel and ammunition dumps, railroad demolition, and attacks on individual or small groups of enemy vehicles."[7]

The army also began setting up guerrilla training camps to furnish small teams that would parachute behind German armies. Army Group South encountered these in late July and learned from interrogation that they had been charged with intelligence collection, sabotage and terror missions. Later, the camps trained persons to organize resistance and carry out various technical aspects of guerrilla activities.

The first guerrilla groups consisted of what one authority has well termed "shareholders" of the Soviet political system, mostly NKVD officials and party members from towns and cities.[8] But Red-army fugitives, at first officers and political commissars, followed civilians into forests and swamps, where ordinary soldiers and civilian refugees began joining them:

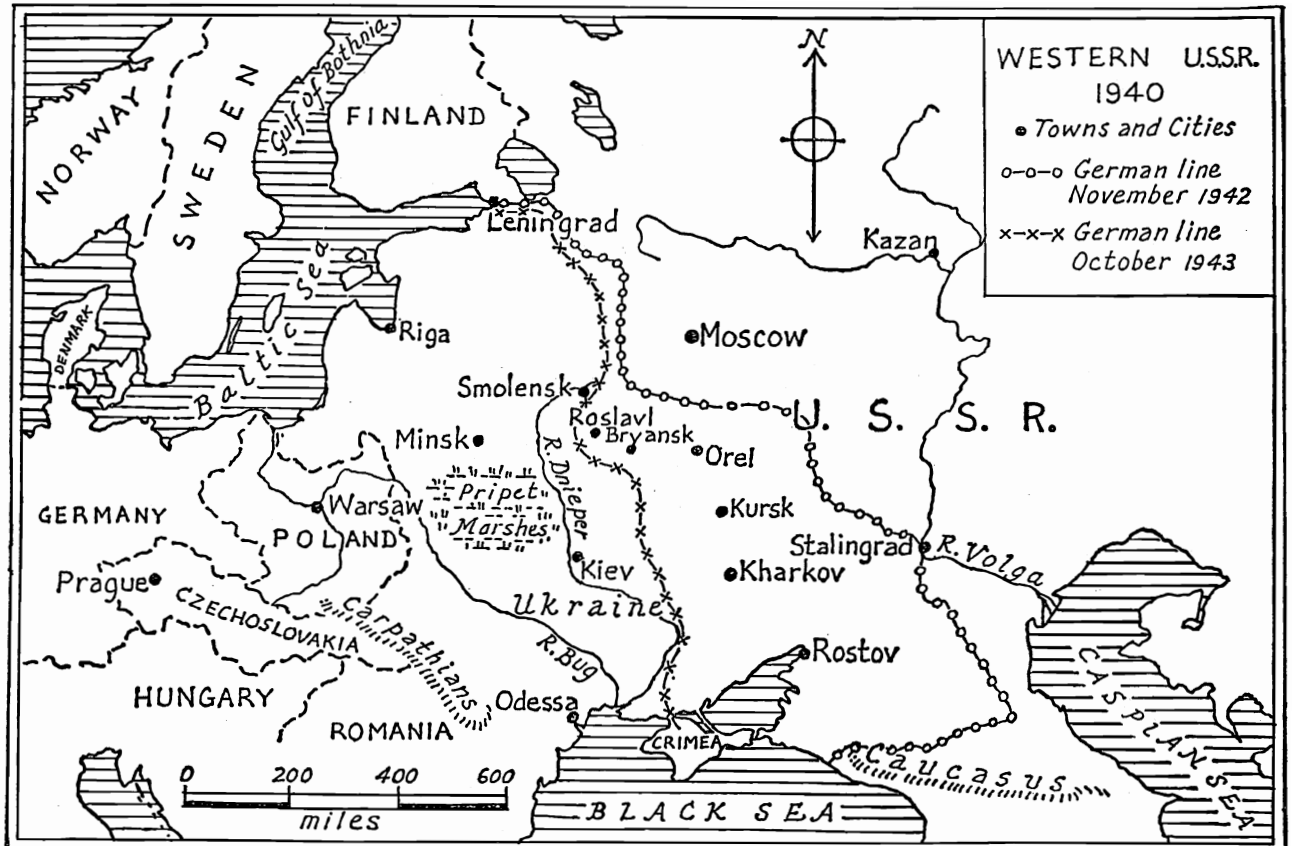
. . . before the first of July [1941] infantry units of *Army Group North* were harassed from all sides by bypassed Red elements. Numbers of Soviet troops were still roaming the swamps and forests, von Leeb reported to OKH [army high command], many in peasant clothes, and effective counter-

5. Armstrong and DeWitt, op. cit.

6. E. M. Howell, *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941–1944* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1956).

7. Ibid.

8. Garthoff (op. cit.) has pointed out that ". . . according to former partisans now in the West, the majority of partisan units arose spontaneously and later were usually taken over by Party officials, since the latter were the only ones able to effect arrangements for supply (and guidance) from Moscow."


WESTERN U.S.S.R.
1940
Towns and Cities
German line November 1942
German line October 1943
N
NORWAY
SWEDEN
Gulf of Bothnia
FINLAND
Baltic Sea
DENMARK
Leningrad
Riga
Kazan
Moscow
Smolensk
Roslavl
Bryansk
Orel
U. S. S. R.
Minsk
R. Dnieper
Pripet Marshes
Warsaw
GERMANY
POLAND
Kursk
Stalingrad
R. Volga
Kiev
Kharkov
Prague
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Carpathians
Ukraine
R. Bug
Rostov
HUNGARY
Odessa
ROMANIA
CRIMEA
CASPIAN SEA
Caucasus
0 200 400 600
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M.E.P.

measures were frustrated by the expanse and difficulty of the country and by manpower limitations. . . .[9]

Nowhere was this resistance serious. German weight had severely dislocated embryo partisan activity. The few guerrilla bands that managed to form became greatly segmented and devoid of central control. Although one German division operating in northeast Belorussia in late July 1941 spoke of "partisan regions" and reported ". . . that roads were mined daily,"[10] this was the exception. Also in 1941 in Belorussia, ". . . a single security division protected 250 miles of the main railroad."[11]

Most partisans were having too much difficulty keeping alive to worry about resistance. In the south, flat and treeless steppes broken only by isolated forests and swamps provided unsuitable sanctuary, and the bands here were early eliminated. In general, a hostile population hindered the guerrilla effort. Peasants and townspeople in numerous areas refused to give guerrillas food or information and did not hesitate to report their presence to the enemy. Primarily for this reason, the partisan movement in the mountain areas of the Caucasus, the Crimea, and western Ukraine never developed into a serious threat.

Guerrillas in the center and north found far more suitable terrain in wide belts of swamps, forests, and lakes encircling the Pripet Marshes. Not only did the land provide sanctuary, but, by channeling enemy communications to a few roads and railroads, it provided suitable targets for guerrillas. However, peasants and townspeople here and especially in Baltic areas, to the north, also proved hostile, and survival was not easy.

Finally, the first winter, of 1941–42, hurt the movement everywhere: forays to collect food and fuel meant tracks in the snow, and naked trees often meant naked guerrillas. In order to survive, various bands amalgamated into good-sized camps, and some of these became vulnerable to German attacks. The more secure the camp, the farther it lay from profitable targets, thus complicating operations.

Three factors, however, saved incipient guerrilla groups at this crucial time, and even allowed them to expand: German occupation policy, German counterguerrilla methods, and Soviet organization and support of the guerrilla effort.

By far the most important of the three was the overriding German attitude toward the Russian population. First revealed by Soviet wartime propaganda, it was confirmed at the Nuremberg trials. But as schol-

9. Howell, op. cit.

10. R. Mavrogordato and E. Ziemke, "The Polotsk Lowland." In Armstrong, *supra*.

11. Armstrong and DeWitt, op. cit.

ars continue to sift millions of captured German documents, the whole story is slowly emerging. In addition to earlier official histories, outstanding work was done by Alexander Dallin in his book *German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945*.[12] More recently, Professor John Armstrong has edited a valuable symposium, *Soviet Partisans in World War II*.[13]

From Hitler down, the Nazi high command regarded Russians as *Untermenschen,* or subhuman beings, an attitude succinctly noted by Goebbels in his diary: the Russians ". . . are not people, but a conglomeration of animals. . . . Bolshevism has merely accentuated this racial propensity of the Russian people."[14]

Before the Wehrmacht marched, Hitler had decided that Russia must cease to exist as a nation. Expecting to accomplish her military destruction within four months, he foresaw a civil occupation and ultimate partition that would eliminate Bolshevism, the Russian nation, and most Soviet states, to provide a vast and rich area for German colonization and exploitation. Hitler decreed a civil occupation just as soon as possible and created a Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (the *Ostministerium*), under Alfred Rosenberg, to accomplish it. Each of three army groups held responsibility for a Zone of Operations, which was divided into a Combat Zone and Army Rear Areas. The area behind this became the bailiwick of Rosenberg's civil commissars, who followed closely the army groups to take over territory as fast as the military forged ahead.

So far, so good.

But, sandwiched between army groups and civil functionaries and lapping over into each sphere, came Himmler's SS organization, ". . . charged with preparation for political administration in the military zone of operations."[15] And to confuse matters further, Hitler charged Goering with economic exploitation of occupied areas, which could not but lead to conflict with Rosenberg and even with Himmler and army group commanders.

Himmler's mission spelled evil. His was a murder function authorized by Hitler's Commissar Order, which called for elimination of all Communist Party officials and Red army commissars at ". . . not later than the transit prisoner of war camps."[16] To eliminate the Jewish-Bolshevik enemy, Himmler set up special action teams (*Einsatzgruppen*) composed of SS, SD, and Gestapo troops and agents who ". . . would move in behind the conquering army, comb the newly-won lands, and mercilessly exterminate ideological and racial enemies. . . ."[17]

12. Dallin, op. cit.
13. Armstrong, op. cit.
14. Dallin, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Howell, op. cit.
17. Dallin, op. cit.

Each *Einsatzgruppe* was ". . . generally responsible for all political security tasks within the operational area of the Army and the rear areas so far as the latter did not fall under the civil administration."[18] They were not only operationally independent from army group commands, but their activities often spilled over into rear civil areas, which in any event eventually reacted adversely to their bestial activities.

The fragile and confused bodies of this organization would have had a difficult time instilling order even in victory. When the Wehrmacht failed to destroy the Red army, Hitler's jerry-built administrative house found itself in charge of an area of about four hundred thousand square miles holding some 65 million heterogeneous peoples. Within a few months, Hitler's basic premise had vanished, but the mission remained: exterminate and exploit.

This incredible policy immediately affected two important groups of Russians: prisoners of war and people of occupied Soviet areas.

Within six months of invasion, German armies had captured some 3 million Soviet soldiers, with hundreds of thousands of additional prisoners coming in each month. No particular arrangements existed to care for these unfortunates; very little food existed to feed them and very little humanity to serve them. Murder resulted:

> . . . Testimony is eloquent and prolific on the abandonment of entire divisions under the open sky. Epidemics and endemic diseases decimated the camps. Beatings and abuse by the guards were commonplace. Millions spent weeks without food or shelter. Carloads of prisoners were dead when they arrived at their destination. Casualty figures varied considerably, but almost nowhere amounted to less than 30 per cent in the winter of 1941–42, and sometimes went as high as 95 per cent.[19]

The shocking conditions even filtered back to Berlin. Goering complained to Count Ciano that Soviet prisoners were not only eating their own boots but ". . . they have begun to eat each other, and what is more serious, have also eaten a German sentry."[20]

Inadequate security forces, particularly in forward prison camps, allowed thousands of Soviet prisoners to escape. Others, cut off by the German advance and learning of German treatment of their fellows, refused to surrender. Throughout autumn and winter, some of these fugitives reached woods and swamps to bring badly needed military skills to the hard-pressed guerrilla bands. By spring of 1942, three or four hundred thousand soldiers were roaming free, and many of these, from sheer necessity, drifted into the forest and joined the guerrillas.[21]

18. Howell, op. cit.
19. Dallin, op. cit.
20. Ibid.
21. E. Ziemke, "Composition and Morale of the Partisan Movement." In Armstrong, *supra*.

Meanwhile the first bloom on the German rose of occupation had vanished. Most senior army commanders had welcomed the relatively pacific reception that promised secure lines of communication—particularly important in view of voracious appetites of tanks, trucks, and aircraft for fuel and oil. But as their progress continued, initial victories seemed to validate Hitler's notion of a short war in the east. Nazi arrogance, never far below the surface, at once asserted itself, and the *Untermensch* philosophy captured many minds. Hitler himself instructed his commanders to spread ". . . that measure of terror which alone is apt to deprive the population of all desire to resist."[22]

As war continued into autumn and winter and no victory resulted and casualties continued to soar and Hitler's strategic incompetence became obvious, fear also began to capture military minds.[23] In partisan areas, ". . . military considerations and often a sense of physical danger, isolation, and self-defense on occupied soil, caused commanders to attempt to eliminate the partisans 'at all costs' "—to insist on "prophylaxis by terror."

"Collective measures of force" were to be applied promptly in any instance of even "passive resistance" in which the perpetrator could not be immediately identified. Soviet soldiers behind the lines who refused to turn themselves over to the Germans were to be considered insurgents ". . . and treated accordingly."[24]

In mid-September 1941, the Wehrmacht commander, General Keitel, ordered that ". . . in every instance of active opposition against the German occupation authorities, regardless of the specific circumstances, Communist origin must be assumed."

. . . Since "a deterrent effect can be attained only through unusual hardness," the High Command sanctioned brutal retaliation against the innocent population:

"As atonement for the life of a German soldier, a death sentence for from fifty to one hundred Communists must be generally deemed commensurate. The means of execution must increase the deterrent effect still further. . . ."[25]

In rear army areas, Himmler's special teams caused additional terror:

. . . One of the four *Einsatzgruppen* commanders, Otto Ohlendorf, stated [at the Nuremberg trials] that during the first year of the campaign, the group under his command liquidated about 90,000 men, women and chil-

22. Dallin, op. cit.
23. Ibid.: ". . . By the end of the year [1941] about one out of every four German soldiers in the East had been killed or wounded, and the Wehrmacht needed 2.5 million troops as replacements."
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.; see also Howell, op. cit.

dren. The activities of these teams were dictated not by military necessity but purely by ideological considerations.[26]

The general policy of terror carried over into *Reich Commissariat Ostland* and *Reich Commissariat Ukraine,* vast areas that fell to German civil administration. Gauleiter Erich Koch ruled the Ukraine. Koch believed that his subjects ". . . stood [sic] far below us and should be grateful to God that we allow them to stay alive. We have liberated them; in return, they must know no other goal except to work for us. There can be no human companionship. . . ."[27] Though less blunt, Koch's colleague Lohse ruled the center and north with the same philosophy.

Part of their task was to siphon off agricultural production for relief of the homeland, just as Goering's people were attempting to exploit various industrial complexes. But part also was to siphon off skilled workers. By early spring of 1942, the *Ostarbeiter* program had sent fifty thousand persons to Germany, by that summer 1 million, and a year later 2 million.[28]

Meanwhile Himmler's people were happily conducting the extermination task: One *Einsatzgruppe,* in the spring of 1942, complained that only 42,000 out of 170,000 political undesirables (Bolsheviks and Jews) had been exterminated. The general commissar there, Wilhelm Kuhe, soon put matters right, announcing in July that ". . . in the past ten weeks we have liquidated about 50,000 Jews in Belorussia. In the rural areas of Minsk, Jewry has been eradicated without jeopardizing the labor situation."[29]

Exploitation and extermination could only create local hatreds. As the over-all German policy of genocide, direct or indirect, became clear, numerous peasants and workers preferred to risk life under the partisans. German failure to capture Moscow in late winter of 1941–42 also exercised a major psychological effect and tended to make the civil population more co-operative in supporting guerrilla units with recruits, food, and intelligence. As these grew stronger and their activities increased, German authorities had to expand security measures, which in turn added to the general climate of terror.

Each of the three German army commanders had to depend on an army-group rear-area headquarters and three "security divisions" to safeguard his immediate rear, ". . . maintaining the supply of the field armies and guaranteeing the exploitation of the land for the immediate use of the military."[30]

26. Dallin, op. cit.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.: Kuhe was killed by a bomb placed in his bed by a "trusted" chambermaid.
30. Howell, op. cit.

A security division only remotely resembled its combat brother. It consisted of two regiments, one of regular combat infantry whose three battalions would furnish "alert units" for mobile operations, and one of *Landesschützen,* or second-line battalions, to carry out static guard duties. Support units such as motorized military police, engineers, and signal troops fleshed out these jury-rigged divisions.

Although the regular infantry and motorized police were well trained, with many combat veterans, Landesschützen units consisted of older, often unfit men. Major Howell noted that, in general, security divisions ". . . were staffed with retired or overaged officers and inexperienced reservists."[31] Supply officers were "inadequately trained," and intelligence officers were ". . . admittedly inept in intelligence matters and generally had no knowledge of counter-intelligence methodology."[32] Transport was short, arms and equipment second rate, morale and discipline generally poor.

The primary task of security divisions centered on protecting supply depots, railheads, and airfields, and keeping open lines of communication to the front. As huge armies moved forward, security divisions followed to set up ". . . a series of strong points to protect the supply lines and insure control of the populace."[33] Since the war would be over in four months, the problem of pacification and thus counterguerrilla warfare had not been studied: The German army did not even possess a standard operating procedure for counterguerrilla warfare, and only in October 1941 did the high command issue a *Directive for Anti-Partisan Warfare*—a rather innocuous work.[34]

When guerrilla attacks began, security divisions working with Himmler's SS security and police units replied with severe punitive measures that more often hurt the general population than guerrillas:

> . . . Because of the expanse of country which had to be covered, they took positive measures against the partisans only when the supply lines and installations were openly threatened. Even then they stuck closely to the roads and rail lines and the urban areas, and avoided the more difficult terrain and back-country regions. Seeing little of the growing opposition, unaware of or indifferent to the possibility of a developing pattern of hostility in the rear, and victorious in a few insignificant incidents over small insurgent groups, the security units gained in confidence and foresaw an early advent of complete peace and quiet there. They felt they were winning their war and that their areas of responsibility would be completely under control in a matter of weeks or days.[35]

31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

When guerrilla attacks continued and mounted in intensity, rear-area commanders responded by "logical" measures—by trying to tighten unit security, by offering bribes of money and food for accurate information on guerrilla activities, by weapons collection, by setting up intelligence nets of *Vertrauensleute,* or collaborators, by trying to streamline intelligence procedures—carrots that never totally replaced sticks of severe reprisals. More-imaginative commanders formed "counter" or "dummy" bands,

> . . . made up of units from the security police and the security service and of the *Ordnungspolizei,* with a number of reliable natives, and committed in partisan-dominated areas in the manner of a genuine partisan unit. In this manner they would be able to keep a constant check on the sentiments of the population, make contact with irregular units, and often quietly eliminate partisan leaders.[36]

Commanders also strengthened strong points, added guards to bridges and railway lines, and developed small, mobile pursuit units (the *Jagdkommando*). As matters worsened for the Germans, measures became more extreme. In the Bryansk area, the local commander insisted on escorted motor convoys traveling by daylight and on armored trains; troops built special security zones up to nine miles wide on each side of major railroad lines:

> . . . Brushwork and forests were cleared, all civilian residents registered, and movements of the people controlled day and night.[37]

In the center and north, harassed commanders began early to conduct counterguerrilla "sweeps," the intention being to uncover and destroy the bands.

These operations normally utilized combat units temporarily transferred from the front. The basic technique involved locating the general guerrilla area, surrounding it, and then "combing" through it with additional units.

One of the earliest counterguerrilla operations occurred in spring of 1942 north of Smolensk, where guerrillas controlled an impressive area of some two to three thousand square miles. For about a month, ". . . all or parts of nine German divisions mounted an attack which shattered the partisan movement." The German forces reported that out of fifteen to twenty thousand enemy, about two thousand broke out and another two to three thousand went into hiding, but that the remainder were killed or captured.[38]

36. Ibid.
37. K. DeWitt and W. Moll, "The Bryansk Area." In Armstrong, *supra.*
38. G. L. Weinberg, "The Yelna-Dorogobuzh Area of Smolensk Oblast." In Armstrong, *supra.*

The Germans may well have exaggerated their success. Certainly other "combing" operations did not similarly prosper. Also in spring of 1942, in the Bryansk area, Operation *Vogelsang* employed local troops reinforced by one armored and two infantry regiments. At small cost to the Germans, 58 dead and 138 wounded, the operation allegedly killed 1,193 guerrillas, wounded an estimated 1,400, and captured 498. Security forces arrested 2,249 men and evacuated 12,531 persons from the area.[39] These impressive figures did not impress the Second Panzer Army, which reported:

> . . . The success did not measure up to expectations. The partisans continued their old tactics of evading [contact], withdrawing into the forests, or moving in larger groups into the areas south and south-west of the Roslavl-Bryansk highways and into the Kletnya area. Although no attacks were noted in the pacified section, mines continued to be planted and . . . several vehicles were damaged. . . .[40]

Two authorities who studied this operation, DeWitt and Moll, concluded that ". . . the later reappearance of these partisans suggests that a large proportion of the casualties reported by the Germans consisted in fact of non-partisan members of the local population." Subsequent counter-guerrilla "sweeps" in the same area tended to confirm this significant conclusion.[41] So did Operation *Kottbus,* a year later in northeastern Belorussia, which involved a prolonged attack by sixteen thousand German troops:

> . . . Reporting to Rosenberg [Minister of Eastern Territories] on the first phase of this operation, the German Commissar General . . . for Belorussia pointed out that among the 5,000 people shot for suspicion of collaborating with the partisans, there were many women and children. He also argued that if for 4,500 enemy dead only 492 rifles were captured, the implication clearly was that the dead included many peasants who were not necessarily partisans. The effect of these operations on the partisans was negligible. Within a few weeks they reappeared as strong as ever. . . .[42]

Few military or political commanders at first protested, since extreme repression fitted Nazi political policy. Professor Armstrong concluded:

> . . . Most of the time . . . the German counter-guerrillas took the position that the civilians, since they had supplied the partisans with food and information, ought to be punished. The Germans also imagined that by destroying agricultural production they would starve the partisans. Consequently, horrible atrocities were committed against the civilian population, including the

39. DeWitt and Moll, op. cit.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.; see also Howell, op. cit.
42. Mavrogordato and Ziemke, op. cit.

elderly, women and children. Village-burning was the main feature of the combing operations. In addition, the Germans rounded up all able-bodied younger men and women for the *Ostarbeiter* program of [forced] labor in Germany. The combined effect of these measures was to turn neutral elements of the population toward the partisans, and particularly to send them a constant flow of new recruits seeking to escape the *Ostarbeiter* program. . . .[43]

As Armstrong pointed out, theoretically the Germans might have isolated guerrilla units by evacuating specific areas, but the size of areas, the vast population, and partisan strength prevented this.

Even where combing operations broke up guerrilla activities, the effect was only temporary. Howell later wrote:

. . . they failed to even approach a permanent solution. In combing out these areas the Germans scattered a number of bands, but nowhere were they able to trap and annihilate any sizable groups. Under pressure, the partisans merely dispersed, slipped through the attacking lines, and reassembled elsewhere.[44]

The operations did break up the bands, however, and eliminated the immediate threat to communications by keeping them off balance. The Germans continued to employ the tactic almost to the end and would have used it more often had enough soldiers been available.

Security divisions, however, suffered constantly from manpower shortages. Once Soviet counteroffensives began, German army commanders did not hesitate to transfer regular infantry regiments away from security divisions to front-line duty. Conversely, only occasionally could security divisions obtain services of front-line units for counterguerrilla operations. At one point in 1942, in the north, thirty of thirty-four security battalions had been ordered to the front:

. . . Whereas previously all bridges behind the *Sixteenth Army* had been guarded, the security command there became so short of men that guard details were pulled off all spans less than 45 feet long, and 14 bridges totaling more than 500 yards, on which sentries were maintained, were covered with a total armament of but 14 light machine guns. The situation was equally pinching behind *Army Group Center*.[45]

Rear-area commanders attempted to solve the manpower problem in several ways. In addition to front-line troops, they used satellite security divisions, generally unreliable units. Sometimes they suborned German replacement units still in training, definitely an unsatisfactory arrangement. They also formed indigenous battalions called *Osttruppen,* but

43. Armstrong, op. cit.
44. Howell, op. cit.
45. Ibid.

Hitler's political policy and the sharp eyes of Nazi purists made this a disjointed, generally surreptitious effort (although eventually it recruited some five hundred thousand locals). Later, when German losses and Soviet battle successes caused Nazis to have second thoughts, theretofore-willing recruits changed their minds and if impressed into duty often deserted in droves to the partisans. Similar programs to enlist local peoples in various types of militias, village defense forces, and youth movements (to deprive partisans of recruits) encountered the same political obstruction.

Even when these measures materialized, most came too late and in too slight quantity to radically influence the counterguerrilla campaign. Had the Germans mobilized the generally anti-Soviet border populations in 1941 and early 1942, the whole tenor of the campaign would undoubtedly have changed. Even after this error, opportunity still remained. As one example, south of Bryansk German officials quietly supported an irregular group of anti-Soviet Russians, the Kaminski band, which eventually numbered some nine thousand irregulars and performed valuable counterguerrilla services.[46] On a bigger scale, more-imaginative German officials sponsored an anti-Soviet army recruited from prisoners of war and commanded by a prisoner, an anti-Soviet General, Vlasov. Although Vlasov could easily have raised an army of from ten to twenty divisions, he understandably demanded some postwar political guarantees, which ranking Nazis refused to give him. The program died, only to be revived at too late a date.

Some German officials and officers early recognized the stupidity of official policy. After ten weeks of battle, Field Marshal von Kluge

> . . . issued an order sharply condemning plundering and wanton requisitions by German troops, and demanding the prompt and complete cessation of all abuse under threat of summary punishment.[47]

As early as December 1941, Goebbels expressed concern ". . . about the extent to which the occupation authorities were antagonizing the population."[48] That winter, a host of occupation authorities, civil and military, warned officials in Berlin of the disastrous policy. In August 1942, an OKW (Army High Command) report reflected the feelings of many officials in the Soviet Union:

> . . . Time after time the population of the Ukraine shows itself grateful for every instance when it is dealt with humanely on the basis of equality, and reacts strongly against contemptuous treatment.[49]

46. Ibid.
47. Dallin, op. cit.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

At a conference of military and civil occupation officials in October 1942,

> . . . Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, Hitler's would-be assassin, took the floor to flail German policy in an impassioned half-hour impromptu speech. The Reich, he exclaimed, was sowing a hatred that the next generation would reap; the key to victory was winning the sympathy and support of the people who lived in the East![50]

But dissenters already had lost their case. In late 1942, Hitler made counterguerrilla operations in combat areas a General Staff responsibility; in rear army areas and civil areas, ". . . the S.S. obtained overall command and responsibility for the extermination of partisans." Hitler left no doubt of his own attitude: ". . . the struggle against the partisans in the entire East is a life-and-death struggle in which one side or the other must be exterminated."[51]

50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.

Chapter 35

Stalin's reorganization of partisan units • Guerrilla hardships • Early guerrilla tactics • Long-range guerrilla operations • Over-all effectiveness of guerrilla warfare

GERMAN FAILURE to pacify, let alone mobilize, occupation areas immeasurably aided the Soviet high command's effort to harness diverse guerrilla forces, first to cause damage to the enemy, but also to prevent anti-Soviet forces from arising.

In spring of 1941, Stalin replaced earlier, makeshift partisan staff arrangements with the Central Staff of the Partisan Movement, headed by Marshal Voroshilov, soon replaced by a high-ranking party official, P. K. Ponomarenko, and operating directly under the Supreme Defense Council. The NKVD also formed a partisan section, as did army groups and armies a few months later.

Liaison teams trained and sent to the guerrilla units by these various headquarters did not fare well to start with, but, by summer of 1942, German brutality and Red army gains were causing passive acceptance by peasants and townspeople, and they were starting to give direction to the guerrilla movement. Simultaneously, the Soviets began to win local

air superiority, which greatly eased delivery of more teams, arms, and equipment, increased liaison between guerrillas and operational headquarters, and provided evacuation for badly wounded fighters. *The Partisan's Handbook* appeared in quantity from Moscow to offer ". . . guides on partisan tactics, Soviet and enemy weapons and explosives, German anti-partisan tactics, first aid," and other pertinent subjects.[1] By mid-1942, fifteen guerrilla training centers existed *behind* German lines around Voronezh alone; one of them taught a six-week course to classes ranging from 170 to 250 guerrillas.[2] Larger units, in the north, claimed a doctor and several nurses, also the ubiquitous political commissars. Arms began arriving in some quantity, and in addition to rifles included light mortars, machine guns, automatic rifles, bazookas, grenades, mines, and explosives. More airfields appeared in guerrilla country. As early as August 1942, leading guerrilla officials flew to Moscow to receive Stalin's direct orders and return to their units![3]

Progress remained slow, however, and setbacks frequent. German counteroperations kept many units on the run. By July 1942, Central Headquarters ". . . was in radio contact with only ten per cent of the partisan groups," and nowhere along the great battle line were guerrillas really hindering the German military effort. Hunger and sickness plagued many units. Guerrillas suffered badly from rheumatism, scurvy, pellagra, boils, toothaches, stomach and intestinal disorders—one "regiment," of 737 men, in 1942 recorded 261 casualties from sickness, 52 from combat and 20 from desertion.[4] The few units that boasted doctors suffered from lack of medicine. In September 1942, one guerrilla wrote of the hard life shortly before his death:

> . . . We are crossing the Lebyashka swamp. The villages round about are in flames. In the distance the thunder of cannon can be heard. Every five to six hundred yards we have to rest. We sit right down in the water, and, after ten minutes, move on. Everyone is weak. The swamp sucks us down. We sink in often, sometimes up to the hips. There is no end; the forest seems to be moving away from us. Finally the order is given to rest until dawn. . . . Camp fires are forbidden; the swamp-land is flat; and the Germans are all around. . . .[5]

Although guerrillas would endure incredible hardships until the end of the German presence, their lot began to improve in late 1942. By mid-November, central headquarters was in radio contact with 20 per cent of the guerrilla units; ". . . by the first of the year there were 424 radio transmitters in partisan groups, connecting the Central Staff with

1. Garthoff, op. cit.
2. Ziemke, op. cit.
3. Garthoff, op. cit.
4. Ziemke, op. cit.
5. Ibid.

1,131 detachments."[6] Where the movement numbered an estimated 30,000 at the beginning of 1942, the Germans reported some 150,000 by the summer of 1942 and about 200,000 in mid-1943.[7]

In the center and north, large partisan areas existed, some numbering between twelve thousand and twenty thousand. These comprised operational "brigades" of from three hundred fifty to two thousand guerrillas. Each brigade consisted of battalions, companies, and platoons which

> . . . might be dispersed over ten or twenty square miles. Groups of brigades occasionally occupied areas of several hundred square miles.[8]

Units devoted a great deal of effort, particularly in early stages, to security and survival. In populated areas, this meant almost constant involvement with the civil population. Although partisan commanders forbade indiscriminate looting, in order to gain food and supply and to deny it to the enemy and also to assert the government's presence, they did not hesitate to burn collective farms and destroy farm machinery. Under direction of political commissars specifically assigned by the Central Staff, units barraged the people with propaganda. One partisan propaganda officer wrote of the early days:

> . . . We wrote leaflets by hand. We had very little paper; we wrote on cardboard, on thin wooden boards, on glass, and we typed even on cloth and birch rind [sic]. In the morning our boys would distribute the leaflets in the villages, railroad stations, and even in Bryansk.[9]

The propaganda effort eventually became much more sophisticated and gained greatly because of enemy atrocities. Partisans also used selective terrorism, frequently killing German officials and Russian collaborators.

Small guerrilla units tried to become as self-sufficient as possible. Although air drops supplied essentials such as sugar, salt, and coffee, bands relied on the land and on raids of German dumps for food. A few isolated units tilled their own fields and kept herds of cattle.[10] One forest base of the time

> . . . included a log encampment, with flour mills, vats for soap-making, forges and home-made lathes for the repair and alteration of weapons. In addition to a wireless transmitting and receiving station, there was the inevitable printing works for the production of propaganda material and news sheets.[11]

6. Armstrong, op. cit.
7. Ibid.; see also Garthoff, op. cit.
8. Ziemke, op. cit.
9. A. Dallin, R. Mavrogordato, and W. Moll, "Partisan Psychological Warfare and Popular Attitudes." In Armstrong, *supra*.
10. Howell, op. cit.
11. Blair, op. cit.

In addition to "natural" defense provided by distance, terrain, and civil co-operation, the partisans depended on fortified permanent camps. One German lieutenant later described the defenses he encountered:

> . . . The bunker was solidly built. The walls were made of five to six inch logs, extending only about a foot above the level of the ground. The dugout was covered with earth, with only the entrance and window left uncovered. The roof was supported by two log beams and covered with a foot of ground. . . . The bunker on the inside measured about twenty-six feet in length, sixteen feet in width, and six feet in height. Nearby we found a supply of firewood, a kitchen dugout, and a well. The small stock of food was worthy of note.[12]

Partisan combat operations varied enormously. Some units worked out of base areas, returning after a specific operation. Others operated independently in German rear areas. One unit leader, Major General Sidor Kovpak, led a "roving band" on an eight-thousand-mile patrol over a twenty-six-month period. Moving mainly at night, Kovpak's people concentrated on attacking enemy lines of communication and isolated enemy detachments. Ironically the unit was nearly destroyed when it sought sanctuary in the northern Carpathians, where the people refused to support it.[13] A mounted brigade commanded by M. I. Naumov left Bryansk area in February 1943 to operate in the southwestern Ukrainian steppe. Attacked west of Kiev, the fourteen-hundred-man unit disintegrated. Only three hundred guerrillas escaped, but these managed to find sanctuary in woods in the northwest Ukraine, which eventually they made into a partisan stronghold.[14]

In the center and north, guerrilla units concentrated on destroying railroads and roads and on ambushing German detachments. At first, guerrillas struck targets of opportunity, but as units grew stronger and communications improved, they sometimes co-ordinated operations with the Red army. In the case of larger targets, for instance an enemy headquarters or an airfield,

> . . . in general, three echelons formed a raiding party: a "combat group," a "demolition group," and a "reserve" (which often ambushed pursuers). All raids and ambushes were prepared in advance with meticulous care, which comprised detailed reconnaissance observation (often performed by girls), detailed planning and the allotment beforehand of specific individual tasks, and cautious execution.[15]

The Soviet high command constantly called for maximum performance. Order after order stressed the need to cut German communi-

12. Ziemke, op. cit.
13. Blair, op. cit.; see also Armstrong, op. cit.
14. Armstrong, op. cit.
15. Garthoff, op. cit.

cations. A captured document stated requirements for a partisan commander who wished to be awarded the coveted Order of Lenin:

. . . The destruction of a large railroad center with the result that it is put out of use for not less than 20 days; the demolition of 2 railroad bridges not less than 100 metres long with the result that they are out of use for not less than 20 days; rendering a railroad station unusable for a period of not less than 30 days, including the destruction of the water tower, the track and crossings, the depot and shops, and other installations; the capture of not less than 10 railroad trains involving the liberation of not less than 10,000 persons being shifted from the USSR to Germany as forced labor; the liberation of not less than 5,000 men from a prisoner-of-war camp; the destruction of not less than 10 railroad trains loaded with military equipment, supplies, men, fuel, food, and material of general military usefulness; the capture of an enemy supply point containing military equipment, motor fuel, food, or not less than 300 vehicles; the capture of not less than 500 horses belonging to the German Fascist army; the destruction of an armored train of the enemy; the destruction of 10 enemy trucks; the capture for use in the unit of 1,000 rifles, or 150 machine guns and submachine guns, or 15 heavy machine guns, or 20 company and battalion (sized) mortars, or 9 heavy mortars, or artillery of different calibers.[16]

How many Orders of Lenin were so earned has not been recorded. In February 1943, however, the Central Staff issued priority targets:

. . . At the top of the list were roads, rail lines, bridges, and enemy vehicles and rolling stock. Secondary targets comprised telephone and telegraph lines and supply depots. The bands were to take offensive action against German guard posts, patrols, and other small units only when they had a definite superiority in numbers.[17]

Authorities differ as to how much damage guerrillas inflicted. Lieutenant General Ponomarenko, chief of the Central Staff, later claimed that, up to mid-1943, partisans killed over 300,000 Germans, destroyed 1,191 tanks and armored cars, 476 airplanes, 378 guns, over 4,000 trucks, and 895 supply depots, and attacked and in some cases destroyed thousands of rail and road bridges.[18] At the Nuremberg trials, the German defense counsel claimed that partisans killed over 500,000 Germans.[19]

Nearly all Western authorities refute these figures as gross exaggeration. Professor Armstrong has argued that total German military casualties inflicted by partisans probably did not exceed thirty-five thousand

16. Armstrong and DeWitt, op. cit.
17. Howell, op. cit.
18. N. Galay, "The Partisan Forces." In B. H. Liddell Hart (ed.), *The Soviet Army* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1956).
19. Ibid.

and that no more than half of these were German soldiers. Other authorities have pointed out that nowhere did guerrillas prevent the supply of German front-line troops and that in general they did not cause the high command to divert front-line troops to anti-partisan warfare. Captain Galay, however, has claimed that in late 1942 the German high command had committed fifteen field divisions to the rear area and that a year later was diverting twenty-five field divisions, about 10 per cent of the army's strength. Somewhat surprisingly, he concluded that ". . . there was not a single case in which partisan warfare . . . had any important influence on the operational situation of the German front," and more-recent scholars generally agree.[20]

"Important influence" must be defined in accepting this conclusion. Even the boldest German commander must have worried when an important rail line was knocked out for a day or two, and he must have fretted when he had to transfer battle-worn infantry units to the rear, where they tired themselves further by fruitless "combing" operations against guerrillas. With various and often-impressive guerrilla accomplishments in mind, Major Howell more sensibly concluded:

> . . . Certainly the bands hurt the *Wehrmacht*. Every rail break, every piece of rolling stock damaged or destroyed, every German soldier killed, wounded, or diverted from other duties to guard against the bands hurt. But the damage was never decisive.[21]

This seems a reasonable conclusion, although it is based primarily on German reports by professional officers probably unwilling to give the guerrilla his complete due. These reports constantly stress quantitative measurement—so many thousands of demolitions, so many hundred raids, so many roads blown up. A quantitative approach does not always provide a fair judgment, for example raids against a modern railroad with efficient maintenance and repair organizations will not cause the damage and delay of raids against a worn and obsolete system such as the Germans had to employ.

The immense battle action also hindered objective measurement. A few trains or convoys blown up could not overly impress German commanders who in five days of Operation *Zitadelle,* for instance, lost 2,268 armored vehicles and suffered thousands of casualties.[22]

Nor do reports stress the guerrilla achievement of growth under extremely difficult circumstances. All units faced numerous operational disadvantages and obstructions. An apathetic and often hostile population coupled with rigorous climate spelled extreme hardship with high casualties and low morale. In general, units suffered from lack of train-

20. Armstrong, op. cit.; see also Dallin, op. cit.; Howell, op. cit.
21. Howell, op. cit.
22. Ibid.

ing, poor leadership, command confusion both internally and with various external headquarters, supply shortages, poor target selection, poor demolition techniques, and distance from target and from German counteroperations.

The guerrillas nonetheless plagued the enemy in a hundred ways and often caused him to commit troops that could better have used rest. They slowed and sometimes stopped important road and rail movements. During later offensives, they often operated effectively with regular army units. They supplied valuable intelligence from the beginning. They also played a passive role of a force in being—an effective psychological presence attested to by numerous German and Austrian survivors who, years later, shuddered when speaking to this writer of the dreaded *Partisanen.* As a force in being, they also formed a strong political influence in many areas and played a major role in preventing Germans from exploiting the civil population to maximum effectiveness.

Finally, many deficiencies that plagued the guerrilla movement were being repaired when the Red army began its vast series of offensives that eventually recovered Soviet territory and ended the guerrilla movement. Because of internal difficulties and German suppression, it had attained neither full growth nor full striking power, and had it been needed in case of battle reverses, its role might indeed have proved decisive. In the event, the Kremlin was delighted to pat it on the back and end its existence as soon as possible.

Ironically, German commanders could have been spared the guerrilla menace to a large degree. The trouble started when Hitler and his closest advisers, holding Russia in contempt, seriously underestimated her military strength and her national will to resist invasion. As Alexander Dallin wrote:

> . . . No provision was made for the Führer's fallibility. If the campaign should last longer or if enemy defeats should be less than decisive, the Reich had no military reserves to throw into action, no plan for enlisting the Soviet population on its side, and no blueprint of political conduct except the eradication of "undesirables" in the occupied area.[23]

Had Hitler and his cohorts not combined arrogance of ignorance with arrogance of power, the Wehrmacht might well have won the war against Russia.

23. Dallin, op. cit.

Chapter 36

The Germans occupy Yugoslavia • Guerrilla units form • The Balkan guerrilla tradition • Scanderbeg • Heyduks *and* klefts *• Kosta Pečanac • World War II: Chetniks versus Partisans • Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party • Early operations • SOE intervenes • German counterguerrilla offensives • Tito's growing strength • New German offensives • Fitzroy Maclean reports • Tito grows stronger • His near capture • Final guerrilla actions • German and Yugoslav losses*

ELEVEN DAYS after Germany invaded Yugoslavia in March 1941, King Peter and his government fled to England, and the Yugoslav army, not yet fully mobilized, surrendered. To eliminate what Hitler regarded as a threat to his southern flank, he divided Slovenia between Germany and Italy, fed chunks of border areas to his satellite hounds—Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria—and established an independent Croatia under titular rule of Ante Pavelić, boss of an extremist Croat party called the Ustasi. What was left of Serbia went to the quisling rule of General Nedić. German minions, following hard on the heels of the fast-moving Wehrmacht, soon introduced wholesale conscription of men for forced labor in Germany and exploitation of food and economic resources.

Numerous Yugoslavs already had escaped the Nazi juggernaut by fleeing to traditional refuge in the mountains, and now thousands more left villages to escape forced labor or deportation to Germany. By midsummer 1941, sources of guerrilla bands were roaming broad mountain

ranges that stretch 450 miles through Slovenia and Montenegro—rugged terrain which continues inland from the coast and runs southeast through Macedonia to the Yugoslav-Greek border.

Had Adolf Hitler paid attention to history, he would have braced for trouble. Greek, Roman, and Byzantine armies at one time or another received bloody noses in the Balkans. Although the Slavs were dominated first by Avars and then by Greeks, their military reputation early became formidable. One authority, Professor Ferdinand Schevill, noted that

> . . . the individual Slav was a brave and even an ingenious fighter of the guerrilla type. His ambuscades in forest and mountain were well managed, and when pursued his favorite device seems to have been to disappear under water, where, securely hidden, he breathed so deftly through a reed that he could only with great difficulty be detected.[1]

Passing centuries of conflict that saw the emergence of ethnic groups, of Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgars, enhanced this reputation. Almost constant war between Arabs and Greeks frequently lapped over the Balkan Peninsula and nearly always proved cruel in the extreme. In 1014, for example, Basil II defeated Czar Samuel of Macedonia and earned the name Basil the Bulgar-killer in the following way:

> . . . Basil's victory yielded some 15,000 Bulgar captives. These, incredible as it sounds, he caused to be blinded and divided into hundreds; then, appointing as leader of each hundred a man who, in order to act as guide, had in hideous mockery been deprived of only one eye, he set the blank, staring faces homeward to carry the message of his omnipotence to his beaten adversary. When the ghastly procession approached the tsar's capital the people crowded the walls to see, and the tsar, as though struck with a bolt, sank to the ground in a stupor and died without recovering consciousness.[2]

The rise of the Ottoman Empire brought no surcease to the Balkans. Defeat at Kosovo in 1389 cost Serbia her independence for more than four centuries. But Turkish rule was never secure. Montenegrins under George Balsha shut themselves up in the Black Mountain to wage guerrilla warfare against both Turks and Venetians. One of the subsequent *Zupans,* or chiefs, probably Ivan the Black, who came to the throne in 1466, enacted a decree

> . . . to the effect that he who in the hour of battle should, on any pretext without the express order of the *Zupan,* leave the field and attempt to seek safety by flight, should as a mark of contempt and disgrace be dressed as a

1. F. Schevill, *History of the Balkan Peninsula* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922).
2. Ibid.

woman, equipped with a spindle in place of a sword, turned out of his home, beaten with spindles by the women, and finally hounded over the frontier as a traitor to Montenegrin liberty.[3]

Meanwhile in Albania a natural leader arose to frustrate the splendid Turkish army. This was a tribal chief, George Castriotes whom the Turks named Scanderbeg and who fought guerrilla warfare so successfully that Mohammed II finally came to terms with him:

. . . The fame of Scanderbeg . . . went like wild-fire throughout Balkania and the West. Great states like Hungary and Venice sought his alliance; the pope hailed him in quaint and picturesque phrase as "the athlete of Christendom."[4]

Scanderbeg died in 1467, and the tribes he had welded together by his own charisma fell apart and soon submitted to Turkish rule. The Montenegrins continued to hold out. In 1484, they burned their capital and withdrew to the mountain village of Cetinje, which they held for another 150 years, their attitude best expressed by the words spoken over male infants at the baptismal font: "God save him from dying in his bed."[5] Their guerrilla tactics infuriated Napoleon, who swore to turn Monte Negro into Monte Rosso. Even their Austrian allies shied away:

. . . the Emperor of Austria desired to employ their assistance as little as possible, "as from their savage characters and the lawless ferocity of their manners they must spread terror among the peaceable inhabitants, and produce ill-will and hatred towards the troops of His Imperial Majesty."[6]

The rest of the Balkans meanwhile suffered under the Ottoman yoke. The Turks considered the peoples as "rayahs," or "conquered infidels," who held ". . . no rights or privileges, who paid to the Sultan 'haratch,' and a tenth of the product of their labor, and who were at the mercy of their Turkish landlords, Turkish officials and warriors."[7] Beginning about 1750, Turkish oppression brought guerrilla bands into being. Called *heyduks* by the Serbs and *klefts* by the Greeks, these bands

. . . moved through the Servian mountains and forests, hurrying from one point to another, where a specially brutal misdeed of Turks against the Christian men and women was to be avenged. The Hydooks were a sort of irregular national force, insurgents who were permanently leading a guerrilla war against the Turks. They were the original model of the Committadjis

3. Alex Devine, *Montenegro in History, Politics and War* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918).
4. Schevill, op. cit.
5. Devine, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Chedo Majatovich, *Servia of the Servians* (London: Putnam & Sons, 1911).

of our days, only without a central leadership and without committees. Fear of the Hydooks was the only consideration which restrained the Turkish lawlessness, rapacity and violence. The Turks called them "brigands," and whoever of them fell into their hands was mercilessly impaled alive.[8]

Professor Schevill noted that:

. . . they were looked on by the common people as avengers of their wrongs and as a species of national heroes. A popular ballad literature gathered around them and carried to every rajah fireside the stirring tale of the blood paid by the oppressor for his age-old crimes.[9]

The crimes continued despite the heyduks, but the Serbs had just about had enough. In 1804, four Turkish captains known as the *Dahees* murdered the ruling Vizier Mustapha and formed

. . . a peculiar political, military and commercial partnership, proclaimed themselves masters of the entire Pashalik of Belgrade. They covered the country with a net of wooden blockhouses (*Hans*), which were occupied by their armed agents, who lived there at the expense of the neighboring villages, and collected the increased taxes and new imposts introduced by the Dahees.[10]

Frightened by rising restlessness of the people, they reacted by repression—by trying to kill every native leader or potential leader in the country. One of these intended victims was a heyduk chief, George Petrovich, who escaped to organize guerrilla war against the Janissaries. Successful in this, he led a revolt against the Turks and became famous as Black George. In 1813, however, he panicked and fled. Serbia returned to Moslem rule but, two years later, Milosh Obrenovich led a new and successful revolt. Obrenovich subsequently arranged for Black George's murder, thus starting a dynastic feud that lasted over a century.[11]

Interminable quarrels that made the Balkans famous as "the cockpit of Europe" invariably involved border guerrilla actions and terrorist raids. World War I, however, at first brought conventional battle to Serbia. But when the weight of Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian armies told, and the Serbs found themselves cut from the supply line to Salonika, they refused to surrender. Instead,

. . . hundreds of thousands of men, accompanied at the beginning by many thousands of women and children too, set out by two roads—one over the mountains of Montenegro to Skadar (Skutari), and the other from Prizren

8. Ibid.
9. Schevill, op. cit.
10. Majatovich, op. cit.
11. H. W. V. Temperley, *History of Servia* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1917).

up the valley of the White Drin and over the very peaks of the almost impassable Albanian mountains—to reach the sea.[12]

Hungry and cold, beset by bands of outlaws and hostile Albanian tribesmen, the fugitives died by tens of thousands. But over a hundred thousand managed to reach the coast, where French ships evacuated them to training areas—an army that eventually joined the allies at Salonika.

Meanwhile the peasants who remained also refused to submit to Austrian rule. In 1916, the allies flew in from Salonika a famous guerrilla leader, Kosta Pečanac, who started irregular warfare against the enemy.

. . . Although this rising, like all the others, was suppressed with the utmost ferocity and cruelty, reprisals being taken against old men, women and children if the rebels themselves could not be caught, Kosta himself remained at liberty and fighting right to the end of the war.[13]

In summer of 1941, numerous guerrilla bands struggling to survive in Yugoslav mountains served one of two flags: Chetnik or Partisan. Division between the two was deep, for little unity had existed in this Balkan country since its optimistic creation at the Paris Peace Conference.

Kosta Pečanac, hero of Serbian resistance in World War I, headed the Chetniks, a Serbian nationalist organization.[14] In theory, Chetniks formed the guerrilla arm of the Royal Yugoslav Army and were properly organized on a country-wide basis. In fact, no such organization existed. Pečanac, obsessed by reprisals that followed the partisan rising in 1916, preferred to accommodate the enemy and took a number of Chetniks over to General Nedić's puppet government. This left the main body of Chetniks in the hands of a regular officer, Colonel Draža Mihailović, who set up guerrilla headquarters in the mountains near Valjevo, in western Serbia.

Cored by the Yugoslav Communist Party, the Partisans formed a much more homogeneous force than the Chetniks. Forced underground in 1921 because of terrorist activities, party members had led a clandestine life, depending on wits, courage, and discipline to survive a series of police states. Originally sixty thousand strong, the party succumbed to feuding factionalism until, by 1928, membership numbered only three thousand. Government repression further hurt it until, in 1934, it was falling apart at the seams.[15]

Meanwhile, however, a young Croat metalworker, Josip Brozovich,

12. H. D. Harrison, *The Soul of Yugoslavia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941); see also Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (London: Macmillan, 1942), Vol. 1 of 2 vols.

13. Ibid.

14. Seton-Watson, op. cit.: "Literally . . . a member of a *Cheta,* which is the Serbian word for an armed band."

15. Fitzroy Maclean, *Disputed Barricades* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957).

had been rising in party ranks. Born in 1892, the seventh of fifteen children in an impoverished home in a small village, Josip completed elementary school before leaving home to work as locksmith and mechanic. Enlisting in a Croat regiment to fight for Austria in World War I, he rose to warrant-officer rank, was badly wounded and captured by the Russians, learned the language, and, in 1917, joined the Bolsheviks. He married a Russian, fought with the Kirghiz nomads, who were Mongol horsemen, and in 1920 returned to what had become Yugoslavia, a state of 12 million persons.

Josip Broz, as he had become, worked as party organizer and agitator, slowly rising in the party while fathering a family and spending a good many years in jail. In 1935, he worked for the Comintern, then returned to Yugoslavia to set up a "rat-line" which fed some fifteen hundred volunteers to the fighting in Spain; many of his future generals fought with international brigades. In 1937, the Kremlin liquidated his boss and made him secretary-general of the Yugoslav party. Tito, as he was now known, reorganized the party, raising its membership to twelve thousand, a small but disciplined group dedicated to the Communist ideal.[16]

In 1941, the German invasion caught Yugoslav Communists off balance, mainly because of the existing German-Russian non-aggression pact. When Hitler's legions broke that by invading Russia, the Comintern cabled Tito: ". . . Organize partisan detachments without a moment's delay. Start a partisan war in the enemy's rear."[17] Out went word to take to the hills. Tito set up partisan headquarters near Užice, in western Serbia, not far from Mihailović's camp.

The German invasion of Russia brought partisan recruits to each camp:

> . . . throughout Yugoslavia, and particularly in the Serbian provinces, sympathy for Russia was deep-rooted and traditional. The Serbs not only loved Russia, but greatly over-estimated her strength. The mood of the Serbian people now suddenly changed from bewildered despair to extravagant optimism. . . .[18]

Tito at once exploited the prevailing mood, insisting on offensive action against the enemy in order to disrupt his forces, hinder operations, and provide his own guerrilla bands with arms, equipment, food, and clothing. Mihailović, who considered himself legitimate representative of the government-in-exile, wanted to avoid enemy reprisals by taking no overt action but instead building a resistance movement for later cooperation with the allies and also for postwar political purposes.

Although Chetniks joined Communists in clearing the Užice area of enemy garrisons, the truce quickly disintegrated. The first British liaison

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

officer smuggled into the country, Captain Hudson, found some Chetnik and Communist units in open battle.[19] Hudson managed to bring the leaders together—a strange meeting: the slightly built eminently proper professional officer Mihailović, steel-rimmed spectacles, his beard trimmed, his words demanding cautious tactics; the *nouveau* Tito, the rebel, guest of royalist jails, big and tough, Slav features passive, blue eyes cold in rejection of all Mihailović stood for. The meeting accomplished nothing except to expose to Hudson the opposite, intransigent attitudes.

Hudson represented the main headquarters of the British organization devoted to covert operations, the Special Operations Executive, or SOE. At this stage, late 1941, SOE suffered a terrible ignorance of the true situation in most world battle areas. Lacking organization and communications, SOE could not repair its deficiencies overnight, nor did it yet own either supplies or delivery means to aid dissident groups. In the case of Yugoslavia, Hudson reported to the best of his ability. Poor communications and his own limitations—he was a young mining engineer—severely hindered his attempts to unravel the tangled skein of Yugoslav politics to his London superiors, and shortly after his arrival in the country he was forced off the air for nearly six months. SOE attempts to infiltrate other agents during this crucial period failed, primarily from want of satisfactory means. Meanwhile, Mihailović's optimistic reports to London of Chetnik resistance resulted in the Yugoslav government-in-exile promoting him to general and minister of war. SOE (London) also declared for the Chetniks, an understandable error in view of their ignorance of the true situation, and in any event an academic error, considering SOE's lack of resources.

During this confused period, the German army, in mid-November 1941, launched its first offensive against the guerrillas.[20] In two weeks, the Wehrmacht gained control of the Užice area. Tito's Partisans bore the brunt of this fighting, which ended with retreat to mountains in the Northwest. Some Chetnik units, disillusioned by Mihailović's refusal to fight, joined the Partisans, who also found new allies hiding in Bosnian mountains.

Mihailović's fears had proved correct:

> . . . The suppression of the revolt in Serbia was followed by a massacre. Thousands of Serbs were shot or hanged, and thousands more were arrested, maltreated and imprisoned or deported to forced labor. The worst atrocities occurred in the industrial town of Kragujevac, where 8,000 people are be-

19. Blair, op. cit.

20. Fitzroy Maclean, *Eastern Approaches* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1949). The author offers an excellent description of both German and Partisan tactics in this excellent work; see also Department of the Army, *German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941–1944)* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1954).

lieved to have been shot, including several hundred school-children. Bitter hatred was created against the Germans, but there was at the same time resentment against the partisans because they had failed to fulfil their high hopes, and had brought suffering on innocent people.[21]

Tito had just established new headquarters northeast of Sarajevo when a second German offensive forced him to retreat south to the rugged mountains of the Drina headwaters—a defeat caused in part by refusal of Chetnik units to fight. Hard on the heels of this disaster came another Communist defeat, in Montenegro, one partially brought on by savage reprisals of Communist guerrillas against anyone co-operating with Italian occupation forces. With Mihailović's blessing, Chetniks openly co-operated in an Italian offensive that drove Communist bands back into Herzegovina and Bosnia.

By mid-1942, an irreparable rift existed between Chetniks and Partisans. Chetnik groups in Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Dalmatia collaborated openly with Italians. In Serbia, Mihailović commanded about ten thousand Chetniks who, based on the countryside, maintained an armed truce with the Nedić quisling and German troop units. Ustasi militia in Croatia formed pro-Axis shock-troop units whose members, as with Darnand's *milice* in Vichy France, provided invaluable local knowledge to German commanders.

Tito, on the other hand, despite severe setbacks, never stopped fighting. Nor did he ever forget that he was fighting for a purpose, a political purpose. He early began building a political base by creating local administrations in liberated areas which he called OBDORs. In November 1942, at Bihać, in southern Bosnia, he and his followers unfurled the flag of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation, or AVNOJ—a scene faintly reminiscent of Communists in southern China in 1928. AVNOJ at once publicized its dedication to freeing the country and forming a state along democratic and federal lines, welcome words that brought fresh recruits flocking in.

Simultaneously, Tito was developing a regular army. He began this effort during the retreat after the First German Offensive by creating the First Proletarian Brigade. By mid-1942, he claimed two "divisions" —unorthodox formations each about twenty-five hundred strong, but sufficient when combined with other Partisan units to regain the area vacated in the Second Offensive and to push on into Bosnia and Croatia. This led to the "People's Army of Liberation," or JANL, created in late 1942 and composed of seven "shock divisions." In addition to these, he developed an ever-growing guerrilla army, and he also relied on part-time Partisans, who lived and worked among the enemy—gentle farmers and civil folk by day, cut-throat assassins and saboteurs by night.

During mid-1942, SOE officers in London and Cairo began forming

21. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

a more accurate picture of Yugoslav resistance. Hudson again was transmitting, as was Radio Free Yugoslavia, a Russian-sponsored operation that supported Tito. Mihailović continued to flood London with reports, claims, demands, and protests—each increasingly scrutinized and questioned by SOE officers in view of Mihailović's inaction.

Toward the end of the year, SOE(London) sent in a new mission, under one Colonel Bailey. Shortly after his arrival, SOE(Cairo) infiltrated several liaison teams to Mihailović's units. Independent reports from Bailey and these new teams confirmed not only Mihailović's inaction but his collaboration with the enemy. SOE(London) now began to look more favorably on Tito's Partisans.

Tito's Partisans had their hands full. In January 1943, the Germans opened a Fourth Offensive: a two-prong thrust from the north intended to drive Tito's forces south to the river Neretva, strongly defended by Italian and Chetnik units. Learning of the German plan, Tito sent three divisions south to break through before the defenses hardened.[22] They were still attacking when the Germans struck from the north. Fighting hard, the Partisans slowly withdrew to the south, but suffered heavy casualties before punching through the Italo-Croat-Chetnik defense. On the credit side, the Partisans blasted Mihailović's Chetnik force, some twelve thousand irregulars, whom the Partisans, despite their own serious losses, chased into Montenegro.

At the end of May 1943, the enemy struck again. This, the Fifth Offensive, involved German, Ustasi, Bulgar, and Italian troops, an immense force of over one hundred thousand supported by tanks, artillery, and aircraft while encircling and closing on the Partisan stronghold. A captured German order revealed high hopes: ". . . Now that the ring is completely closed, the Communists will try to break through. You will ensure that no able-bodied man leaves the ring alive."[23]

The Partisans finally broke out, not to the east but to the northwest. General von Löhr later wrote: ". . . The Germans were too exhausted to stop them and there were no reserves."[24] The effort nonetheless cost Tito about ten thousand dead or missing.[25] Survivors found respite in the mountains north of Sarajevo. Here, joined by fresh guerrilla forces, Tito rested briefly. By August, he had considerably expanded his area of operations. Meanwhile the British had dropped a liaison officer, an Oxford historian, F. W. Deakin, who reached Tito at the height of the Fifth Offensive (and was wounded along with Tito). His favorable

22. Blair (op. cit.) has suggested that perhaps a ranking German officer who was a secret agent tipped off Tito.

23. Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra;* see also F. W. D. Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

24. Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra.*

25. Otto Heilbronn, *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963).

report prompted SOE(London) to send Tito an aid mission. Still hoping for maximum resistance, SOE(London) also reiterated willingness to aid Mihailović, but only if he ceased collaboration with the enemy and came to operational agreement with the Partisans.

Tito exploited Italy's collapse, in September, by establishing contact with Partisan units in Slovenia and by occupying a large portion of the Dalmatian coast and offshore islands. Although the Germans soon expelled the guerrillas from the coast, Tito retained the islands, his forces growing stronger in the process—tactical gains shortly to pale in comparison with a political victory.

For, also in September, a powerful SOE mission under Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean reached Tito's headquarters. Maclean was not a career officer. A testy Scot, at thirty-two years of age he had served eight years in diplomacy, felt at home in difficult political situations, and was a sufficient realist to appreciate the dimensions of Tito's past work and future potential. More important, he belonged to the British Establishment—a member of Parliament, he was a personal friend of Winston Churchill, who appointed him his personal representative much to the annoyance of SOE and the Cairo military command. Maclean did not take long to make up his mind: Tito must be supported to the maximum of SOE's ability.

In sorry contrast to Maclean's optimistic reports stood those from a regular British officer, Brigadier Armstrong, who headed a new mission to Mihailović. Colonel Bailey and Mihailović had long since fallen out, and Armstrong quickly suffered a similar disillusionment. He found Mihailović ". . . dominated by the single thought of how to overcome the Partisans, to whom he was bitterly and irreconcilably hostile. He appeared completely disinterested in attacks on communications. . . ."[26] Armstrong's blunt reports brought forth a series of SOE demands blithely ignored by Mihailović. After repeated warnings, SOE suspended further aid, in December 1943; with departure of the last liaison team, in spring of 1944, allied contact ceased.

While Mihailović's star declined in the allied sky, Tito's was rising, mainly due to the exuberant Maclean, who presented the Partisan case in most vigorous terms to his own government. In November, the Partisan government, the AVNOJ, met to proclaim ". . . a new federal Yugoslavia, having denounced the exiled King and Government, and promoted Tito to the rank of Marshal."[27] Almost simultaneously, Maclean's representations caused allied heads of state at Tehran to agree that ". . . the Partisans in Yugoslavia should be supported by supplies and equipment to the greatest possible extent. . . ."[28]

26. Blair, op. cit.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.; see also Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra.* An American OSS officer joined the British Mission in September; American OSS missions later worked with both Tito and Mihailović.

Maclean himself suffered no illusions concerning Tito's political bent. He reported that ". . . in any event, [allied] help or not, the partisans were going to be a decisive post-war influence in Jugoslavia." He went on: "Much will depend on Tito, and whether he sees himself in his former role of Comintern agent or as the potential ruler of an independent Jugoslav State." In Cairo he explained this to Mr. Churchill, and stressed the probability of Yugoslavia becoming a Communist state. Churchill's reaction underscored his priority concern for winning the war:

"Do you intend," he asked, "to make Yugoslavia your home after the war?"

"No, Sir," I replied.

"Neither do I," he said. "And, that being so, the less you and I worry about the form of Government they set up, the better. That is for them to decide. What interests me is, which of them [Partisans or Chetniks] is doing most harm to the Germans?"[29]

The allied decision to support Tito at first meant little. In summer of 1943, SOE had been talking grandly of supplying 500 tons a month to the Partisans; they actually delivered a meager 230 tons for *all* of 1943. And in December of that year, Tito once again was fighting for his life, in the Sixth Offensive, Operation *Kugelblitz* (Thunderbolt), a massive effort undertaken by over fourteen German divisions and five non-German divisions. Lasting several weeks, this effort forced Partisans out of all offshore islands except Vis, a major Partisan base, and it also penetrated into the mountains of Slovenia, Bosnia, and western Serbia before running out of steam. It left the Germans generally in command of towns and most communication centers, but it left Partisan forces relatively intact throughout the country.

With increased allied aid, the Partisan movement began to take off. In September 1943, Maclean estimated a total Partisan force of one hundred thousand. By spring of 1944, this had grown to over two hundred thousand and Tito was demanding tanks, artillery, and aircraft. Allied planes were also flying out wounded Partisans: ". . . During 1944 more than 10,000 military and 2,000 civilian casualties were thus evacuated."[30] Meanwhile, at allied request, Tito raised Partisan units in Serbia to interdict German communications through the Morava Valley, a successful effort that attracted thousands of Serbs to the Partisan banner. Again at allied request, Tito ordered units in Slovenia to prepare for Operation Bearskin: by cutting roads and railroads in the north, allied planners hoped to prevent German troop reinforcement either to northern Italy or to Normandy, where the allies would soon land.

29. Maclean, *Eastern Approaches, supra.*
30. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

At this point, Tito was riding high and perhaps grew complacent. Neither he nor his staff officers at the cave command post in Drvar seemed suspicious of a German airplane that ". . . spent half an hour or more flying slowly up and down at a height of about two thousand feet."[31] The British mission did not like it and moved off into surrounding hills. Four days later, at the end of May, with no warning, bombers plastered the area, then six JU-52s dropped paratroopers, who were followed by troops crash-landing in gliders while a three-column ground attack pressed in overland.

While Tito's "palace guard" held off German paratroopers, the Partisan leader escaped through a rear exit. After a furious pursuit, Tito, his principal staff officers, the British and Russian missions, and 118 wounded guerrillas were evacuated by a series of hastily improvised airlifts. Tito subsequently established himself on Vis, where his headquarters remained until war's end.

This interruption upset planning for Operation Bearskin, as did increased enemy security in target areas and poor weather, which hindered airdrops of vital demolitions. For all these reasons, Bearskin only partially succeeded. But, in September, Partisans brought off Operation Ratweek, by cutting roads and railroads from one end of the country to the other. In restricting German troop movements, this guerrilla ef-

31. Maclean, *Eastern Approaches, supra.*

fort primarily assisted the British-U.S. offensive in northern Italy; secondarily it assisted the Russians moving into Bulgaria.

The final major Partisan offensive concentrated on interdicting the German XXI Mountain Corps during withdrawal north. Although guerrillas, heavily supported by the allies, caused the enemy to abandon transport and heavy equipment, they did not prevent his main body from reaching the northern border. Maclean has pointed out, however, that in the last two months of the fighting, the Germans lost close to one hundred thousand killed and over two hundred thousand captured.[32] Captured German figures reported twenty-four thousand Germans killed and twelve thousand missing.[33] According to the Yugoslav Government, the Yugoslavian people lost over 10 per cent of its population and over 60 per cent of its national wealth: ". . . We lost 1,685,000 people, of whom over 75 per cent were shot or lost their lives in Fascist camps or death chambers. We lost over 90,000 skilled industrial workers and miners and 40,000 intellectuals. There are 425,000 wounded or disabled. . . ."[34]

By January 1945, what was left of Yugoslavia was virtually clear of enemy troops. Most Ustasi and Chetnik leaders had fled. Supported by the Russians, Tito easily expanded his power base, and by the end of the war had emerged incontestably as the new ruler of Yugoslavia.

32. Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra.*
33. Basil Davidson, *Partisan Picture* (London: Bedford Books, 1946).
34. Ibid.

Chapter 37

German strength in Yugoslavia • German operational problems • Tito and Yugoslav nationalism • The Hauspartisanen *• Tito's guerrilla tactics • Kosta's operations • SOE's liaison problems • The Russian attitude*

THE GERMAN EXPERIENCE in Yugoslavia emphasized the importance of a guerrilla force in being. Without Tito's Partisans, the Germans could have enjoyed an easy occupation with benefits the term implies: total access to the country's manpower and economic resources, a fertile ground for New Order propaganda—all for a minimum investment of occupation forces.

As it was, until autumn of 1943, the guerrilla threat forced Germany to keep nine Wehrmacht divisions in Yugoslavia, a hefty force buttressed by ten Italian divisions and numerous Bulgarian and local quisling units. The value of the collaborators was questionable. Local German commanders, in trying to exploit "sympathetic" resistance groups, frequently conflicted not only with Italian policy but with ". . . German military policy and German Nazi Party and Gestapo policy."[1]

1. Seton-Watson, op. cit.

Italy's collapse, in late 1943, forced Germany to raise her occupation troops to 14-plus divisions, a force augmented by five satellite divisions: an estimated total of 140,000 German troops and 66,000 satellite troops. In addition, Germany supported 150,000–170,000 Bulgar, Croat, and Chetnik troops. In 1943, establishing a new command in Belgrade, Army Group F, the German high command in effect changed an army of occupation to an operational fighting force.[2] Tito's force at this time numbered around 100,000 soon to climb to some 220,000.

This number ratio helps to validate Partisan operations, as do certain enemy testimonials: ". . . Field Marshal von Weichs, the German Commander-in-Chief South-east (Balkans), directed his formations to refer in their reports to Tito's partisans not any longer as bands but to brigades, divisions and so on, and expressed himself to the effect that they had to be considered as the equivalent of the regular forces of Germany's other enemies."[3] Final proof rests in the seven major German attempts to capture Tito and eliminate the Partisans. These were not slapdash affairs, but were carefully planned military operations. They suffered a host of problems: poor internal security, poor co-ordination among German, satellite and local forces, general ineptness of satellite and local-force commanders, failure of German commanders to adjust to the tactical problem, for example their insistence on night bivouacs while the Partisans marched. But ultimate failure stemmed not from these problems but from what history already should have taught the German high command: the seemingly uncanny ability of guerrillas to survive in home grounds. The lesson gains in importance when large areas of these home grounds, unlike vast forests of the Ukraine, held considerable hostile forces, in this case Croatian Ustasi, Serbian Chetniks, and Nedić quislings, not to mention German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation troops.

How to explain this?

The first factor was the fertile field of human feeling, a sort of patriotic anarchy best described in the controlled panic of a dispatch sent by a ranking German civil official, Dr. Thurner, from Belgrade, in August 1941:

> . . . All our attempts to canalize these people in a constructive direction and separate them from the Communists have failed and had to be abandoned. We have argued with them, conferred with them, cajoled them and threatened them, but all to no purpose. We do not believe that it is possible to achieve anything in this country on the basis of authority. The people just do not recognize authority. A minority question cannot be created among the Serbs as it was with such success among the Croats. Practically

2. Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra;* see also Blair, op. cit.; Department of the Army, op. cit.

3. Heilbronn, op. cit.

nobody is interested in the old political parties. They do not believe in anyone any more and they follow the Communist bandits blindly. With their slogans the Communists have succeeded in rallying round them elements who in the past would never have dreamt of co-operating with them. Some go so far as to prefer Bolshevism to occupation by our troops. . . . My impression is that even the news of the capitulation of the Soviet Union would not cause these bandits to capitulate. They are tougher than anything you can imagine. What is more, their organization is excellent. It might serve as the classical example of a perfect secret organization.[4]

Thurner hit on the second factor, which was qualitative. In contrast to leaders of pro-German parties, Tito headed a small and disciplined organization, the Communist Party, whose members never questioned the Partisan mission of fighting the enemy and never forgot the party's political goal of constantly expanding to achieve postwar power. Tito constantly stressed the necessity of retaining support of the general population. Shortly after taking to the field in 1941, he issued an Order:

. . . Experience hitherto has shown that insufficient attention has been paid to the concept of a general uprising of the people. This mistake must be rectified without delay. There is a danger that otherwise the Partisans may lose touch with the masses who are ready to fight for the just cause. . . .[5]

About the same time, he ordered a Croatian leader:

. . . Do everything in your power to see that in future the conduct of operations is well organized and centralized under strong leadership. Form strong Partisan formations and see that they are constantly in action.[6]

This bellicose unity contrasted violently with that of other national groups such as the Chetniks—a splintered organization with important segments either remaining feckless in pathetic desire to let war wash harmlessly over them or waiting to see the probable result, sometimes secretly aiding Partisans, sometimes even coming over to them.

Tito exploited divisive national feeling in several ways. Partisan propaganda, particularly the promise of "a liberal and democratic" postwar government, appealed to a great many unaligned people who loathed the repressive prewar order represented by the government-in-exile through Mihailović's Chetniks. The harshness of German and Italian occupation policies further influenced the population in favor of the Partisans, who possessed much wider support than either western allied observers or Germans supposed.

Tito always respected the need for this support. When he was on the run after the First German Offensive, his meager supply train still in-

4. Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra.*
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

cluded twelve oxcarts that held a printing press and five thousand newly printed copies of *The Short History of the Communist Party*.[7] He insured discipline by attaching political commissars to Partisan units at all levels. He also harnessed national feeling by establishing local administrative units, or OBDORs, in "liberated" areas. When the enemy "captured" such an area, OBDOR became a "shadow" government and, as such, performed numerous valuable functions, for example acting as a deterrent to would-be collaborators and helping to establish and maintain one of the Partisans' most valuable adjuncts: small groups of volunteers who stayed in their own locality and ". . . lived as civilians among the population, followed their normal occupations and worked as part-time partisans."[8] In addition to furnishing food and intelligence, ". . . they killed sentries, threw hand-grenades into German barracks, burned down garages, mined village streets and house entrances, destroyed railway lines—in one night they blew up the rails of the Agram-Belgrade railway in eighty places—and did all the other jobs which partisans usually perform."[9] The Germans called them *Hauspartisanen,* or Home Partisans, and detested them. Colonel General Rendulic, commanding a German Panzer army, later stated that ". . . the life and tasks of the German troops would have been much easier if the opponent had had only closed formations. The Home Partisans were a much more dangerous enemy because it was from them that all the hostile acts emanated against which the troops could protect themselves only with the greatest difficulty and which caused them large losses. They could seldom, if ever, be caught."[10] In attempting to catch them, Germans killed and imprisoned thousands of innocent people, thus creating new Partisans. The effect of Home Partisans was beyond all proportion to their limited numbers—an estimated eight thousand in June 1944.[11]

Tito was also smart enough to keep his regular military organization simple. JANL, despite regular army trappings, remained essentially a guerrilla organization of small, semi-independent, and lightly armed bands. Tito could boast about "divisions"—but a Partisan division counted only about twenty-five to thirty-five hundred men divided into "brigades" consisting of several groups, or "battalions." These units lacked any sort of artillery or formal communications, but, singly or in unison, they fought extremely well under tough, self-reliant leaders of unquestioned loyalty. Moving often at night, guerrilla bands covered vast areas, often fighting against great odds with no doctors or medicines to treat their wounded. Allied observers remarked feelingly on Partisan resilience and the high state of morale, and this must have been the

7. Ibid.
8. Heilbronn, op. cit.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

case in order for them to have survived numerous vicissitudes of war such as the 180-mile retreat with thousands of wounded during the Fourth Offensive.

Tito later offered Brigadier Maclean a remarkable analysis of his operational success, words as pertinent now as then:

> . . . We sought to instil in our units the strictest possible discipline, not by extra drills, but by ceaseless political instruction with the object of improving both individual and collective morale and of securing a proper attitude towards the population. Our aim was to build up from our Partisan Detachments an army which would win the devotion of the civil population. Hence the severe sanctions inflicted on those who did anything to alienate the population. . . . Every defeat had at once to be made up for by a victory—anywhere—so that morale did not suffer. For this reason even our worst defeats, even the big enemy offensives had no effect on the morale of our men, for we ourselves at once went over to the offensive, choosing the place where the enemy least expected it. . . . It was vital also to impress upon our men that they must never allow the fact of being surrounded to demoralize them, but must regard it as the normal situation in our kind of war. By concentrating our efforts against one point, we could always break out of any encirclement. . . . Whenever the enemy launched an offensive, we sent out Partisan Detachments to destroy communications behind his lines. That had a demoralizing effect on our opponents and prevented them from bringing up the supplies they needed. Finally—and this, too, is important—we were always in dangerous and difficult situations; but our men never cursed us because we were always exposed to the same dangers they were.[12]

Tito was always careful to retain mobility. At the time of the Fourth Offensive, he wrote:

> We must avoid fixed fronts. We must not let the enemy force us by clever tactics on to the defensive. On the contrary, the spirit of our troops must be offensive, not only in the attack, but in defense as well. During an enemy offensive the offensive spirit must find expression in vigorous and audacious guerrilla tactics, in operations behind the enemy's lines, in the destruction of his communications, in attacks on his supply centers, and on bases which are temporarily weakened. We must be no more afraid of being surrounded now than when we had fewer troops. We must make up for the loss of an area by the conquest of a larger and more important area.[13]

Brave words, these, and only partially carried out. The almost always precarious Partisan position greatly restricted offensive operations. Early in the war, guerrillas had to attack targets that would yield arms and

12. Maclean, *Disputed Barricades, supra.*
13. Ibid.

clothing, but even later, when allied supply started reaching them in some quantity, they were not strong enough to strike where they wished. Many sensitive targets such as communication centers lay beyond reach. Co-ordination of effort at times was very poor, the inevitable result of primitive communications: couriers often became lost or captured, and lack of satisfactory codes frequently endangered security. A security error almost led to Tito's demise in the Drvar raid, but such carelessness on his part was rare.

Partisan operations perforce were often decentralized, which meant that Tito had to rely on capable subordinate leaders. These men generally worked out their own tactics. Basil Davidson, who served as British liaison officer to one of Tito's chief guerrilla leaders, Kosta Nadj, later described Kosta's tactics for taking towns:

> . . . to feint elsewhere whilst moving his assault units stage by stage into position under cover of darkness; and then to precede the final night assault by the infiltration of a picked unit whose job it was to get into the center of the town without firing a shot and to occupy one or two prominent buildings; as soon as the general assault began this panic unit would open rapid fire in all directions, and create conditions in the rear of the defenders which enabled those outside to open a breach, and then by street-fighting to link up and isolate the enemy for piecemeal destruction.[14]

Like many other unit commanders, Kosta started with almost no weapons, relying on militia forces to furnish them. His success caused German garrisons to change tactics by mid-1942, basing town defense on a system of central bunkers. Partisans replied by sneaking in grenadiers, or *bombashi,* to throw grenades through the bunker slits.

> . . . The best bombashi were boys of twelve or fourteen, little chaps who could nip quickly over the hundred yards or so that might separate the bunker from the nearest cover to throw their bombs before the enemy knew what was happening. Many of them were killed in the course of this hazardous but necessary operation.[15]

Davidson accompanied Kosta's considerable force on operations east of Belgrade, where it fought virtually independently of Tito's headquarters. Once the guerrilla mastered his new surroundings, once he held "intimate" knowledge of terrain and enemy locations and habits, he was on top:

> . . . This nearness gave rise to contempt for the enemy; he was slow, and inferior, and frightened of the dark, and he could move in large numbers and in broad daylight but almost never by himself. He was like a huge and overfed caterpillar, obese and horrible, many-legged, abominable. In com-

14. Davidson, op. cit.
15. Ibid.

parison with this stupid monstrosity the partisan felt himself to be a superman, alone perhaps, but self-reliant in his cunning and strong health, his existence rooted as deeply in the land as the long smooth timbers of the oaks of Fruska Gora, his survival guaranteed somehow by the very nature of things. The country belonged to him, not to the enemy.[16]

The guerrilla's lot could have been greatly eased by a more realistic allied aid policy. Tito's accomplishments loom considerably larger when we consider that, up to the end of 1943, he received the barest minimum of arms and equipment. Almost entirely on his own, he had organized an army and government while alternately harassing the enemy and escaping from him. An earlier supply effort would have solved many of his problems, besides saving thousands of lives.

The basic British difficulty stemmed from lack of area intelligence, surprising in view of Britain's political sophistication, and the failure of means to repair that deficiency. A more objective appraisal of the resistance movements was also hindered by natural sympathy for the Royal Yugoslav Government as exemplified by Mihailović and his Chetniks. But liaison officers, properly trained for the target country and possessing adequate communications, could have cleared the confusion in short order. SOE never overcame the liaison problem, and Blair concludes that, in general, Maclean's liaison officers ". . . knew nothing of guerrilla warfare and little of the Yugoslav language, history or politics, and their reports were of limited value. Very few actions were ever fought which would not have taken place without the missions, and as one description states, 'half a ton of ammunition and explosives would in most areas have been more effective than half a ton of BLOs [British liaison officers].' Their presence was also a source of suspicion to the Partisans."[17] An interesting side effect resulted from their reports, which the BBC used: Although broadcasts of world news by this august organization were renowned for accuracy, its Yugoslav coverage drew heavy criticism for inaccuracy, Maclean himself complaining, and the Germans making a propaganda field day out of patent errors.[18]

SOE operations also suffered from tortured command channels. This sometimes led to the ludicrous, as in the case of Bailey's mission to Mihailović. While Bailey at Mihailović's headquarters duly reported to SOE (London), his subordinates, liaison officers in the field with Chetnik units, *reported independently to SOE(Cairo)*. On at least one occasion, SOE(Cairo) acted under duress from the military high command and issued orders that had to be countermanded by SOE(London). Maclean wore three hats: SOE commander to Tito, personal

16. Ibid.
17. Blair, op. cit.
18. Ibid.

representative to Supreme Allied Commander, Middle East, and personal representative to the British Prime Minister. The latter appointment obfuscated the other two and, at best, meant that, should his nominal superiors tread at all, they would tread very lightly.

Command confusion grew along with the allied effort. SOE could handle a supply problem of a few hundred tons; it could not support large training programs, supply a small army, and co-ordinate required air, naval, and ground efforts. This difficulty led to drastic command reorganization, in spring of 1944.[19]

Despite these shortcomings, British and American military aid to Tito represented a distinct sacrifice, both in early stages, when arms and supply were measured in single tons and in delivery requirements of one or two aircraft, and later, when this aid measured thousands of tons delivered by squadrons of aircraft and ships. Military critics of the time, including some ranking officers, argued that this considerable investment in men and material could have been used more profitably in more orthodox operations.

This assessment depended on ultimate objectives. If the allied objective had been merely to sustain Tito in harassing the enemy—an objective incidentally defended by Dr. Heilbronn over more aggressive operations—then a great deal of aid and the concomitant machinery could have been eliminated in favor of "hard" supply of small arms. Allied planners, however, looked far beyond this mundane achievement. Until late 1943, their most distant horizon comprised a joint Chetnik-Partisan resistance, and one can argue that such a contingency either would have reduced the enemy to abject impotence or forced him from Yugoslavia, an interesting consideration in view of Winston Churchill's eagerness to extend orthodox military operations to the Balkans. The Chetnik default dimmed this glorious horizon but briefly, for now Maclean painted a glorious picture of an enormous Partisan army of combined arms, and indeed in some very valid colors. Nor did Tito hesitate to jump on the new band wagon: early in 1944, he was demanding tanks, artillery, and aircraft.

This was not as stupid as it sounds in retrospect, and for reasons already mentioned. No one knew in early 1944 when the war would end—the atomic-bomb situation was still far from clear. In the event, Tito's army became superfluous.

Superfluous, at least, to allied military operations. And hereby hangs a curious irony. Had Tito not built his Partisan army, in part with allied aid, a most uncomfortable vacuum would have existed in postwar Yugoslavia—a geographical entity traditionally in the Russian sphere of influence. Stalin did not wait for cannons to stop firing before asserting

19. Each service assumed command of its own operating forces, with the RAF appointed to co-ordinate operations and the supply function assigned to Special Operations, Middle East, at Cairo.

his dominance over Tito and the country. But Stalin had showed up badly compared to the West. Tito had begged the Soviets to send him arms beginning in August 1941. Stalin had paid no attention either to that or subsequent requests, and a Soviet military mission, which did not even reach Tito until February 1944, accomplished nothing. Tito had never been overly impressed with the Russian Communists, and his war experience did not endear them to him. Although he would have trouble with the West in postwar years, he still had to face the inescapable fact that the West had helped him when the chips were down.

So it was that Tito not only filled the Yugoslav vacuum left by World War II, but, shortly after doing so, proved to the world that communism and Moscow were not synonymous. Although his rule left much to be desired, it turned an area once riddled with factionalism into a reasonably stable country whose insistence on independent political status has more than once proved a healthy stabilizing factor in international diplomacy. To accomplish this, his people have paid the piper by sacrificing individual liberties in what remains still another totalitarian regime.

Chapter 38

German occupation of Greece • Political and military background • Initial resistance • Greek passivity to occupation • First SOE mission • Conflict among resistance groups • SOE difficulties, internal and external • Operation Animals • The ELAS guerrillas • German countertactics • The Russian mission • Operation Noah's Ark • Italian occupation of Albania • Albanian resistance • Enver Hoxha and the LNC • First SOE mission • Internal political conflicts • The Germans arrive • The Davies mission • Maclean's new mission • Hoxha's guerrilla operations • Assessment of guerrilla operations in Greece and Albania

IF RESISTANCE became confused in Yugoslavia, it grew positively chaotic in Greece—traditionally the home of violent politics.

In spring of 1941, the German invasion of this Mediterranean country sent King George II and the monarchist government into exile, first in Cairo, then in London. By June, the enemy held the entire country. As in the case of Yugoslavia, Hitler distributed large portions of it to his allies: Thrace and eastern Macedonia to Bulgaria, central and western Greece to Italy. The German army concentrated primarily on protecting main lines of communication running from Montenegro in the north through the Struma and Vardar valleys south to the trading center of Salonika and on to Athens and Piraeus (and across the Mediterranean to North Africa). As elsewhere in the Axis world, occupation proved harsh and brutal, and, in short order, resistance movements appeared.

Those readers who know Greece will remember the strong individu-

alism of her peoples, a national characteristic of great charm but one that has helped to keep her politically splintered through the ages. The monarchy founded after the War of Independence, in 1821, ended in a shaky republic established in 1924. When King George II regained the throne eleven years later, his was a disputed mandate. Besides such non-royalist parties as republicans and socialists, the Communists had grown quite strong, a worker-oriented party founded in 1918 and affiliated to the Comintern in 1920 as the Communist Party of Greece, the KKE.[1]

Political anarchy followed restoration, and, in 1936, the prime minister, General Metaxas, established a dictatorship and forced the KKE underground. Metaxas continued to purge the army of republican and Communist officers, and he also treated Italy's occupation of Albania with restraint, quietly strengthening diplomatic ties with Turkey, France, and Britain while trying to strengthen his armed forces. When Mussolini demanded partial occupation of Greece, in October 1940, Metaxas refused and ordered general mobilization. Within weeks, the small but keen Greek army, ably commanded by Lieutenant General Alexander Papagos, reinforced by Royal Air Force squadrons, had smashed Italian attacks in the Pindus Mountains and driven thirty miles inside Albania.

Metaxas died in early 1941. Mussolini's failure meanwhile had caused Hitler to intervene, not so much to save Mussolini's reputation as to secure the Balkan flank prior to his invading Russia. In March, he sent troops into Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The Greek Government, of Prime Minister Alexander Korizis, now accepted British reinforcements. By April, a British (mainly Australian-New Zealand)-Polish force of some seventy thousand men, constituting three divisions and two brigades hastily mobilized in Egypt, had landed and deployed along a line southwest of Salonika. Inadequate liaison between Greek and British high commands exposed the left flank of this force by leaving General Papagos and most of the Greek army isolated on the Albanian front. The Germans struck in early April, soon pushing the shattered British force from the country. Three weeks later, they marched into Athens; they went on to capture Crete, and, in June, the Greek Government fled to Cairo.

German occupation authorities working with Prime Minister Tsolakoglou's puppet government cracked down hard on some Communists, arresting and deporting such prominent leaders as Nikos Zakhariadhis, Secretary General of KKE. But, working on the principle of divide and conquer, the Germans released other Communists from prison.

1. C. M. Woodhouse, *The Story of Modern Greece* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968): A Greek scholar and historian, and an active participant in Greece with SOE(Cairo) during World War II, Mr. Woodhouse has written a splendid short history of this troubled land; see also, by the same author, *Apple of Discord* (London: Hutchinson, 1948): This excellent study of the Axis occupation and subsequent civil war contains a thoughtful defense of the Metaxas dictatorship.

Zakhariadhis' replacement, Yioryios Siantos, organized an underground labor movement, the EEAM, and, in September 1941, the Greek Liberation Front, or EAM, which gained some socialist support. In spring of 1942, EAM formed the National Popular Liberation Army, or ELAS, its agents recruiting in Roumeli, Thessaly, and Macedonia.

At about the same time, three republican resistance movements sprang up: EDES, headed by Colonel Zervas; a much smaller group, EKKA, whose military leader was Colonel Psaros; and the AAA, headed by Colonel Saraphis. A royalist organization also appeared, the Six Colonels, an operationally impotent group, as did a student organization under Professor Kanellopoulos.

Six more-disparate groups probably never existed; yet they possessed a common trait: a distinct preference to fight anyone but the enemy. By spring of 1942, Italian and German garrisons carried out duties generally unmolested, and since duties included supporting Rommel's armored forces in North Africa, guerrilla inactivity brought increasingly blue language to British military conferences at GHQ, Middle East, Cairo.

Resistance leaders were not altogether to blame. In 1941, the stuff of their armies was a generally inert mass of country people who expressed but slight desire to fight the Germans. Will to resist had to be imposed from without. Resistance had to be generated. As C. M. Woodhouse later wrote,

> . . . it was not the easy-going peasant who started the resistance to the Germans in the mountains. That was the last thing they wanted: they had hardly seen a German, or noticed the slightest difference in their way of life, until the talkers from the towns arrived with exhortations to take arms against the invader. For them the resistance movement meant the loss of their livelihood, the burning of their homes, the looting of their property; all of which they endured as long as they believed the cause to be a good one; but none of which they would have inflicted upon themselves without prompting. . . .[2]

Primarily for this reason, Communist leaders of EAM spent a year in developing a clandestine network of cadres ". . . so efficiently woven and deployed that when, in the summer of 1942, the first guerrilla bands under the name of ELAS appeared in the mountains, they multiplied quickly. When they could they swept out of their way or absorbed all rival bands that they came across. . . ."[3]

Part of the difficulty also stemmed from ignorance of Greek politics on the part of British Foreign Office officials who supported Prime Minister Tsouderos' promonarchist government-in-exile.[4] The king, who had

2. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord, supra.*
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.; Korizis committed suicide during the retreat.

seriously violated the Greek constitution in 1936 by dissolving parliament and failing to hold a general election within the prescribed period, refused to admit his lack of popularity in Greece; in Cairo and later in London, he insisted that he would restore monarchical rule after the war. Meanwhile he did not want the British to aid other than *royalist* guerrilla groups. In view of the inability of royalist leaders in Greece to raise such groups, this meant guerrilla inactivity at an extremely crucial time.

GHQ Middle East found this unacceptable. Wanting support for a planned allied offensive in North Africa, it ordered SOE(Cairo) to contact and support any guerrillas willing to fight the enemy.

SOE's first attempt to contact resistance leaders met almost instant disaster. Landed by submarine on the island of Antiparos, the British party fell into Italian hands, as did ". . . complete lists of men they intended to meet in Athens, all of whom were promptly arrested. Many lost their lives. . . ."[5]

Despite this setback, an SOE mission parachuted into northern Greece in autumn of 1942. Colonel E. C. Myers, a thirty-six-year-old army engineer, commanded this effort, with Captain C. M. Woodhouse, a twenty-five-year-old scholar fluent in Greek, serving as deputy.[6] Myers and Woodhouse found considerable guerrilla, or *andarte,* activity. Strikes and other resistance efforts in cities had caused the Germans to make mass arrests, and in August they began organizing forced-labor transports—repressive measures that resulted in growth of guerrilla groups.

But the British officers also found a serious antagonism existing between ELAS and EDES, and only with a great deal of effort did Woodhouse persuade them to co-operate in destroying a vital rail viaduct.[7] After this success, which cut rail communications between Salonika and Athens for six weeks and thus helped deprive Rommel of much needed supply, Myers started back to Cairo, Woodhouse remaining to work with EDES. But the Cairo command, which could only have profited from Myers' return with accurate and up-to-date information, ordered him to remain in Greece. SOE(Cairo) also ordered Woodhouse to Athens, there to contact the organization known as Six Colonels, which Cairo, still influenced by the Greek government-in-exile, mistakenly thought would co-ordinate all guerrilla activities in Greece. At the same time, SOE(Cairo) decided to send in liaison teams to work with mountain guerrilla groups.

This plan only muddled an already confused situation. In spring of

5. Sweet-Escott, op. cit.
6. E. C. W. Myers, *Greek Entanglement* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955).
7. Ibid. The author gives an excellent account of this operation.

1943, Myers and Woodhouse, who held a reasonably realistic grasp of facts, pointed out that the Six Colonels organization was incapable of co-ordinating anything, that they could not repair the rift between ELAS and other guerrilla organizations, indeed that EAM/ELAS was Communist controlled. They sensibly concluded ". . . that the practical answer was to limit the guerrilla movement to a few small independent bands who by their very smallness would be able to operate on a hit-and-run basis when and where required in support of Allied strategy."[8]

Unfortunately, SOE(Cairo) refused to listen to common sense. In March, the Greek king and his exiled government had returned to Cairo, which meant additional pressure on SOE, both from Greek monarchists and British Foreign Office officials. A newly infiltrated British liaison officer attached to ELAS headquarters further distorted the picture. This man, who knew but little Greek, ". . . for some months continued to report on ELAS and EAM as a national uprising which must be given British support so that the democratic parties in the movement might be strengthened."[9] ELAS, he reported, had ". . . no political aims whatsoever" and was ". . . purely a military Resistance Movement."[10] Refusing to abandon dreams of a vast guerrilla army in Greece, SOE(Cairo) now attempted a compromise by organizing independent guerrilla areas, each commanded ". . . by a senior Greek officer" working with a British liaison team

EAM/ELAS quickly scotched this plan by attempting to take over the entire resistance movement. An ELAS unit captured Colonel Saraphis, titular head of Six Colonels, and other units attacked EDES forces under Colonel Zervas. Myers answered this insubordination by requesting SOE(Cairo) to cut off aid to EAM/ELAS, but Cairo, unduly influenced by its liaison officer with ELAS, refused. To add to Myers' temper, Saraphis, whom Myers had saved, now went over to the Communists to become military commander of ELAS!

As a final straw, EAM/ELAS persuaded SOE(Cairo) to establish a joint guerrilla headquarters with representation so rigged as to leave EAM in control.

SOE's acquiescence stemmed from lack of concerted policy, from continued ignorance and confusion, the inevitable result of poor organization and communications and unreliable reporting.

Part of the trouble was divided responsibility: SOE(Cairo) not only answered to its parent, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, but to Foreign Office and military representatives, a triple responsibility that proved ". . . a source of confusion."[11] It also suffered from poor in-

8. Blair, op. cit.
9. Ibid.
10. Myers, op. cit.
11. Woodhouse, op. cit.

ternal organization, a sort of Topsy characteristic whereby in four years it carried eight different names:

. . . Each change of name corresponded to a change of structure and nature; often slight, but always real and significant. During the same period there were eight different heads of the same organization, sometimes concurrently; three of them were civilians who did not entirely trust soldiers, and five were senior officers who did not entirely trust politicians or diplomats. . . .[12]

Bickham Sweet-Escott, who served in the Cairo office, later wrote:

. . . Nobody who did not experience it can possibly imagine the atmosphere of jealousy, suspicion, and intrigue which embittered the relations between the various secret and semi-secret departments in Cairo during that summer of 1941, or for that matter for the next two years. It would be quite beyond my powers to describe it.[13]

Such internal flux hampered relations with the field, as did distance and communication problems. The above authority later noted that ". . . there was no coherent planning . . . all the emphasis in Force 133 had been getting parties with radio transmitters into the field as soon as possible. But no provision had been made to have enough people in Cairo to cipher and decipher the messages which would result."[14]

Poor agent preparation played a destructive role. Most British liaison officers

. . . entered Greece for the first time with no previous knowledge of the country, the people, or the language. . . . Few of them had political opinions, but their unconscious sympathies were rather to the left than the right. What formed their prejudices was not how they thought but whom they liked. In most cases, that meant whatever guerrillas they were with. . . . They had, in common with other irregular units operating in the Eastern Mediterranean, a levity of outlook upon their grim life, which at its best enchanted the common Greek population with a sense of sympathy, but at its worst inspired serious-minded Greeks with angry despair. . . . With the exception of two or three at the top, none of them received any political brief or was authorised to make any political pronouncement. From the day the first of them arrived in Greece on 1st October, 1942, their task was to fight the occupation: later, under pressure of political complications, it was enlarged to military liaison; but it was never specifically political. . . .[15]

Allied military pressures also influenced SOE representatives in Cairo and in the field. Foremost was the coming invasion of Sicily. Allied plan-

12. Ibid.
13. Sweet-Escott, op. cit.
14. Ibid.
15. Woodhouse, op. cit.

ners wanted guerrilla help in Greece in order to try to fool the Germans into believing that the invasion would occur there and thus tie down as many enemy troops as possible. This project, Operation Animals, required ELAS support, and Myers and Woodhouse gained it only by overlooking EAM/ELAS insolence and continued growth of EAM/-ELAS power. In the event, a small British team destroyed the key Asopos viaduct in a model operation.

Two British officers made a preliminary reconnaissance, noting that the only possible approach to the heavily guarded structure lay through a tortuous mountain gorge. A volunteer party, at great personal danger, then backpacked the necessary charges most of the way down the gorge. A small party, two SOE officers, two engineer officers, and two enlisted men, planted the charges at night. The explosion toppled a section of the viaduct into the deep gorge, which eliminated the single-line main railroad to Athens for four months. Myers later wrote:

> . . . We learnt later that the viaduct had been guarded by about forty Germans, with six heavy machine guns and more light automatics. The whole defense [including searchlights] had been laid out in every direction except up the gorge. The Germans were so convinced that the viaduct had been blown up as a result of treachery that they shot the entire garrison guarding it.[16]

ELAS and EDES forces partially co-operated by ambushing German troops, cutting telephone communications, and making forty-four major cuts in road and rail communications—an effort that indicated their very considerable but never fully realized potential.[17]

Colonel Saraphis had greatly improved the fighting potential of ELAS, which now amounted to over fourteen thousand guerrillas, divided into six territorial commands.[18] Though not particularly subservient to Soviet doctrine, ELAS did employ the "three-man committee" command concept, whereby each unit had a military commander, an administrative officer, and a political officer who held considerable power. A guerrilla "band" varied from thirty to one hundred men, several bands forming a "battalion." These units received Communist political indoctrination, although this was not overly stressed in view of EAM claims to represent a broad front. Saraphis also developed ELAS reserve units in the villages, youth units (to provide couriers) known as EPON, and he even organized a small navy (ELAN).

By autumn of 1943, guerrillas controlled nearly two thirds of Greece, and EAM/ELAS controlled a large portion of that area. Their hold on

16. Myers, op. cit.
17. Ibid.; see also Woodhouse, op. cit.; Sweet-Escott, op. cit.
18. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Greek Civil War, 1944–1949* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966).

the new joint guerrilla headquarters, to which the British Foreign Office supplied a representative, Major Wallace, resulted in the Communists administering large areas, where they established food depots, communications, schools, courts, and newspapers. Tens of thousands of refugees streamed in from enemy-controlled areas, and, in feeding and caring for these generally illiterate mountain peoples, EAM/ELAS (financed by a British subsidy of about $120,000 per month) mixed a strong ration of Communist propaganda. Woodhouse, who was on hand, later wrote:

> . . . EAM/ELAS set the pace in the creation of something that Governments of Greece had neglected: an organized state in the Greek mountains. All the virtues and vices of such an experiment could be seen; for when the people whom no one has ever helped started helping themselves, their methods are vigorous and not always nice. The words "liberation" and "popular democracy" filled the air with their peculiar connotations. Uneasy stirrings were breaking the surface everywhere, but only the KKE knew how to give them direction. . . .[19]

Although actual guerrilla attacks remained minimum, ELAS units did build a landing field and support other covert allied activities such as gathering intelligence and helping downed airmen to escape.[20]

In August, a joint guerrilla deputation flew to Cairo under Myers and Wallace's aegis. The ensuing confrontation with monarchists demonstrated the existing gulf between exiled and guerrilla forces, with everyone condemning everyone else. This resulted in a British command reorganization which transferred policy decision making from SOE(Cairo) to a newly formed "Special Operations Sub-Committee in the Middle East." But it scarcely solved internal Greek political problems.

Guerrilla leaders returned to Greece ". . . disappointed, angry and with the fixed idea that the British government intended to reimpose the monarchy."[21] Moreover, the men who wielded what little allied authority existed, Myers and Wallace, remained in Cairo. The junior Woodhouse now took command of what had become known, thanks to the addition of two OSS officers, as the Allied Military Mission (AMM).

Matters rapidly deteriorated. Woodhouse himself later questioned

> . . . whether the military value of guerrilla movements in the Balkans justified their continued existence after August 1943 . . . by August 1943 the Allies had passed to the offensive; numerical and material superiority made

19. Woodhouse, op. cit.
20. Blair, op. cit.
21. Ibid.

victory in the long run certain; the value of guerrilla campaigns ceased to bear any proportion to the disasters which they brought upon the civilian population, and the political troubles which they laid up for the future. . . .[22]

He certainly had a point in the case of Greece. Already-strong ELAS forces had gained more arms and supply from Italy's collapse in September. Saraphis now converted his territorial commands into five "divisions," deployed in the most vital areas. A youth unit performed courier tasks for each division, which also featured engineer, communication, supply, and medical companies.[23]

Growth in ELAS strength, coupled with failure of the Cairo talks, increasingly hindered the allied effort. Although the Italian Pinerolo Division surrendered intact to the British, EAM persuaded the Allied Military Mission to break it into small detachments, which ELAS units promptly attacked to capture sufficient arms for two new divisions. In October, ELAS units opened new attacks against Zervas' EDES groups.

But Saraphis had been moving too rapidly, and these attacks generally failed. Moreover, German temper had been growing short and the high command now launched a series of strong offensives against ELAS mountain strongholds. Three months of operations scattered Communists and disintegrated their new "mountain state." Germans also allowed the Greek puppet government to form anti-Communist "security battalions" of about five hundred men each, an organization eventually numbering about fifteen thousand and active for the most part in the Peloponnese.[24]

Adversity forced EAM/ELAS to a more co-operative attitude, a development welcomed by British officers in Cairo trying to plan Noah's Ark, an operation designed to hinder German withdrawal from Greece. Renewed negotiations with disparate guerrilla units led to the "Plaka Agreement," of late February 1944. Designed to end civil war among guerrillas, this agreement provided only temporary postponement of hostilities. EAM now created the Political Committee of National Liberation, or PEEA, whose strong non-Communist representation was supposed to insure a national bias; in reality, PEEA formed a rival to the government-in-exile.

In April, an ELAS unit attacked the small EKKA group and murdered Colonel Psaros. Tempers flared into fighting between ELAS and EDES units. But, once again, the situation quieted, possibly due to the

22. Woodhouse, op. cit.
23. O'Ballance, op. cit.
24. Ibid.; see also Woodhouse, op. cit.: Prime Minister Rallis ". . . regarded the force as a bridge across which Greece would pass from German occupation to Allied liberation without an interval of chaos. . . ."

influence of a Russian mission that arrived secretly in EAM/ELAS headquarters. Woodhouse later wrote:

> . . . ELAS, who had expected the Soviet Mission to bring manna from heaven, found Colonel Popov unable even to supply his own party with vodka, let alone ELAS with gold, arms and ammunition. On the other hand, the Soviet Mission, which had expected to find an army of at least the same kind, if not the same magnitude, as Tito's partisans, found a rabble thinly veiled by an elaborately centralised command. . . . Neither on the military nor on the political level does it seem likely that a favorable report on EAM/ELAS went to Moscow. . . . Circumstantial evidence suggests that EAM/ELAS suffered an abrupt shock as a result.[25]

Although infighting continued through summer and autumn, plans for Noah's Ark moved slowly forward. EAM/ELAS agreed to participate in phase one—guerrilla strikes scheduled to harass retreating Germans in conjunction with allied air attacks. Phase two called for a British landing in the Athens area, and both Saraphis and Zervas agreed to keep their guerrillas in the country while the Greek Government landed.

Noah's Ark began in September 1944, the guerrilla units concentrating on cutting road and rail networks and attacking ponderous German convoys. Neither ELAS nor EDES fought to maximum capability, but Woodhouse and other observers nonetheless estimated that guerrilla action destroyed a hundred locomotives and five hundred trucks, besides killing some five thousand enemy.

Phase two, the British landing and return of the Greek Government, also occurred on schedule. But that begins another saga, to be narrated in a later chapter.

The forces found in Greece displayed themselves simultaneously in Albania, the tiny mountainous country (eleven thousand square miles) tucked between Greece and Yugoslavia on the Adriatic Sea. In some ways similar to Morocco, this feudal remnant of civilization consisted of a long coastal plain that supported a peasant agricultural economy and was backed by rugged mountains, the home of a welter of tribes whose conflicting traditions, loyalties, and religions frequently flared into serious feuds: Roman Catholics, Moslems, Greek Orthodox—perhaps one million people divided roughly into the Ghegs of the North and the Tosks of the South, but each division ruled by factionalism of centuries.

Long under Italian influence, the country offered but little resistance when Mussolini's divisions landed, in April 1939. King Zog and his government fled, leaving the country at the mercy of some five Italian divi-

25. Woodhouse, op. cit.; see also O'Ballance, op. cit.: Neither before nor after the visitation did ELAS receive military aid from the Soviet Union, nor, at this time, was Tito furnishing aid to ELAS.

sions. These encountered resistance from guerrilla bands, or *chetas,* mainly in the mountains, but it was sporadic and unco-ordinated. Attempting to exploit the situation, in mid-1939 the British infiltrated an agent from Belgrade with orders to work up a guerrilla united front. The fall of Yugoslavia cut short this effort and led to the agent's capture.

Almost no information filtered from the country in the next two years. But as allies began planning for the invasion of Italy, interest revived in Albania. In spring of 1943, Bill Maclean, a young British SOE officer with guerrilla experience in Palestine and Abyssinia, led a small mission into the South. Maclean found a situation akin to those in neighboring countries. Three main groups had developed: the Royalist, or Zogist, movement, led by Abas Kupi, a promonarchist army officer, and confined largely to the North; the Republican, or Balli Kombetar (National Union) movement, which developed along the coast and central foothills and was strongly rightist; the Communist, or LNC, forces, led by Enver Hoxha, in the South.[26]

Hoxha's movement was by far the most active. As Julian Amery explained in his interesting book *Sons of the Eagle,* Italian influence had resulted in some youths being educated abroad. These young men, who neither owned land nor respected tribal tradition,

> . . . could find no outlet for their energies within the narrow limits of independent Albania. . . . They were thus peculiarly susceptible to the influence of revolutionary ideas. In other countries such young men often inclined to Fascism, but in Albania Fascism was the creed of the overlord and, in their search for faith and discipline, they therefore turned to the Communists. It is unlikely that there were ever more than two, or at the most three, thousand of these young men, but they were to be the backbone of the Communist organization and the leaders under whom the landless peasants were organized. The combined discontent of these two classes—the youth of the towns and the landless peasants—produced a social revolutionary movement, which presently won the support of many of the richer peasants as well by its appeal to their patriotism or their land hunger. This, in turn, provoked the most conservative elements to combine for the defense of their own interests; and so the general unrest among the Tosks was increased.
>
> The general poverty of the Albanians, their resentment of foreign rule, the anarchy and mercenary economy of the Ghegs, and a growth of a crisis in social relationships among the Tosks were thus the conditions out of which the Albanian resistance movement grew. . . .[27]

26. Julian Amery, *Sons of the Eagle—A Study in Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Macmillan, 1948); see also, Julian Amery, *Approach March* (London: Hutchinson, 1973).
27. Ibid.

Enver Hoxha himself stemmed from the bourgeoisie. He was a thirty-two-year-old professor of history who had been educated in France and Belgium, and many of his subordinate leaders came from the same middle-class background. In late 1942, he persuaded the most important royalist-Gheg guerrilla bands to joint the partisan movement under the banner of the National Liberation Movement, or LNC. The collaboration proved highly tenuous, with one of the strongest Gheg leaders, Abas Kupi, never a willing participant. Despite the LNC veil, Hoxha remained a hard-line Communist with Comintern connections to KKE in Greece and Tito in Yugoslavia.[28]

Albanian Communists, including some Gheg bands, were fighting the Italian enemy when Maclean's mission arrived. Impressed by their activity, Maclean arranged for delivery of arms and equipment and began training two shock brigades. Other SOE teams parachuted in to join the various groups. But as the Italians showed signs of surrendering, the question of a new government arose, and conflict developed between the partisans and the Balli guerrillas. The Italian surrender heightened tension, since Italian arms equipped more guerrillas, who also recruited Italian deserters.

Subsequent German occupation further hindered the resistance movement. Moving in about two and a half divisions, the Germans soon pressed various guerrilla bands back into the hills: ". . . within a fortnight the insurgents were everywhere on the defensive."[29] The Germans were essentially interested in coastal defense against an allied landing and contented themselves with occupying principal towns and keeping roads open. ". . . The rest of the country they determined to neutralize by policy rather than force."[30] They released political prisoners, announced that they would withdraw from Albania once war ended, and set up a puppet government.

This policy played into Enver Hoxha's hands. If Germans controlled cities and coastal communications, Hoxha would control the rest of Albania, and, in autumn of 1943, he ordered his people to begin attacking and destroying his rivals in the South, the Balli bands. The Ballis soon began falling back toward the coast, where, to survive, they collaborated with the Germans, who willingly fitted them out for counterguerrilla duties: ". . . The civil war in Southern Albania was thus indefinitely prolonged, to the exhaustion of the Albanians and the repose of the German army."[31]

At this critical point, SOE replaced Maclean with a more senior representative, Brigadier "Trotsky" Davies. A Sandhurst regular and twice-decorated veteran of the Mesopotamia campaign (1920) and the

28. Blair, op. cit.
29. Amery, op. cit.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

Palestine fighting in 1938, Davies brought in a small staff, which he based at Biza, in the South. He also brought in nearly half a million dollars in gold to help him accomplish his major task: ". . . to back the political party, or parties, which gave evidence of fighting our enemies."[32]

Although he had some good men who subsequently performed well in the field and although he was a man of considerable charm and unquestioned personal courage, Davies erred in trying to implant regular army order in guerrilla warfare disorder:

> . . . Our H.Q. [headquarters] was organized . . . as an orthodox H.Q., even down to the Italian defense platoon, and we all fitted into a detailed alarm scheme—action on air attack, drill for an air drop, and so on. . . .[33]

Where Maclean traveled light, Davies dug in and soon had an impressive but useless headquarters of ". . . interpreters, Italian cooks, servants, mulemen and others," all requiring food and quarters, and one calculated to attract the attention of even the most myopic enemy.[34]

Thus situated, Davies turned to the immense task of forging peace between Enver Hoxha and the Balli, a task that would have required a skillful diplomat armed with Jobian patience. The old boy simply wasn't up to the challenge. At his first conference with the Communist leader, he refused Hoxha's request to review the present world political situation:

> . . . Enver said, very pointedly, "The military situation depends entirely on the political situation, so why will you not first give us your impression of world politics?"
>
> I replied, "Because I am a soldier and not a politician."[35]

As Davies continued to argue, with both Hoxha and the Balli, the situation continued to deteriorate, the *chetas* merrily shifting sides, while almost no one fought the Germans. Davies himself grew increasingly frustrated and disgusted:

> . . . I felt that we could bring the country to a standstill with two brigades of British troops acting as guerrillas, or with half a dozen *Commandos* [i.e., special operation units]. . . .[36]

That such a notion was never tried was just as well. After moving his ponderous headquarters two or three times in response to German pressure, he decided to break off the guerrilla campaign until spring and move his headquarters south in conjunction with Hoxha's forces. Al-

32. Brigadier Davies, *Illyrian Venture—The Story of the British Military Mission to Enemy-Occupied Albania 1943–1944* (London: Bodley Head, 1952).
33. Ibid.
34. Blair; see also Davies, op. cit.; Amery, op. cit.
35. Davies, op. cit.
36. Ibid.

though Hoxha and his guerrillas reached sanctuary, the Davies group never made it. Hotly pursued by Germans and turncoat Albanians, Davies was wounded and captured and his organization broken up. His field missions suffered various fates: Many were captured and their gold stolen; a few survivors escaped north to join Abas Kupi's guerrillas. As though to haunt the mission's failure, gold circulated by Davies caused severe inflation in the mountains, thus exercising an effect precisely opposite to the intention.[37]

In spring of 1944, SOE parachuted a new mission, again under Maclean, into the North, to try to build a resistance movement cored by Abas Kupi's group and even to bring Abas Kupi into joint effort with Enver Hoxha.

Maclean and two principal lieutenants, Smiley and Amery, found considerable potential in the northern mountains—Amery estimated a total fifteen thousand rifles with possibility of another ten thousand. But they found tribes ". . . very torn and divided, some pro-German, all suspicious. . . ."[38] Although they managed to bring off some small operations, they did not receive support necessary to bring about a general uprising—and very possibly they could not have accomplished this even with prodigal supply.

In contrast, Hoxha and his guerrillas in the South prospered, their numbers growing from an estimated five thousand in January 1944 to over twenty thousand by May. Allied supply, though still in limited quantities, began arriving by air and sea, and LNC units soon were striking German convoys and even garrisons throughout the area with operations expanding north to the other side of Tirana.

In June, the German high command brought in the 1st Mountain Division, a crack outfit which in a month ". . . succeeded in closing the Allied bridgehead north of Saranda, reopening communications with Greece and scattering Partisans into the mountains."[39]

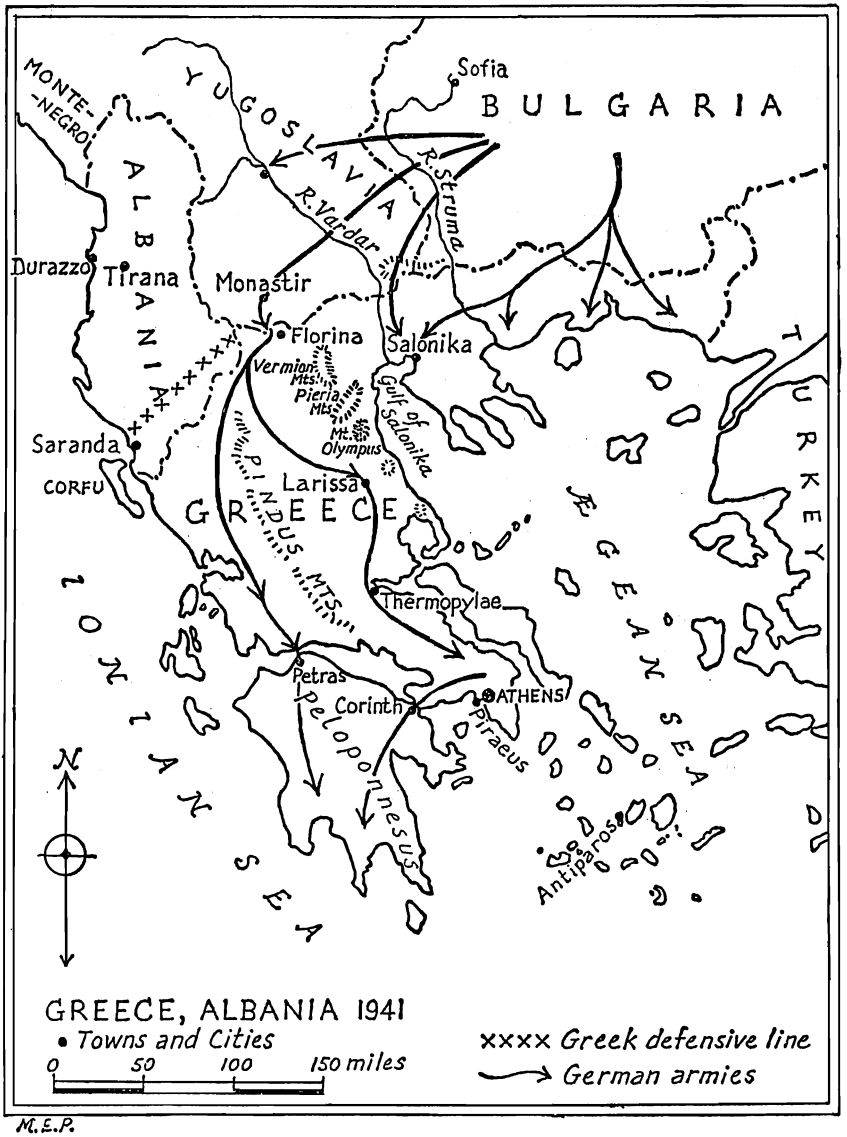
But with transfer of this division to Yugoslavia and replacement by a second-rate outfit, LNC quickly reorganized and recommenced harassing activities. Its units now came into open conflict with royalist and republican movements, but, with SOE support, neutralized these organizations while spreading farther north.

Ensuing internecine fighting greatly helped the Germans to evacuate Albania. Although Partisans and Zogists harassed the German retreat, the former claiming to have killed between five and six thousand Germans, they expended their real energy in fighting civil war, a war the Partisans won. With the ignominious retreat of Abas Kupi and SOE advisers, LNC controlled the country, which became and has remained Communist.

37. Blair, op. cit.
38. Amery, op. cit.
39. Blair, op. cit.

What did guerrilla warfare accomplish in Greece and Albania?

It contributed to keeping enemy divisions from service in other theaters. The Albanian occupation tied up over five Italian divisions and, after the Italian surrender, about four German divisions; the occupation of Greece required six German and twelve Italian divisions. But we



should remember that some of these units would have been necessary without guerrilla resistance, and also that some of them were so second rate as to be useless in a combat zone.

The resistance in Albania was least impressive, although LNC reportedly did good work during the German withdrawal. Greek guerrillas carried out specific tasks during Operation Animals and Operation Noah's Ark. Operation Animals drew two divisions and several air units into Greece at the time of allied landings in Sicily and further harassed German operations by cutting road and rail communications. Guerrilla units also provided intelligence on enemy strength and dispositions and aided other covert operations that gathered special types of intelligence and helped downed airmen to escape.

All this was healthy and provided a return of sorts on a considerable investment in Greece, a much lesser one in Albania. Unfortunately, investment yielded other returns scarcely palatable to the West: allied money, arms, and equipment contributed significantly to the success of Communist efforts in each country.

The most outstanding feature of these guerrilla campaigns was astonishing political ignorance displayed by British and later American civil and military officials. The political absurdity of the Foreign Office backing Albanian and Greek monarchies was matched by the military absurdity of attempting a quantitative operational approach to guerrilla warfare in these circumstances.

The operational environment in both countries was similar. Whether occupiers were Italian or German, they did their level best to alienate local populations and thus create resistance nuclei. In theory, a vast potential of resistance existed. In fact, and what the SOE or their military and civil superiors failed to recognize, this potential could not be realized, because of traditional and deep-seated political-social-religious differences. Here were politically dubious forces that, if improperly controlled, could not but result in postwar embarrassment to the West. Military ambitions of the West in these areas represented a dream incapable of accomplishment. Because of refusal to face facts, each operation wasted considerable quantities of time, effort, and material that could have been utilized elsewhere.

Chapter 39

Japanese conquests • Australian coastwatchers • American marines on Guadalcanal • Japanese occupation of Timor • Australian independent companies • Callinan fights guerrilla warfare • Japanese countertactics • The native element • A summing up

THE READER may recall that, by spring of 1942, Japanese armies occupied all of Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies—the so-called Co-Prosperity Sphere, whose eastern flank Japan protected by a string of newly occupied bases terminating in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the western flank by the conquest of Burma, which isolated China and posed a direct threat to India.

The rapidity of these conquests threw potential resistance movements into considerable confusion. With few exceptions, no real resistance organizations existed, although, as in European countries, local Communist parties converted quite easily into militant organizations.

But temporary defeat and immense distances prevented the allies from supplying essential arms and ammunition to, or even communicating with, much less controlling, dissident groups. In some areas, important segments of the population either welcomed Japanese as liberators or suffered them in preference to white colonial rule. Although harsh occu-

pation policies usually changed such halcyon situations, delayed emergence of dissident groups again posed communications and supply problems.

Terrain also influenced the situation: Tiny Pacific islands such as Tarawa and Iwo Jima offered neither natives nor sanctuaries for infiltrated teams, nor did the American navy or marines dispose of specially trained groups for use in more likely target areas such as Guam. An inhibiting political factor also existed, particularly with the British, who did not want such empire possessions as Burma and Malaya promiscuously supplied with arms in the postwar era.

All these factors sharply delimited guerrilla movements, which, as in other theaters of war, greatly varied in motivation, composition, application, and effectiveness.

Almost alone in the vast area of conquest, the Australian high command had taken certain "stay behind" precautions against war with Japan. The original idea stemmed from 1919, when an Australian naval intelligence officer ". . . put forward a suggestion that Australia's vast coastal areas be policed by a network of 'watchers' to report any suspicious characters and happenings in isolated parts."[1]

Through the years, naval intelligence extended the system to New Guinea, Papua, and the Solomon Islands, an intelligence net supported by government officials, missionaries, pilots, and planters. Alarmed by the worsening international situation, in 1939 Commander Eric Feldt recruited small "stay behind" teams and equipped them with teleradios and codes. When war broke, these incredibly brave men, usually white district officers or plantation managers assisted by a few loyal natives, took to the hills, where, often living like animals, they reported enemy strength and dispositions to Port Moresby. Just such a report first disclosed Japanese presence on Guadalcanal and led to U. S. Marine Corps landings in August 1942.

The coastwatcher who reported this development was named Martin Clemens. About a week after marines landed, he presented himself to Major General Alexander Vandegrift. The marine commander found him ". . . a remarkable chap of medium height, well-built and apparently suffering no ill effects from self-imposed jungle exile."

. . . Clemens brought with him a small and loyal group of native scouts including Sergeant Major Vouza, a retired member of the Solomon Islands constabulary. At the outbreak of war Vouza, a black and bandy-legged little fellow, as were all the natives, reported to Clemens and accompanied him into the hills. There they recruited a goodly force of natives who hated the Japanese because of cruelty to the islanders. Clemens and Vouza trained

1. M. Murray, *Hunted—A Coastwatcher's Story* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1967).

these young men as scouts and when Clemens offered me his and their services I was delighted to accept. Vouza later rendered superb service as did all the scouts—of the entire coastwatcher organization I can say nothing too lavish in praise.[2]

The coastwatchers were neither trained nor equipped to generate native guerrilla movements, but their operations nonetheless profited immensely from Japanese occupation policy, which treated Solomon Islands natives as so much dirt. This was a gross error, for these natives possessed eyes and ears and swift jungle feet and the ability to jabber in pidgin English—and their words frequently sang through the ether to Port Moresby, often a siren song calling down air and naval attacks.

Their courage was as splendid as their loyalty. To confirm reports of enemy forces forming on the marine left flank, Vouza volunteered to scout behind Japanese lines. Vouza appeared back in marine lines during the battle of the Tenaru River. In Vandegrift's words:

. . . During the night's action Vouza, bleeding from a dozen wounds, crawled into Pollock's front-lines. Soon he was gasping out his story to Martin Clemens: the enemy had surprised his patrol, captured him, interrogated him without success, then tied him to a tree to torture him unmercifully and finally leave him for dead. His face a pulp from rifle butts smashed into it and bleeding from bayonet wounds in the throat, shoulders and chest, he chewed through his ropes and on hands and knees crawled through the battle to reach our lines and gasp out valuable information on the strength and dispositions of the attacking enemy.[3]

Guadalcanal offers the first tactical paradox in the Pacific war. Despite training that stressed extreme mobility and quasi-guerrilla jungle tactics, Japanese soldiers no more found themselves at home in Guadalcanal jungles than the Americans. Command jealousies, disease, and supply and communication problems combined to frustrate attacks against the marine perimeter guarding Henderson Field. Although supported by clear naval and air superiority, various attacking columns suffered thousands of casualties both from marine fire and from subsequent retreat through jungle rapidly becoming hostile as rations and medicines were consumed and not replaced.

The marines also suffered. At one point, most of Vandegrift's large command was down with dysentery or malaria or both. On several occasions, the jungle slowed, then halted, his limited offensive actions. But marines came to terms with the jungle, not only surviving but fighting and fighting well to invalidate forever the carefully inculcated myth of Japanese tactical invincibility. Part of the reason stemmed from Vande-

2. A. A. Vandegrift and R. B. Asprey, *Once a Marine, supra;* see also S. B. Griffith, *The Battle for Guadalcanal* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1963).
3. Ibid.; Vandegrift awarded him the Silver Star medal.

grift's personal leadership and his refusal to accept defeat, a charismatic performance of enormous importance, considering the long odds against him.

Nor was this sheer bravado. Vandegrift was no stranger to jungle, having campaigned for years in Nicaragua and Haiti. If jungle could hide Japanese, it could also hide marines. In early September, he learned that the American navy could no longer support operations on Guadalcanal—that, literally, he and his marines would have to fight on alone:

> . . . I walked back to the CP [command post] with my operations officer [Lt. Col. G. C. Thomas]. "You know, Jerry," I told him, "when we landed in Tientsin, China, in 1927, old Colonel E. B. Miller ordered me to draw up three plans. Two concerned the accomplishment of our mission, the third a withdrawal from Tientsin in case we got pushed out." We walked a bit farther. "Jerry, we're going to defend this airfield until we no longer can. If that happens, we'll take what's left to the hills and fight guerrilla warfare. . . ."[4]

On the more positive side, Vandegrift used jungle later in the campaign when he sent Carlson's Raiders on a wide sweep intended to intercept a withdrawing Japanese column. Aided by native scouts and porters under Vouza and supplied by airdrop, Carlson extended the patrol far to the west. Although he missed the main body, he ambushed a number of rearguard units and cleaned out bothersome artillery positions—in all, killing some 450 enemy at a cost of seventeen killed and seventeen wounded.[5]

One wonders what would have resulted had Vandegrift possessed sufficient strength in the beginning to use Marine Raiders in this long-range penetration role instead of in the more orthodox fighting roles on Tulagi and Guadalcanal.

Another relatively simple action played itself out early in the war on Timor, a large island lying about five hundred miles northwest of Port Darwin, in northern Australia. Timor formed a natural protective flank for Japanese-held Java. Planes flying from its two airfields could neutralize Port Darwin, and it also furnished a staging-support area for operations in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea.

Timor is a large island, about three hundred miles long and an average forty miles wide; a central mountain range has produced terrain varying from scrub-covered slopes to open coastal areas interspersed by dense jungle. Before the war, the Netherlands owned its western half, Portugal its eastern half. In December 1941, a small contingent of Dutch and Australian troops known as Sparrow Force occupied the Dutch por-

4. Ibid.
5. H. S. Mirillat, *The Island* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944); see also Griffith, op. cit.; Vandegrift and Asprey, op. cit.

tion. When Portugal remained neutral, the Dutch and British persuaded her to allow "a friendly occupation" by Sparrow Force troops, in particular the Australian 2/2 Independent Company.

Britain had started the concept of independent raiding companies—forerunner of her famous Commandos—shortly after the fall of France in June 1940. With help of a small British military mission, Australian and New Zealand armies trained a total of eight such companies for independent harassing operations in the Middle East. A member of the British team, a thirty-three-year-old captain and former explorer and teacher, F. Spencer-Chapman, later described the operational thinking of the day:

> . . . We talked vaguely of guerrilla and irregular warfare, of special and para-military operations, stay-behind parties, resistance movements, sabotage and incendiarism, and, darkly and still more vaguely, of "agents"; but the exact role of the Commandos and Independent Companies had never been made very clear. The recent Lofoten raid was much in people's minds, and some thought—and hoped—that the Companies would be used as shock troops for full-scale raids with air and sea support. . . .

Others believed that if the Japanese overran various islands,

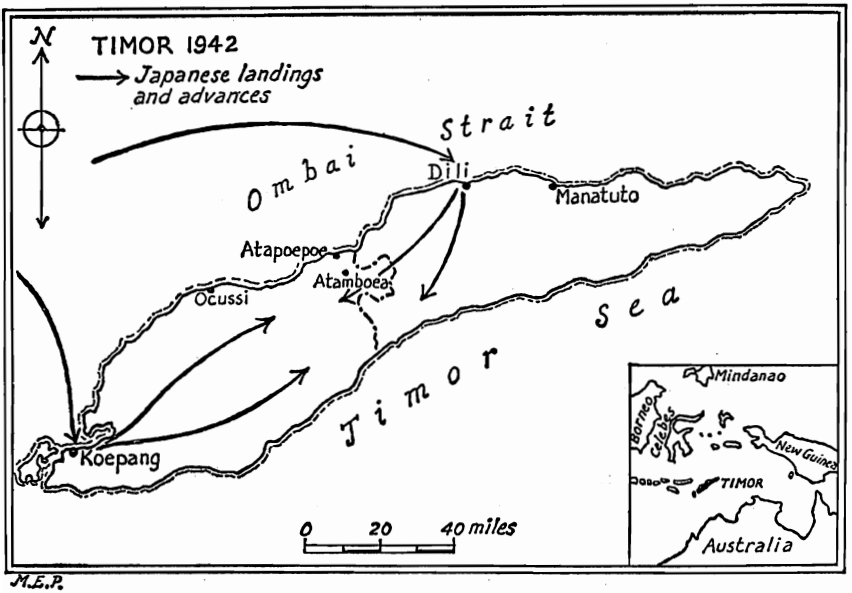
> . . . the role of the Companies would then be to stay behind, live off the country or be provisioned by air, and be a thorn in the flesh of the occupying enemy, emerging in true guerrilla style to attack vital points and then disappear again into the jungle. We also visualized long-range penetration of the enemy lines by parties so highly skilled in fieldcraft and in living off the country that they could attack their targets and get back again without being detected. . . .

Training conformed as much as possible to these various possibilities. The courses, lasting six weeks, concentrated on demolitions and fieldcraft. Spencer-Chapman

> . . . taught them how to get a party from A to B and back by day or night in any sort of country and to arrive in a fit state to carry out their task. This included all sorts of sidelines—a new conception of fitness, knowledge of the night sky, what to wear, what to take and how to carry it, what to eat and how to cook it, how to live off the country, tracking, memorizing routes, and how to escape if caught by the enemy.[6]

The Japanese advance caused the high command to commit the newly trained companies to islands closer home. Australian 2/2 Independent Company went to Timor and subsequently to adventures beyond dreams of its hardy back-country-Australian members. The story is well told

6. F. Spencer-Chapman, *The Jungle Is Neutral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949).



M.E.P.

by the company commander, Major Bernard Callinan, in his book *Independent Company,*[7] which I have relied on in the following brief account.

Variously reinforced, 2/2 Independent Company comprised around 325 men totally unfamiliar with Timor. Sent to the Portuguese area of Dili, on the coast, the company completed what defenses it could before the Japanese onslaught in February 1942. Some fourteen thousand Japanese troops landed at Koepang, in Dutch Timor, and about six thousand at Dili. On Dutch Timor, the bulk of Sparrow Force fell back, only to encounter Japanese paratroopers fighting a guerrilla-style action in their rear. Inadequately trained and equipped, this force soon lost tactical cohesion, the units either surrendering or escaping to Portuguese Timor.

While 2/2 Company also fell back, its commander held no intention of surrendering. His situation was scarcely happy. The company was not supposed to be fighting independently on Timor, and logistically was anything but self-sufficient. It even lacked a radio transmitter capable of raising Port Darwin. It was well armed, however, for guerrilla warfare—its men carried the proportionately high number of sixty submachine guns and were splendidly trained for small-unit operations. Instead of surrendering, as the high command in Australia supposed had

7. Bernard Callinan, *Independent Company* (London: William Heinemann, 1953).

been the case, the company commander immediately chose defensive positions and began harassing the newly arrived enemy.

The Australians wisely refrained from complicating the relatively simple tactical problem of containing Japanese in the Dili area. To accomplish this, they set up a fluid defense in surrounding hills, from where small units ambushed roads and paths, besides raiding suitable enemy targets.

Wishing to push back the Australians so that their forces in the west could deliver the *coup de grâce,* the Japanese reinforced Dili units and began dispatching strong probing patrols into surrounding hills.

For combat veterans, they seemed surprisingly inept. They almost constantly telegraphed their movements. In Callinan's words,

> . . . soon we saw some troops set up a mortar in the village square and fire off some bombs in our direction, to points which they thought we might be using as observation posts. It was slightly amusing to watch those marionettes loading the mortar, and then hear the bombs bursting hundreds of yards on our right. We had learnt not to use the highest peak, or even the most obvious spot.

Japanese patrols frequently walked through one ambush position to be attacked by a second; survivors were then struck from the rear. Small ambushes constantly hit enemy motor patrols, an activity that increased when the Japanese set up a base twenty miles inland from Dili. Australian roadblocks ". . . varied from rolling large rocks or felling trees across the roads, to blocking up culverts to cause the road to be washed away, and to blowing embankments away and then diverting creeks to continue the erosion." This facilitated successful ambushes,

> . . . and our tally of enemy killed grew. To reduce the attacks the enemy established strong posts along the road, and from these patrols went out to keep the area clear. This was the culmination of all our efforts; we now had the enemy thoroughly worried, and his troops were being dispersed, and tired out on sentry and patrol duties. This system of posts also suited our capabilities as we were able to provide small parties which sat above these posts and observed them, and when the routine of the post was known a raid would be carried out. . . . One typical raid was carried out by Sergeant James, who with two sappers [engineers] sat less than one hundred yards from a Japanese post for two days. When he knew the routine of the post well, he decided that the best time to strike was just as the enemy were having breakfast. So the following morning there was a sharp burst of fire and twelve Japanese were killed, the raiders disappearing into the scrub.

Two or three such raids per week, each claiming from five to fifteen Japanese lives, worked an "enormous" effect on Japanese morale.

Australian morale meanwhile was none too good. By now, malaria

claimed most of the company. Boots were wearing fast, weapons needed repair, ammunition was running low, money was needed to pay natives. So far as the world knew, 2/2 Company languished in some Japanese prison camp.

Imagine the surprise, then, of radio monitors one morning in Port Darwin picking up a faint signal from Timor. This came from a transmitter made by a radioman ingeniously working with two field radios and bits of variously acquired junk. According to Callinan,

> . . . the set occupied a room about ten feet square, and there were bits and pieces spread around on benches and joined by wires trailing across the floor. Batteries were charged by a generator taken from an old car and driven by a rope which passed around a similar wheel about eighteen inches in diameter. Attached to this latter wheel was another small wheel around which a further rope passed on to a wheel about four feet or more in diameter, and to this large wheel were fixed handles by which four natives turned the machine.

New sets brought in from Darwin eventually replaced this Rube Goldberg contraption, which was just as well, considering the constant need for mobility!

Supply drops naturally increased 2/2 Company's effectiveness, to the astounding degree that the Japanese accepted the tactical status quo and began concentrating on raising natives against the Australians.

Timor natives give still another lie to the pleasant fiction of people everywhere wanting to die for what the West likes to call freedom. Timor natives did not know the meaning of freedom. To them, the white man represented oppression. At one point during the campaign, Callinan watched a two-hundred-man Portuguese force launch a punitive expedition against some rebel natives:

> . . . Compared with this, the Japanese efforts at subjecting areas were just child's play. Every village and crop was burnt; every woman, child, and animal was driven off and fell as spoil to the victors. . . .

Was it any wonder that Japanese agents before the war had successfully implanted anti-white propaganda, not alone in Timor but throughout Pacific colonial areas?

After the landings, the Japanese continued to cultivate the native population by simple propaganda reinforced by strong physical presence. They also put a considerable price on each Australian head, and they tried to work up active native opposition *behind* the Australians.

> . . . The steps they followed were, firstly, to threaten the natives in an area that if they assisted the Australians their villages and crops would be destroyed; then, if that was not successful, the Japanese would carry out their threat. The enemy was always able to mass many more troops and natives than we were, and although these expeditions were costly to him

he was able to achieve his objective. The natives were materialists, with no great interest in a war between two almost mythical countries such as Australia and Japan, so gradually the areas through which we could move freely became restricted.

None of these measures deprived Australians of the initiative, though enemy caution forced them to drastic action. Patrols armed with three-inch mortars sent from Port Darwin sneaked close to Dili to launch surprise bombardments that caused Japanese patrols to issue forth (and frequently stumble into ambushes). Other brave souls relying on friendly native cover advanced to close range and eliminated enemy groups with submachine-gun fire.

To counter native treachery, Australians relied on friendly natives, who proved surprisingly loyal. A native servant, or *criado,* served each Australian, following him into combat and relieving him of gear, then helping him escape over difficult and unfamiliar terrain. Later in the campaign, 2/2 Company trained several native units in marksmanship and partially equipped them with rifles. Recruiting grew easier as occupation continued and Japanese cruelties multiplied. Natives particularly resented Japanese attacks on native women and girls. Australians also gained a psychological advantage over natives from their own air raids (by far the most important accomplishment of these raids). Finally, they relied on active patrol and area security and instant reprisal in case of native attack.

Mobility remained their best ally. Time and again, Japanese columns rushed from Dili only to encounter space. If they rushed too far, they found themselves cut off. If they did happen onto a few guerrillas, the latter quickly disappeared. It was as if guerrillas sprang from ground to disappear in sky. It seemed easy; in fact, it hinged on an extremely cunning organization whose disciplined members constantly utilized security measures.

The operational key was Force Headquarters, tucked away in the hills. This organization supported the active guerrilla groups and also administered a rear-area sanctuary in a mountain village, ". . . a remarkable achievement comprising a hospital, a convalescent depot, and a reinforcement training depot. . . ." Force Headquarters remained extremely mobile:

> . . . Each little group of signal, administrative, transport, and cookhouse personnel was made responsible for its own mobility. There were regular practices at loading all their gear on to horses, taking them down a track for a few hundred yards and then back again; thus each group soon knew just how much they could carry, and where the best place was for each item.

This was not empty precaution. Although the signal section maintained careful radio discipline, the Japanese sometimes homed in on

transmissions. On one occasion, they followed this with a raid in force. Callinan later recalled that ". . . although the signallers had been in the middle of a message to Australia, the sets and ciphers were on the track within fifteen minutes, and there was not a sign of their recent occupation left behind. . . ."

To maintain control over guerrilla groups, Force Headquarters relied on telephone and native runner to platoon headquarters. Whenever possible, the platoon leader placed himself in a safe position, where he would not be constantly forced to move. This gave a much needed continuity to the intelligence process, which flowed both ways. But if a platoon headquarters was attacked, damage was usually minimal. Good security normally warned the platoon leader, and excellent mobility usually provided escape. From the beginning, the Australians used a system of rallying points:

> . . . Whether it was a two-man ambush, a sub-section, section or platoon action, we always had that rallying point where the troops reorganized, and it was this continual dispersing after an attack and rapid reforming which frustrated the Japanese efforts to exterminate us.

Far from exterminating the Australians, the Japanese seriously threatened their existence on only a few occasions. They could not prevent airdrops from reaching the guerrillas. A few ships also managed to bring in supply, an effort culminating by landing 2/4 Independent Company as much-needed reinforcement. In thirteen months, the Australians killed some fifteen hundred enemy troops at a cost of forty men.

But this was not their real accomplishment. Their supreme moment occurred when the Japanese high command, fearful of an allied landing on Timor, committed the 48th Infantry Division, fifteen thousand veterans of China, Philippines, and Java campaigns. As Nevil Shute pointed out in an introductory chapter to *Independent Company,* ". . . this at a time when their advance in Burma had been halted, when the American Marines were fighting on Guadalcanal, and bitter fighting was in progress in Papua [New Guinea]"—in other words, at a time when the Japanese had a dozen and one other uses for a good infantry division.

Australians on Timor undoubtedly could have insured a successful allied landing by temporarily protecting a beachhead. But, in 1943, the "withering on the vine" strategy, whereby allied forces bypassed island redoubts, leaving them to starve and eventually surrender, made pointless such a landing. Instead, one evacuated the Australians to leave the Japanese in uneasy occupation of the island.

This writer has been unable to determine if the allied high command explored the idea of increasing the guerrilla effort on Timor in order either to force the enemy to commit other troops badly needed elsewhere or to defeat the Japanese in detail for propaganda value.

Chapter 40

Guerrilla resistance in the Philippines • Area of operations • Kangleon's guerrillas on Leyte • Major missions • Japanese occupation policy • Japanese countertactics • Fertig's guerrillas on Mindanao • Major missions • Failure of Japanese countertactics • Communist resistance • Luis Taruc and the Huks • Volckmann's guerrillas on Luzon • His organization and growth • Major missions • The Japanese attitude

A MUCH LESS COHESIVE but no less instructive guerrilla resistance sprang up in the Philippine Islands after the fall of Corregidor, the island bastion lying off Bataan, in early 1942. Not all of the American-Philippine garrison surrendered to the Japanese. Although MacArthur's command was totally surprised, some commanders sent officers behind Japanese units with orders to raise guerrilla groups. During retreat to the island bastion, a good many soldiers, cut off by the Japanese advance, had escaped to remote areas of Luzon, where willing Filipinos helped hide and feed them while they organized guerrilla units. (See map, Chapters 13–14.)

Elsewhere in the vast complex of islands, Filipino and American officers often refused to surrender, preferring instead to take to the hills to form resistance nuclei, which attracted fellow citizens, survivors of sunk American ships, and various American civilians who managed to elude the Japanese dragnet.

Still another guerrilla movement, and a potent one, centered around the Communist Party of the Philippines, which, like European Communist parties, was small but well organized.

About fifty guerrilla groups emerged in the islands before the Japanese had even consolidated their conquest, and a surprising number of these survived and prospered. In the vast archipelago, 7,100 islands with a land area of 114,830 square miles, they occupied in the main Luzon in the North, the Visayan Islands (particularly Leyte and Samar) in the center, and Mindanao in the South,[1] although small groups existed on many smaller islands, where they eventually lined the beaches to greet returning Americans.

At first, these units were out of touch with allied headquarters in Australia or even with each other. Nor were their aims always harmonious. While killing Japanese was the announced goal, some groups existed more to survive than to fight, some to prey as bandits on relatively helpless native barrios, some, particularly Communists, to fight but also to consolidate in so far as possible their power for postwar purposes, and some to fight as hard as they could until the Americans returned.

Whatever the goal, no one group enjoyed an easy existence, despite a good many natural sanctuaries. Some of the immense problems have been well presented by Ira Wolfert in his book *American Guerrilla in the Philippines,* which is the story of an American naval officer, Cliff Richardson, who joined a guerrilla force organized and commanded by a regular Philippine Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ruperto Kangleon.[2]

After escaping from a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, Kangleon recruited a small guerrilla group in southern Leyte. At first, natives wanted to help the guerrillas, their motivation intense nationalism rather than particular ideology. About 70 per cent of the population, however, greatly feared the Japanese and did not hide their relief when guerrillas had vacated barrio or village areas. Initial enthusiasm later waned when a bandit group calling itself guerrillas "requisitioned" anything they could find, including women, with no notion of fighting the Japanese.[3]

Bandits provided but one difficulty to Kangleon's embryo army, which suffered from shortages of everything but spirit. The band owned few rifles and little ammunition. To keep rifles in repair and provide fresh ammunition, guerrillas rounded up ". . . a hand-forge, some

1. M. H. Cannon, *The War in the Pacific—Leyte: Return to the Philippines* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1954).

2. Ira Wolfert, *American Guerrilla in the Philippines* (New York: Avon Books, 1945); see also S. E. Morison, *Leyte: June 1944–January 1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), Vol. 12 of 15 vols.: After the war, Kangleon became Secretary of National Defense and a senator in the Philippine Government.

3. Wolfert, op. cit.

hacksaws, and a file. That was a small arms factory." Brass curtain rods taken from schoolhouses were cut and filed to make bullets.

> . . . For the primer, we used sulphur mixed with coconut shell carbon. Later we were able to get hold of some antimony and add it to the mixture. . . . Our main source of powder was from Japanese sea mines that we would dismantle. We'd mix in pulverized wood to retard the burning because mine powder is too violent for a rifle bullet.[4]

The ordnance factory, which ". . . never filled more than a one-room house, about twenty feet by ten," boasted a staff of about sixty workers, but so laborious was filing down the curtain rods that "our production never got better than an average of 160 bullets a day."

Despite such disadvantages, the guerrilla force rapidly expanded. Almost all raw materials continued to come from the people—general requisitions carried out through local government. Guerrillas made their own ink, essential for news sheets and money; they made fuel for their few vehicles by distilling alcohol from tuba; they constructed 140 kilometers of telegraph lines by using nails made from barbed wire and insulators from old soda-pop bottles.[5]

Kangleon did not contact MacArthur's headquarters in Australia until spring of 1943, when an American naval commander, Charles Parsons, arrived by submarine to talk to guerrilla leaders and set up a chain of coastwatcher stations. After considerable confusion, during which Kangleon's guerrillas had to fight and defeat a rival guerrilla force, MacArthur recognized Kangleon as the official guerrilla commander on Leyte. Directed to concentrate on collecting and transmitting intelligence on enemy strength and dispositions, Kangleon continued to strengthen his forces, an effort helped by two American submarines, which began the hazardous task of bringing in arms and supply.[6]

Kangleon's early survival rested in part on a relatively light Japanese garrison in southern Leyte. Mainly for this reason, the Japanese

> . . . tried to conciliate the guerrillas, offering, in return for their surrender, not only freedom from punishment but also jobs and the opportunity to resume their normal family life. A great many guerrillas took advantage of this offer of amnesty and surrendered. . . .[7]

Kangleon's force remained largely intact, however, and when guerrilla activity continued and as the Japanese experienced fresh reverses in the Pacific theater, they reinforced Leyte garrisons and attempted to clean out guerrilla bands.

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Cannon, op. cit.; see also Morison, op. cit.
7. Cannon, op. cit.

By this time, Kangleon and his American officers had organized a quasi-regular army, whose companies maintained ". . . a guardhouse, barracks, mess hall, officers' quarters." The security of this army depended largely on the civil populace:

> . . . a whole network of volunteer guards sprang up—civilians serving without pay, donating one day out of every four to act as sentinels or relay men for messages or lookouts. When Japanese approached, the civilians were warned, too, and in the hills and many coastal barrios patrols found only empty houses and vacant towns. . . .[8]

Beginning in late 1943, the Japanese increased size and frequency of patrols. Utilizing information supplied through collaborators belonging to "The Good Neighbor Association," they captured numerous guerrillas and guerrilla sympathizers, summarily executing each. Guerrillas replied by killing one collaborator for each victim:

> . . . Cinco's [a unit leader] men developed the habit of killing Japan's "good neighbors," leaving their faces untouched so that they might be recognized but mincing up their bodies gruesomely, then floating them downstream to their home barrio where they could serve as an example to the others.[9]

Tactically the Japanese relied on large expeditions, or "sweeps," sometimes supported by aircraft whose bombs and machine-gun bullets proved virtually useless in heavy jungle. Richardson recalled watching an enemy force fan out

> . . . into the hills. We watched their columns walking along staring curiously at our pop bottle telegraph system. Their columns converged on nothing. Their pincers clutched empty air. Not a shot was fired at them. They found nothing to shoot at. A fifth columnist would tell where a headquarters house was. The Japs would surround it stealthily at night. They would rush it at night. They would find a sleepy man and his sleepy wife and sleepy children.[10]

Once a patrol had worn itself out in a day of fruitless marching through difficult terrain, guerrillas frequently ambushed it on its way back to barrio.

Failure to eliminate guerrillas infuriated the Japanese, who resorted to harsher and harsher treatment of the civil populace. Suspect guerrillas or sympathizers often received the salt-water torture:

> . . . they tied a man's hands and feet and ran the cord around his neck so that if he struggled he would strangle himself. Then they forced a wedge

8. Wolfert, op. cit.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

into his mouth to hold it open, held his nose, and poured sea water into his mouth. He had to swallow to breathe.[11]

If he talked, they stopped the torture; if not, they continued until his death.

These and other punishments often caused people to leave villages for the hills, where the Japanese ruthlessly tried to ferret them out, often killing entire hill families and burning hill barrios in the process. To prevent this, guerrillas frequently attacked enemy units close to coastal towns rather than in more favorable ambush areas in the hills.

Hill people also reacted vigorously. The men began carrying a second, and smaller, bolo under the shirt, attacking Japanese soldiers as they closed in to tie their hands. When the Japanese learned this trick and made victims remove their shirt, ". . . the Filipinos took to carrying shards of glass in their mouths, razor blades if they found them and sharpened nails to strike enemy eyes—anything that would do damage and keep a man from feeling he was a dumb beast standing mutely to be killed." Hill natives also planted *suak,* or barbed pieces of tetanus-poisoned bamboo, along trails used by Japanese patrols. When a patrol passed, natives would ". . . fire a shot or . . . shout and the Japs would drop flat against the *suak.*"[12]

The combination of hill natives and guerrillas proved too much for the Japanese, who slowly yielded all but coastal towns, finally not daring even to send patrols to the hills. Nor did the Japanese commander dare to report failure. Instead, he insisted that, from January through August 1944, his troops fought 561 engagements with guerrillas:

> . . . The Japanese declared that they had taken 2,300 prisoners of war, including 3 Americans; that 6 Americans and 23,077 Filipinos had surrendered; 1,984 guerrillas had been killed; and that the Japanese casualties amounted to 7 officers and 208 enlisted men killed; and 11 officers and 147 men wounded.[13]

Kangleon, on the other hand, reported minimum guerrilla casualties and significant Japanese losses. At the very least, his movement continued to grow. Armed with radios and new weapons landed from submarines, they continued to report valuable intelligence, and when American armies returned to the islands a few months later, they formed a potent and helpful force.

On Mindanao, the vast southern island, an American mining engineer and reserve officer, Colonel Wendell Fertig, built an impressive guer-

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Cannon, op. cit.

rilla organization from a cadre of five officers and about 175 enlisted men.[14]

Although Mindanao proved ideal for guerrilla operations—it offered ample food, mountain sanctuary, and easy access to the sea and thus eventual supply by submarine—the movement did not immediately prosper. American defeat had caused important segments of the population to either support or submit to the Japanese presence. Japanese, not the guerrillas, soon changed this disadvantageous situation. Surfeited with superiority, they inflicted their boorish presence on the locals, frequently slapping men and molesting and raping women. As early as September 1942, forty-five uprisings occurred on Mindanao, and Fertig found himself heading a viable guerrilla movement.

The Japanese had intended to rule through the legal Philippine Government and native police, an intention voided by the army's stupid behavior. Instead, they organized a constabulary of native quislings brought in from other islands. These became the priority target of Fertig's guerrillas, who harassed them so effectively that they soon ceased patrolling and eventually confined themselves to two general areas.

Although the Japanese maintained about 150,000 troops on Mindanao, they held back in committing them to counterguerrilla actions. When they did so, they proved as inept as on the Visayan Islands, in general relying on "sweeps" that devastated "guerrilla areas" and accomplished little. In early 1943, the Japanese even introduced war dogs to track down guerrillas, a futile effort abandoned a few months later.

The Japanese failed to understand the nature of the target. Believing that they were fighting isolated groups of bandits, their various area headquarters refused to co-ordinate counterguerrilla operations, relying instead on local punitive actions.

They did not realize, or anyway would not admit, that they were fighting an entire population. A significant exception occurred in 1944, when one Japanese general chose a conciliatory approach to the people and nearly wrecked the guerrilla movement! More often, however, the enemy fell into the traditional trap: the more countermeasures failed to eliminate guerrilla activity, the more they persecuted the people and the stronger the movement became.

Fertig's substantial growth was recognized in early 1943, when allied headquarters designated Mindanao as the 10th Military District. Some escaped Australian army prisoners of war, including Major Rex Blow, arriving in June 1943, found a quasi-military organization of impressive proportions. Landing in northern Mindanao, in the Lianga area, they reported to Colonel Hedges, commanding 105th Regiment of guerrillas.[15]

14. S. T. Hosmer (Chairman), *Counterinsurgency: A Symposium—April 16–20, 1962* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1963).

15. Rex Blow, "With the Filipino Guerrillas," *Australian Army Journal*, 1966.

Although Hedges, who had managed a timber company in the area before the war, commanded about ten thousand guerrillas, he was temporarily lying low as a result of vigorous Japanese punitive measures. Major Blow learned something of prevailing spirit, however, when he asked a young Filipino intelligence officer to type out some reports. "Sir," Lieutenant Villanueva replied, "I do not wish to work in an office, I want to kill Japs." He subsequently did so, only to lose his life while singlehandedly attacking some fifty Japanese soldiers.[16]

Hedges faced another problem in the form of confused religions. About two thousand Christians were fighting as guerrillas in coastal areas; the rest of his command consisted of fierce Mohammedan Moros, who fought under their old sultans. Moros not only fought Japanese and Christians but also each other, and Hedges and Blow spent a great deal of time trying to minimize their extracurricular wars.

The main guerrilla function in the north at this time was to survive while providing allied headquarters with intelligence. Each complemented the other. Major Blow later wrote:

> . . . One of our agents was a young lady working in the Japanese Kempetai office in Iligan. She kept us supplied with all the latest information and was able to warn of us intended patrols. . . . We had several agents in all garrisons. . . .[17]

Guerrillas nonetheless practiced careful security precautions. Fertig himself frequently changed "headquarters"—the longest he ever stayed in one place was two months. They also used aggressive measures to throw the enemy off. The favorite was the small patrol to harass the usual two-hundred-man Japanese patrol. Filipinos knew every foot of the area, knew where to strike and where likely ambushes could occur —hill natives could actually *smell* the presence of Japanese.

But without the people's help, guerrillas would not have survived. For a long period, Fertig depended for interisland communication largely on a "bamboo telegraph," in which ten-year-olds played an integral role despite the blandishments of enemy, who, although offering candy one day, offered blows the next. Major Blow's fourteen-year-old houseboy and bodyguard, Sabu, had watched Japanese soldiers kill his father and rape his mother and sisters, an experience scarcely unique. As a result, people constantly risked their lives on behalf of guerrillas. Blow later wrote of an offensive that eventually forced the Japanese to evacuate Iligan:

> . . . When out on patrol we never carried anything but a change of clothes, a toothbrush and our arms. Every house we passed would offer us something to eat, whether it was a piece of corn or a fat chicken. The Japs were now offering quite a large reward for my head, dead or alive—the price being

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

5,000 yards of West Point khaki drill, valued at about twenty pesos a yard then. But there was never the slightest suggestion of earning that prize. . . .

In the Lianga area, Blow continued:

. . . During these difficult days we were given great assistance by the Assemblyman, Mr. Lluch. He organized a body of young girls who cooked, sewed, and tended our wounds. They were a stout-hearted group and always back in town the day after the Japs had passed through, ready to organize a concert or dance, repair our clothes and feed us. . . .[18]

So effective were guerrillas in this area that, by the time of American landings, most of the considerable area of Lanao, including beaches, was devoid of Japanese. In the Malabang area, Blow's guerrillas seized and held an airstrip from which American marine fliers operated against Japanese for a week prior to actual landings. When this operation forced precipitate retreat of the Japanese garrison, General Eichelberger changed his landing plan to save about two days and a great deal of ammunition.

Still another movement centered on the Communist Party of the Philippines, itself in a transitional stage. In 1938, it had absorbed the Socialist Party—in some ways a shaky merger, with each party retaining ". . . its own organizations, even in the barrios [villages], and this arrangement continued until 1941 and, to a lesser extent, through the period of the Japanese occupation."[19]

Although differences between these radical parties in time would grow acute, the nationalist bias of each prevailed for the common purpose of fighting Japanese. In December 1941, Communists-Socialists published a twelve-point memorandum calling

. . . for all-out resistance to the Japanese. In forthright language it declared that anyone committing treason would do so at the cost of his life. It urged all patriotic Filipinos and anti-fascist organizations to organize squads of volunteers to begin training for guerrilla warfare while waiting for definite instructions on how and when to begin the fight.[20]

This movement naturally attracted its own followers, and it undoubtedly attracted other nationalists in areas lacking organized guerrilla units. At outbreak of war, Communists formed the *Hukbo ng Bayan so Hapon* (People's Army to Fight the Japanese), which we have come to know as the Hukbalahap, or Huks.

Organized on quasi-military lines and commanded by twenty-nine-

18. Ibid.; see also Morison, op. cit.
19. Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).
20. Ibid.

year-old Luis Taruc, whom we shall again encounter in postwar years, these units formed regiments, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. In time, leaders established semiliberated and liberated areas, from where they harassed Japanese to a far greater extent than has usually been admitted by anti-Communist postwar commentators.

One American fugitive, an army officer, came on a Huk camp in autumn of 1942. This was on Mount Arayat, about forty miles north of Manila:

> . . . Early in the morning we arrived at the Huk headquarters. The approaches to it were well patrolled and guarded, as we were challenged at least a dozen times while climbing up Mount Arayat. . . .
>
> We were well received at Huk headquarters, and I was much impressed by the order and the discipline that I observed. Upon learning where we were headed, they asked us to consider remaining with them as military advisors. . . .[21]

At this time, Huks were already active, regularly attacking Japanese units in order to gain arms and supply. Early successes produced an unhealthy overconfidence, however, and in 1943, Japanese troops attacked and practically destroyed the Mount Arayat stronghold—the only major counterguerrilla success during the occupation.[22]

The Huks recovered, however, to become a real menace to the Japanese, particularly in central Luzon but also on other islands. Captured Japanese files bulged with reports such as that of September 24, 1944, by the National Advisory Board on Public Safety to the puppet President Laurel: ". . . about 1,000 Hubkos armed with machine guns, automatic rifles and pistols struck Jaen in Nueva Ecija . . . looting, burning: 1 policeman dead; 2 Hubkos killed, 4 wounded. . . ." Three months later, the unhappy president learned ". . . that the mails coming from the Visayas and Mindanao are practically nil while those from Luzon are extremely limited."[23]

A variety of guerrilla movements took place on the northern island of Luzon. One of the most viable sprang from the efforts of a young West Pointer, thirty-year-old R. W. Volckmann, who began his Philippine experience a captain and ended a colonel—a remarkable saga well told in his book *We Remained*.[24] Promoted to regimental commander during the retreat down Bataan, Volckmann refused the final surrender order and took to the hills, where a number of small bands already had

21. R. W. Volckmann, *We Remained* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1954).
22. N. D. Valeriano and C. T. C. Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations. The Philippine Experience* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).
23. Mauro García, *Documents on the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines* (Manila: Philippines Historical Association, 1965).
24. Volckmann, op. cit.

formed, a disjointed effort, under two American army officers, Colonels Moses and Noble.

After a series of incredible adventures and hair-raising escapes, this latter-day Lawrence found himself in northern Luzon, a victorious trek that depended in part on his own incredible stamina and courage, in part on willingness of hundreds of natives to risk their lives and the lives of families and friends to hide, feed, and nurse him. Arriving more dead than alive, in September 1942, he recovered to organize and command one of the most valuable guerrilla nets in the archipelago.

Volckmann started nearly from scratch. He was not familiar with the history or philosophy of rebellion and guerrilla warfare, he probably had not read Lenin and certainly not Mao Tse-tung. Using common sense, he was aware that the first element essential to a resistance movement existed in the Philippines: a cause. Japanese invasion and occupation, he reasoned,

> . . . were opposed in varying degrees by the vast majority of the people. Thus the underlying potential for resistance existed throughout the Islands. The major question was, Could the individuals who basically were opposed to the Japanese be organized and directed so as to express their opposition against the Japs actively by subversion and guerrilla warfare? The answer appeared to depend on an analysis of the human, psychological, and physical factors as they existed at the time.[25]

The history of the Philippines satisfied the human factor:

> . . . A resistance movement and the culmination and active expression of a successful resistance movement, guerrilla warfare, can only be generated among people who have the courage and stamina to withstand privations, endure hardships, and face imminent death while fighting back against great odds. . . . To make use of these characteristics, I recognized that leaders must emerge to inspire, awaken, organize, and direct this potential. From the willingness of the Filipinos to trust and be guided by American leadership, I was confident that any lack of strong native leadership could be supplemented by a few determined Americans. . . .[26]

Psychologically, the situation was less apparent. Volckmann concluded that ambitions and aspirations implanted by the American experience would withstand Japanese propaganda up to a point. When he arrived in Ifugao, the Japanese were conducting an amnesty drive based on "Asia for the Asiatics." He did not find many natives impressed, and he believed, correctly, that Japanese brutality would swiftly supplant the velvet glove.

Physical factors ". . . included topography, enemy forces, friendly forces, space and time, and moral and material support." Mountains,

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.

forests, and limited roads of northern Luzon favored guerrilla operations, as did numerous villages, ". . . a source of food and shelter":

. . . The Japs, to control such an area completely and effectively, without gaining the co-operation of the populace, would have to divert and maintain huge forces in North Luzon. But they were committed in force throughout Asia and the South-west Pacific.

They could, however (as they did in late 1942), concentrate sizable forces and conduct an extensive campaign against guerrilla forces and their supporting populace. They could be expected to continue to have this capability until Allied forces threatened or actually landed in Luzon. However, each Allied victory and the reduction of the time and space between the Allied forces and Luzon would reduce Japanese capabilities and in turn strengthen Filipino morale. I was certain also that reduction of the time and space factor would likewise mean material support, provided, of course, that contact could be established with friendly forces. To me, then, the time and space factor was the key.[27]

Volckmann thought that an earlier attempt to go into action had been a mistake. Lacking external pressure,

. . . the Japs retaliated in force and rushed thousands of troops into North Luzon. For eight months they conducted relentless mopping-up operations against the guerrilla forces and the loyal civilians supporting the resistance movement. Every town and city was garrisoned, and ten-day patrols which combed the surrounding country were kept out by each garrison. Entire civilian settlements suspected of supporting the "banditos" were destroyed.

. . . The entire civilian population was organized into "Neighborhood Associations" in which fifteen families were placed under a head, the "Presidente," who in turn was held directly responsible to the mayor of the municipality for the families under him. The mayor was answerable to the local Japanese garrison commander. The Neighborhood Associations were required to post around-the-clock guards on all trails and roads and to report all guerrilla activities.

As a check on their system the Japs hired spies and informers from among the natives who could be bought. These spies were paid large bonuses, in addition to their normal salaries, for information of particular value. Large rewards were placed on the heads of all Americans and of the better-known Filipino guerrilla leaders. To augment and strengthen their army the Japs organized and armed Filipino constabulary units and stationed them under close Jap supervision.[28]

These various measures severely impeded the guerrilla movement, which, in spring of 1943, numbered fewer than two thousand men dispersed throughout Luzon, a command known grandly as U. S. Army

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.

Forces in the Philippines—North Luzon (USAFIP—N.L.). With the capture of Colonels Moses and Noble, Volckmann took command to carry out MacArthur's "Lay Low Order." This sensibly ordered guerrillas on Luzon to organize combat cadres and intelligence nets but avoid more active operations until arms and ammunition could be sent from Australia. To accomplish this, the young officer divided the vast area into six districts, each with its own commander and separate military and civilian organization. The reader will have to turn to his book to understand the dimensions of his remarkable achievement—I can only stress certain of his findings and conclusions.

Volckmann realized from the beginning the importance of civilian co-operation—his escape alone had constantly emphasized this:

> . . . No resistance movement can flourish for long without mass civilian support. This support may be voluntary, induced, or imposed, but it is absolutely essential to the maintenance of large guerrilla forces for a prolonged period of time in a country overrun by the enemy. The ease with which this civilian co-operation was obtained varied between districts as well as between the various localities within the districts. It was generally found that areas which had no guerrilla forces for long periods were the hardest to bring back under control. In some instances severe measures had to be taken against individuals or groups who resisted the move to re-establish control.[29]

In this respect, the major enemy was not Japanese ". . . but rather the spies, informers and collaborators operating for them." Volckmann came up with an answer reflected in a simple order: eliminate them. After six months of often brutal countermeasures, the threat greatly diminished:

> . . . The effect of this extermination program had more far-reaching results than those at first evident. Not only were the loyal and sympathetic civilians soon convinced that they could now safely support USAFIP, N.L., but the so-called "fence-sitters" began toppling in the right direction. Even those who had previously been opposed to the "misguided elements" realized that the Japanese could not guarantee protection, and they too when approached were willing to put their shoulders to the wheel. The Filipinos' fear of the Japs, created by their barbarous and inhuman acts, was overpowered by the quiet, sometimes ferocious, but always persistent methods of their own people.
>
> The civilian support thus brought about was then organized and the civilian was made to feel that he was part of the resistance movement. Once fully committed to such a role, it was very unlikely that people will ever again turn to the enemy. . . .[30]

29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

Despite any number of setbacks, the movement continued to grow. A year after he took command, Volckmann had established reliable communications with district commands. His combat units had grown from less than two thousand to about eight thousand in strength, with a reserve of another seven thousand plus about five thousand men organized into "bolo battalions," or service units. In August 1944, he gained radio contact with Australia, which meant direct transmission of intelligence as opposed to sending it via guerrilla commands to the south. It also meant some long-delayed help, and, in November, the first submarine reached the area.

With the influx of arms, radios, and other essential supply, Volckmann shifted from "lay low" to aggressive operations. Concurrently, he relayed a steady flow of intelligence to MacArthur's headquarters. Documents discovered in a crashed plane disclosed a major change in Japanese plans: General Yamashita had decided to withdraw from the Lingayen area into the northern hinterland. Such was Volckmann's flow of intelligence from the proposed allied landing area that, two days prior to D-Day, he sent a dispatch to MacArthur: ". . . There will be no repeat no opposition on the beaches." Simultaneously, his guerrillas throughout the area struck the Japanese:

> . . . The numerous small enemy garrisons were quickly isolated and destroyed. Extensive demolitions, road-blocks, and continuous ambushing and destruction of transportation greatly reduced the mobility of large enemy concentrations and seriously aggravated their already difficult supply problems.[31]

When Sixth Army landed in January 1945, Volckmann reported for duty as commander of a force numbering nearly twenty thousand with its own service of supply—a force organized and in action *behind* enemy lines.

From January to June 1945, his five guerrilla regiments constantly disrupted Japanese lines of communication, intercepted and destroyed foraging and scouting parties, and ambushed troop units. Although official accounts later minimized the guerrilla contribution, Volckmann estimated that his people accounted for about fifty thousand Japanese casualties. When Sixth Army headquarters questioned casualty reports of one regimental commander, he showed a team of Rangers enemy bodies that his Igorot guerrillas had carefully stacked like cordwood for easier counting!

As Sixth Army units worked north to close with Volckmann's guerrilla strongholds, irregular units joined army divisions to furnish invaluable aid in the severe fighting ahead.

31. Ibid.; see also Morison, op. cit.: MacArthur's staff apparently ignored Volckmann's dispatch, to carry on with pointless prelanding bombardment.

Running threadlike through the resistance warp of Filipinos is the extraordinary behavior of the Japanese, who often resembled their Hitlerian counterparts. The innate arrogance of the Japanese military completely canceled the not inconsiderable advantages of the oriental-versus-white-man appeal as well as the natural desire of any civil population to live and let live. The Japanese attitude was stressed in a remarkable letter written by Claro M. Recto, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Laurel puppet government, to Lieutenant General T. Wati, the Japanese military commander in Manila. Dated June 20, 1944, it was designated "Personal and Confidential":

. . . I think you will agree with me that in spite of the best efforts of the Philippine Government, a considerable portion of the Filipino people have not rallied as they should to the common cause. It is deeply to be regretted that, notwithstanding the liberal policies laid down by the Tokyo Government and carried out in their larger aspects by its able representatives here, little has been accomplished, as a matter of fact, to eliminate the feeling of distrust and hostility which a considerable portion of our people continue to entertain towards the present regime. This fact requires a word of explanation lest the Japanese Government, unaware of the real reasons behind the present attitude of the Filipino people, should come to regard all of them, in general, as ungrateful, unwilling or unable to appreciate Tokyo's liberal policies towards the Philippines. For the Filipinos are an innately grateful people, and it would be unjust to accuse them of ingratitude simply because they have so far not shown the degree of co-operation which Japan had expected of them.

The explanation seems to be simple enough. It may be found in the first place, in the psychology of the common people, not only in this country but everywhere. Here as elsewhere the common man is less concerned with high policies, great issues or abstract principles than with matters that intimately affect him: his livelihood, his individual rights, the welfare of his family and of the small community to which he belongs. If he is treated with discrimination, arrogance and cruelty, if he is thrown out of his house without any other place of his own where to go, if his property is confiscated without what he believes to be just compensation, or if he is driven to desperation as a result of the present situation, he finds himself losing faith in the Republic and feeling aggrieved against Japan. It is then quite difficult to impress him with the display of his country's flag, with generous donations of clothing and medicines, or with such liberal policies as condonation of Army loans to the Republic, the restoration of public properties to his government, etc.

Minister Recto then removed the velvet glove of correspondence to get to the point:

. . . The practice, for instance, of slapping Filipinos in the face, of tying them to posts or making them kneel in public, at times in the heat of the

sun, or beating them—this upon the slightest fault, mistake or provocation, or without any other reason than failure to understand each other's language . . . thousands of cases have been reported of people being either burned alive, killed at the point of bayonet, beheaded, beaten without mercy, or otherwise subjected to various methods of physical torture, without distinction as to age or sex. . . . Many [victims] have no fault at all except the fact that they have sons or brothers who are members of "guerrilla" bands, or that they have given food or temporary shelter to the latter, under threat of death or physical injuries. . . .

Another matter that needs to be mentioned is the practice of exacting collective responsibility for individual acts. If a "guerrilla" happens, for instance, to ride in a *carretela* with other peace-loving and law-abiding citizens who are completely unaware of the former's identity, and that "guerrilla" is arrested, all those who, by pure accident are riding with him, are also arrested and punished in the same way. Or, when a "guerrilla" is discovered and arrested in one of the small roadside eating places in the provinces, the owners of the place and all those who happen to be eating there at the time are also arrested and punished. Similarly, entire barrios and municipalities have been placed in concentration, or their inhabitants exterminated, because they have been unable to prevent "guerrillas" from ambushing and attacking Japanese soldiers passing there, or because some "guerrillas" happened to repair to the place and exacted food or other commodities of the innocent folk, who found themselves helpless because of the threats or coercion employed.

. . . The existence of "guerrilla" elements or of outright banditry, particularly in the provinces, is not, generally speaking, due in the main to any fundamental political motive. It is doubtful whether those who are engaged in such activities are pro-American by conviction. In the first place most of them, with the exception perhaps of some of their outstanding leaders, have no real understanding of the basic issues involved in the present war between the United States and Japan. Nor, it is believed, have they developed any feeling of real attachment to the Americans, not having closely mixed or associated with them, socially or otherwise. But many have turned "guerrillas" because of the sad and often tragic experiences which they or their relatives, friends and countrymen have undergone at the hands of the Japanese. . . .[32]

The war was to last well over another year, but the Japanese would never understand the subject of Minister Recto's long letter: a ruler's respect for common people.

32. García, op. cit.

Chapter 41

Japanese occupation of Indonesia • Historical background • Dutch overlords • Sporadic Indonesian resistance • Early nationalist movements • Sukarno and the PNI • Japanese exploitation and bestiality • Effects of the occupation • Indonesian independence • Dutch demands • Allied intervention

IN REFRESHING CONTRAST to its usual barbarous behavior, the Japanese army exploited the favorable political climate of the Dutch East Indies and, at first anyway, avoided local resistance. In February and March 1942, large numbers of Indonesians greeted invading Japanese soldiers more as liberators than as enemy[1]—not unlike Ukrainians welcoming Germans the previous year.

Indonesia's anti-European attitude had been building for nearly 350 years. Spain and Portugal began trade with the islands during the sixteenth century, a profitable commerce picked up by British and Dutch toward the end of the century. In 1602, the United Dutch East India Company began sending ships to establish Dutch presence throughout the archipelago. In 1618, Jan Pieterszoon Coen arrived as governor gen-

1. G. M. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952).

eral of the East Indies and chased the British from the area. The following year, he captured and burned the old town of Jaharta, on Java, and rebuilt it as Batavia. Within a century, early trade in spices expanded to coffee and indigo as Dutch control spread.[2]

Unlike explorers in the New World, early European arrivals in Indonesia found an ancient and established civilization. Like their counterparts in Indochina, Javanese guerrillas had driven Kublai Khan's Mongols from the country. But such unity was rare, and internecine dynastic warfare predominated. The Dutch exploited royal factionalism to rule from a series of ports linked by sea power and supplied with commodities by various sultans who, jealous of each other, proved relatively easy to dominate.

In eliminating foreign competition and holding chiefs to the mark, Dutch rule slowly extended inland. By 1750, the Dutch had subdued most minor princes and forced away colonial rivals such as Britain and Portugal. But, in 1780, the Franco-British-American war cut communications between Holland and the Indies to end Dutch naval supremacy in the archipelago. Holland's political eclipse during the Napoleonic era opened Indonesia to the British East India Company. This reversal ended in 1816, when the Dutch regained control. Earlier and immensely profitable trade had steadily declined during the eighteenth century, and this, coupled with ". . . widespread corruption in its administration in the Indies and a reckless financial policy,"[3] brought demise of the Dutch East India Company in 1799. Indonesia's future now rested in the hands of the Dutch Government.

To the native, Dutch and British traders appeared about the same. In his excellent book *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia,* Professor G. M. Kahin noted of the Dutch:

> . . . The over-all system operated to exploit as much from the villages as was possible. Their populations were compelled to make forced deliveries of a large portion of their crops and to perform nonagricultural forced labor on an extensive scale. Theoretically these deliveries in kind were paid for, but actually they amounted to sustained tribute levies on an immense scale, the village generally being allowed to keep just enough of its produce to sustain its inhabitants as a labor force.
>
> It must be emphasized that not only the Company but the native aristocracy upon which the functioning of the system was dependent likewise benefited. . . .[4]

2. B. H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara—A History of Indonesia* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1959); see also Kahin, op. cit.; Louis Fischer, *The Story of Indonesia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959); Leslie Palmier, *Indonesia and the Dutch* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).
3. Kahin, op. cit.
4. Ibid.

John Crawfurd, British Resident in Java from 1811 to 1816, took earlier Europeans sharply to task:

. . . The plunder of the east, for it did not deserve the name of commerce, was their object. . . . To give an equitable price for the commodity they purchased, or to demand no more than a reasonable profit, never entered into their minds. They considered the natives of those countries as fair game.

His own countrymen were no better than the "rapacious traders" of the Netherlands, and he found it ". . . difficult to say which party was *least* to blame. . . . On both sides the mean and bad passions which were excited by avarice, and by commercial and national rivalry, were carried to an unexampled extent." Royal families also showed badly:

. . . Their courts were centers of indolence, luxury, and profligacy. Their pageantry amused the white man and awed the brown. The evils of an aloof, foreign tyranny were compounded by an unfeeling feudalism. Native rulers, submissive to the company in effect owned the land, the villagers who tilled it, and the produce. . . .[5]

On occasion, Indonesians contested Dutch and even native rule. In mid-eighteenth century, the Dutch fought a five-year guerrilla war in Mataram, and, in 1770, Chinese miners in northwestern Borneo revolted and broke away from Dutch hegemony. In 1825, a disillusioned nobleman, Prince Diponegoro, prompted by "voices" which told him ". . . to rid the land of royal immorality, rural poverty, and Europeans," put together a guerrilla force mainly of peasants and started what the Dutch still refer to as the Java War. In Amsterdam, the Russian ambassador reported to St. Petersburg that the Dutch had sent out two thousand volunteer soldiers to meet the challenge. A year later, he reported

. . . that the seesaw war on Java continued. He described rebel strategy: "They avoid battle with the troops and have adopted a plan of undermining the strength of the Europeans with the help of the unhealthy climate and fatigue. Such a method of warfare may in the end give them superiority. . . ."

Military reverses soon caused the Dutch to send out an additional three thousand troops. The Russian ambassador duly reported this and added: ". . . When one thinks of the alarming growth of the insurgent mood, it is hard to say anything definite about the future of the colony."[6]

The Java war lasted five years. It cost the Dutch some fifteen thousand killed (including eight thousand Europeans) and an estimated 20 million florins; it cost the Javanese perhaps two hundred thousand dead

5. Fischer, op. cit.
6. Ibid.

(mostly from cholera).[7] Dutch victory surprised no one. Separated by geography, language, religion, and tradition, islanders were not able to unite against Dutch rule. With Diponegoro's exile, the Dutch settled down to exploitation uninterrupted until 1942.

The long guerrilla war, coupled with expenses of the Dutch-Belgian war in Europe, produced a particularly avaricious colonial policy. In 1825, an administrator named Van den Bosch introduced the "Forced Cultivation System," which was ". . . a new tax in the form of compulsory labor." In his excellent book *Indonesia,* Dr. Palmier has described this in detail. The new system ". . . resulted in the exploitation of Java as though it were a huge government plantation (or labor camp)." Between 1831 and 1877, this nefarious system yielded 823 million guilders from the Indies; ". . . annual budget of the Netherlands was not more than 60 million guilders; the Indies contribution averaged 18 million guilders a year."[8] The islands also provided enormous private trade and shipping fortunes. This brought a flow of investment capital and a stream of Western entrepreneurs, who continued to flourish after the pernicious system had ended.

The rape of Java brought expansion to Sumatra, the Celebes, western New Guinea, and most of Borneo—an empire rich in sugar, tobacco, rubber, and oil and other minerals, in addition to spices and coffee. Indonesians continued to resist these encroachments. Although Dutch arms generally put down protest movements with comparative ease, Bali did not submit to Dutch rule until the twentieth century. The kingdom of Atjeh, in northern Sumatra, fought a thirty-five-year war that lasted until 1908 and cost the Dutch an estimated 400 million florins.[9]

Throughout this period, the Dutch kept a tight rein on incipient nationalist desires. Although the government began to train Indonesians and Eurasians in modern administrative methods as early as 1848, the numbers were small enough. Financial milking permitted only minimum social services. The Dutch historian Vlekke later wrote:

> . . . Once the System began to yield results, the human tendency to profiteer as much as possible revealed itself in the Netherlands Ministry of Colonies, and for nearly twenty years government expenses in the Indies were pared to the bone, without regard for their educational and political needs, in order to raise the figure of the remittances from Batavia to Europe.

Palmier concluded:

> . . . There is no doubt that the system stunted Javanese social and political development; the country would not present the dejected picture it does now

7. Palmier, op. cit.
8. Ibid.; see also Vlekke, op. cit.; Kahin, op. cit.
9. Fischer, op. cit.

[1965] if some of the profits of the Forced Cultivation System had been ploughed back into the country *at the time*.[10]

Although land laws passed in 1875 resulted in wider individual ownership of land with some protection of small landholders, peasants nonetheless continued to pay income taxes which Dutch plantation owners avoided until 1908:

. . . Many peasants became debtors, borrowed money, thereby lost their farms, and became farm laborers or moved to the growing towns. The steeply rising birth rate likewise bred poverty and drove people away from the crowded countryside.[11]

The sordid story continued with the educational policy. Native village schools appeared only after 1854. These were of the rudest type, affording only primitive primary and secondary education. In 1903, an estimated 190,000 children were going to school—this out of an archipelago population of over 30 million! Those children fortunate enough to be educated in Dutch primary schools and thus learn the Dutch language —in 1900–4 they numbered just short of three thousand[12]—frequently could not obtain commensurate employment upon graduation, a difficulty also experienced by the handful of university graduates.

A few officials tried to change this restrictive policy. The majority, however, seemed convinced that Indonesians were not to be educated. One of the earliest nationalists, the young daughter of a nobleman, Kartini, wrote about this time: ". . . The Hollanders laugh and make fun of our stupidity, but if we strive for enlightenment, then they assume a defiant attitude towards us. . . ."[13]

Some long-overdue reforms appeared at the turn of the century. The so-called "Ethical Policy" did improve the peasant's lot, but government finances could not support most social services, and the few reforms that were introduced fell victim to constantly increasing population.

Moreover, these were largely carrot-and-stick reforms. At no time did the Dutch intend to prepare the people for ultimate independence. Again education figures are revealing:

. . . In 1930–1 there were only 178 Indonesians in institutions of university level, at a time when the population numbered some 59 millions. At the secondary level, both academic and vocational there were only 6,085 Indonesians being given instruction in Dutch. At the primary levels, the number of Indonesians given Western education amounted to only 83,655.[14]

10. Palmier, op. cit.
11. Fischer, op. cit.
12. Kahin, op. cit.
13. Palmier, op. cit.
14. Ibid.

Nor had employment opportunities significantly increased; Indonesian upper-school graduates generally could not compete with either Europeans or Chinese for the few jobs going.

This unhappy administration spawned a variety of nationalist movements beginning early in the century.[15] Ranging in bias from social to economic to religious to political, they assumed many shapes and colors. Some, such as the Budi Utomo (High Endeavor) and its religious counterpart, the Muhammadiyah, stemmed from Javanese aristocracy and remained essentially intellectual movements. Others, such as the Sarekat Islam (Muslim Society), offered a commercial-religious appeal; by 1918, Sarekat Islam numbered some 450,000. Only one year later, it had grown to 2.5 million members. Its radical section now broke away to establish the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), which attracted numerous returning university graduates.

In partial answer to the nationalist trend, the Dutch formed a People's Council of Indonesia, which first met in 1918. Although natives constituted half its numbers, it held only two short sessions a year:

> . . . Its members enjoyed parliamentary immunity but it was not a parliament. It had no legislative or executive functions. It could discuss and advise and thereby influence the Governor General. But it could decide nothing against his wishes. Many Indonesians consequently refused to collaborate with the Council.[16]

Communists also continued to pursue a disruptive policy, which exploded into a series of strikes and an uprising in 1927. As happened in the Middle East, the anti-religious element prevented widespread support, and government forces effectively suppressed the outbreak by arresting thirteen thousand, imprisoning forty-five hundred and interning another thirteen hundred.[17] Much of the Communist program, however, appeared in 1927 in the new Indonesian National Party (PNI), whose chairman was a twenty-five-year-old engineer, Dr. Achmed Sukarno. Although small, the party incorporated most of the student membership of the Indonesian Union and proved increasingly powerful. It wanted ". . . complete economic and political independence for Indonesia, with a government elected by and responsible to the people," a goal that could only be reached ". . . by non-cooperation with the Dutch."[18]

Henceforth this objective governed Indonesian nationalism. Not all Indonesians shared such a radical policy, yet world-wide depression,

15. Kahin, op. cit.; see also Vlekke, op. cit.; see also Special Operations Research Office (American University, Washington, D.C.), *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare* (Washington: American University, 1962). Hereafter cited as SORO.
16. Fischer, op. cit.
17. SORO, op. cit.; see also Fischer, op. cit.
18. Palmier, op. cit.

which began in 1929, converted many, as did subsequent refusal of the Dutch to introduce long-overdue political and administrative reforms. Instead, government relied on oppression. Sukarno and many of his associates went to jail in 1929. A year after his release, 1932, he was arrested and exiled, a remedy that postponed without curing basic problems.

In 1939, per-capita annual income of the 70 per cent of the Javanese population dependent upon agriculture for a living ". . . was . . . estimated to be only $8.32, including the value of crops consumed as food, only $4.45 being actual cash income. . . ."[19] Using education as a guide, in 1940, 1,786 Indonesians attended high school and only 637 college.[20] At outbreak of war, 7 per cent of 70 million people were literate.[21] Europeans held 90 per cent of high administrative posts, and a Dutch governor general held veto power over any legislation passed by the Volksraad (People's Council). Discontent remained rife, the radical Greater Indonesian Party (PIR) vocal in demands for independence and socialist government.

The Japanese invasion struck Indonesia at a crucial time of internal development. Landing on Sumatra in February 1942, their army within a few days won a Dutch surrender, which forever dispelled the carefully nurtured myth of Western supremacy. As Louis Fischer later wrote: ". . . A power that had held sway over them for more than three centuries vanished in three weeks at the touch of fellow Asians."[22]

But what was to replace Dutch rule?

The Japanese never quite decided. In theory, they had won a great victory by seizing Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and the Celebes—some three thousand islands with a land area of nearly one and a half million square miles, almost half the size of Australia. Not only did the islands offer copious quantities of tin, bauxite, nickel, coal, oil, rice, cocoa, rubber, tobacco, sugar, coffee, tea, and copra, but nearly 70 million people, of whom 75 per cent were peasants, were available to work mines and estates.

The Japanese also found a nationalist movement that they thought to convert into a convenient puppet government. This, the Indonesian Educational Union, which kept the initials of Sukarno's earlier movement, the PNI, was run by Dr. Mohammed Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir. When the Japanese arrived, Hatta openly collaborated while Sjahrir remained underground in charge of the resistance movement. This was a clever precaution, because the Japanese completely misinterpreted the people's joyful mood, believing, as Professor Kahin wrote, ". . . that they could exploit the resources of Indonesia for the benefit of the war

19. Kahin, op. cit.
20. Fischer, op. cit.
21. SORO, op. cit.; see also Kahin, op. cit.
22. Fischer, op. cit.

effort without having to make concessions to Indonesian nationalism."[23]

The Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Imamura, disbanded all political parties and forbade discussion of independence. Still worse, Japanese brutality almost immediately asserted itself, the Indonesians, for example, having to bow low to every passing Japanese soldier. Completely carried away with their own conceit, the Japanese, in spring of 1942, launched the "Triple A" movement—Japan the Leader of Asia, Japan the Protector of Asia, Japan the Light of Asia—designed to increase production. When people failed to respond satisfactorily, the Japanese began a long series of concessions. At Mohammed Hatta's urging, they brought Sukarno back from exile in order to harness rampant nationalism to the war effort. In March 1943, the conquerors authorized limited government in the form of the Center of People's Power, or Poetera, with Sukarno appointed chairman and Hatta vice-chairman. A few months later, Japanese Prime Minister Tojo authorized limited self-government. To defend the islands in case of allied invasion, the Japanese permitted Sukarno to organize and train an army, the Peta, or Volunteer Army of Defenders of the Fatherland, which eventually numbered 120,000 men.

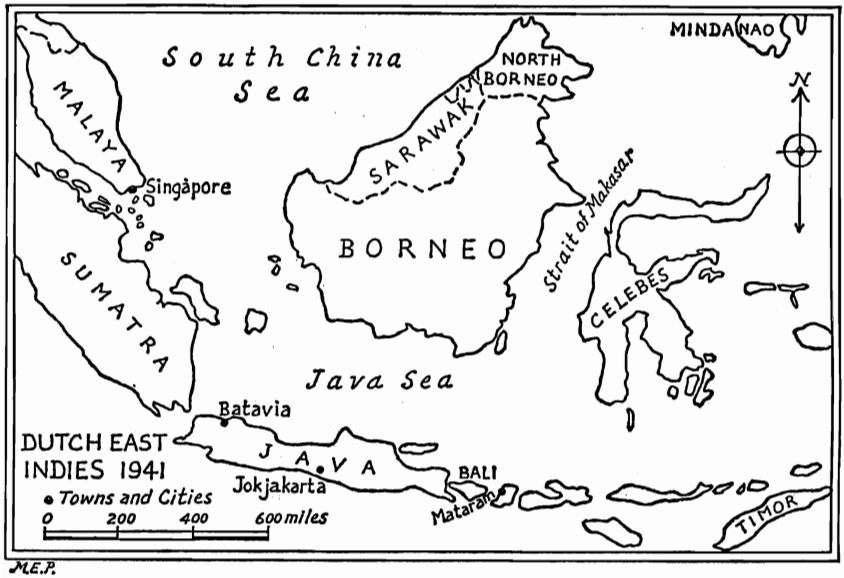
Although promising Indonesians eventual independence, the Japanese continued a harsh occupation. Years after the war, the *Times of Indonesia* published a pertinent editorial:

> . . . As we who lived through the occupation can testify, the Japanese are probably the most stupid of all Asian peoples in their dealings with natives of other races, for, with that compound of arrogance and idiocy which is the make-up of the average Japanese, they have a genius for getting themselves thoroughly detested. That Japan was bound to lose the war is one of those self-evident facts any schoolboy should have known: that Japan lost the friendship of the whole of South-east Asia in a matter of some forty months is something of more than ordinary interest for the historian. What cost the Japanese the good will of the countries they raped was their brutality. . . .[24]

By 1944, Japanese brutality had turned most of occupied Indonesia against Japanese rule. Fearing the increasing nationalist bias of Poetera, the Japanese disbanded the movement in March 1944, establishing instead the People's Loyalty Organization. The war was now going very badly for the Japanese and they tended to panic. In October 1944, they again promised independence, and, in the remaining months of occupation, granted increased powers to what became the Sukarno government.

Despite unpleasant aspects, the total experience benefited Indonesians. Without intending to do so, Japanese occupation policy encour-

23. Kahin, op. cit.
24. Fischer, op. cit.



aged nationalism: The Indonesian language, Bahasa Indonesia, spread among the people; the Japanese perforce used Indonesians in important civil service jobs, and people discovered, as their leaders had always insisted, that they could perform these jobs as well as, if not better than, Europeans. The Poetera offered a framework for self-government that survived the end of occupation and that the Peta protected. By war's end, ". . . Indonesia had provisional government, a national army, district administrations, a national flag and a national anthem."[25] Sukarno, in August 1945, proclaimed national independence.

The Dutch immediately protested. In Kandy, Ceylon, Dutch representatives at Lord Louis Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command headquarters ". . . demanded that the Japanese in Indonesia be ordered to suppress the new Republican government. . . . Mountbatten gave the instruction, but the Japanese parried it; the task, as events showed, would have been formidable. . . ."[26] The only available troops, British and American, made no move for six weeks. This gave Sukarno time to consolidate his new government and thus present the first Dutch troops with a *fait accompli.*

England meanwhile continued to display an ambivalent policy, on the one hand urging Dutch to negotiate with nationalists, on the other hand allowing Japanese to remain armed and eventually to fight against Indonesians.

25. SORO, op. cit.
26. Fischer, op. cit.

As the Dutch continued to refuse negotiations with Sukarno, incidents between nationalists and Dutch-British-Japanese troops multiplied. Having failed to protect her colony in adversity, Holland decided now to restore rule by force of arms. What she failed to realize was that Indonesians were equally determined to retain a new-found freedom.

Chapter 42

Japanese occupation of Thailand • Historical background • Exploitation of Thailand by great powers • Decline of monarchy • Dictatorship • The Japanese arrive • Limited OSS operations • The Japanese occupy Indochina • Historical background • Religion and the French conquest

GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS in Thailand and Indochina suffered from factors similar to those at work in other theaters of war: lack of allied organization, initial inability to overcome weather and distance, enemy countermeasures, and awkward internal political conflicts.

The kingdom of Siam, or Thailand, posed a unique problem to British and American planners in India and China. An independent country, it had slipped into the Japanese orbit and had even declared war on America and England, a bellicose posture that seemingly denied a tradition of diplomatic dexterity.

Like its neighbors, Thailand possesses an ancient and rich culture, probably reaching from the sixth century B.C. Some scholars believe that, in the seventh century A.D., a Thai kingdom, Nanchao, flourished in China's Yünnan province, only slowly becoming a vassal state. Migrating south, Thais intermingled with Laos and Shans of Burma while assimilating into the great Khmer Empire of Angkor (today's Cam-

bodia). In 1238, two powerful Thai chieftains defeated Cambodians to establish the kingdom of Sukhothai, which, under King Ramkanheng (1275–1317), became the most powerful state in Indochina. The king and his successors wisely paid tribute to China, a pragmatic policy that enabled them not only to survive while wedged dangerously between Burma and the Khmer Empire, but to expand their lands into the kingdom of Ayutthaya, or Siam.[1]

The first Westerners to reach the kingdom, the Portuguese, arrived in 1518 and began trade. While Siam continued to fend off (and sometimes succumb to) rapacious neighbors Burma and Cambodia, she opened ports to Dutch and Japanese ships. The English followed. An overzealous Dutch presence caused Siam to court France, a short-lived romance ended by Louis XIV's persistent attempts to convert the country to Christianity. After a confrontation with an English fleet in 1687, Siam turned her back on Europe for the next 130 years.

Vietnam expansion and a series of weak kings hurt Siam, which, by 1767, was on verge of succumbing to Burma. But then China invaded Burma to relieve part of the pressure and help General Taksin defeat the Burmese army. As king, Taksin invaded and won Cambodia. A tyrant, he went insane and was deposed and executed in 1781. His successor, General Chakri, or Rama I (1782–1809), founded the present dynasty and, despite a series of Burmese invasions, made Siam the most powerful state in Southeast Asia.

Rama II continued to resist pressure from Burma, a threat greatly diminished when the British conquered the country, in 1826. But this proved a mixed blessing, since British presence in Malaya thwarted Siamese expansion in that direction, while expansion eastward brought her into conflict with Vietnam. The English presence also undermined Siam's policy of isolation. In 1826, she signed a limited trade agreement with Great Britain, another with America in 1833.

Britain's victory over China in 1842 caused Rama IV to open his country further. In 1855, he signed the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with England, in Professor Nuechterlein's opinion, the ". . . turning point in Siamese history, not only in her relations with Western countries but also in her internal life." This lop-sided treaty, one of several imposed by England in Southeast Asia, limited duty on goods imported by British merchants in Bangkok, permitted opium to be imported duty free (subject to some restrictions), limited duties on goods exported by British merchants, and gave the British landowning privileges and extraterritorial rights. Burma signed similar treaties with

1. Donald E. Nuechterlein, *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965); see also D. G. E. Hall, "Thailand (History)." In Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968, Vol. 21.

France and America the following year. Townsend Harris, who negotiated for the United States,

> . . . reported that most of his difficulties were the result of Siamese fear and distrust of the British whom they characterized as "rapacious tyrants who were seizing the whole of Asia."[2]

French presence in Vietnam soon added to Siamese woes. The French began laying claim to the southern portion of the country in 1859 and soon began pushing north and west. If British presence in Siam proved irksome, it partially checked French designs. But, as the century spun out, King Rama V (1868–1910) felt increasingly pinched between the British in Burma and Malaya and the French in Indochina, an ugly period culminating, in 1893, when Siam, to avoid war with France, ceded all territory east of the Mekong River and agreed to other humiliating concessions.

At the turn of the century, Siam began looking to America and Japan to offset European influence. In 1903, Professor E. H. Strobel of Harvard Law School became the first foreign-policy adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. After World War I, in which Siam fought on the allied side, Woodrow Wilson's son-in-law, Francis Sayre, revised America's treaty with Siam, ending such privileges as limited export-import duties and extraterritorial rights, and persuaded European nations to similar reforms. Internal pressures, however, brought general decline in Siam's prosperity.

In 1932, a bloodless coup established constitutional monarchy. Of several causes, Nuechterlein cites as probably the most important

> . . . the determination of a small group of foreign-trained young intellectuals to modernize Siam's political structure and to institute a program of radical economic reform. These men, who had studied in Europe during the nineteen-twenties were impressed with the ideas of liberal government and political freedom that permeated Europe after World War I. . . .[3]

Two young men played dominant roles both in the coup and subsequently. The first, Pridi Phanomyong, better known in the West as Luang Pradit Manutam, came from a well-to-do provincial family.[4] After studying law in Paris, he returned to Bangkok, to become secretary of the bar association and play an active role as leader of the left group of the dominant political force, the People's Party. Thirty years old at the time of the coup, he tried to initiate state socialism, a radical program that soon caused a break with the new rulers and, in 1933, his exile to Europe.

2. Nuechterlein, op. cit.
3. Ibid.
4. D. Insor, *Thailand—A Political, Social and Economic Analysis* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963).

Pridi's military counterpart, Pibul Songgram, had studied in France as a military officer. A thirty-five-year-old major at the time of the coup, he defeated a royalist rebellion the following year and became minister of defense. The government quickly turned to authoritarian rule; in four years, the military budget doubled. In 1935, the king abdicated in favor of his ten-year-old nephew. Three years later, Pibul became prime minister and Pridi returned to serve as minister of finance.

In 1939, the government adopted the name Thailand—land of the free. Although Pridi continued to press for economic reforms, the Pibul government remained authoritarian, with Pibul himself increasingly an admirer of Germany and Japan. In 1940, with Japanese support, he recovered Laotian and Cambodian territory ceded to France early in the century. On December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Pibul accepted a Japanese ultimatum and surrendered his country to Japan; he subsequently declared war on England and America.[5]

At first glance, the operational climate in Thailand for either SOE or OSS appeared unfavorable, particularly since some fifty thousand Japanese troops occupied the country. But Thailand had not forsaken her tradition of international opportunism. The Thai ambassador in Washington, Seni Pramoj, refused to deliver Pibul's declaration of war to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. As one result, America did not declare war on Thailand. As another, Seni rounded up various students and officials to establish a "Free Thai" movement sponsored by OSS.

Meanwhile in Thailand, a secret resistance movement was growing under Pridi, whom Pibul had appointed regent (the young king was studying in Switzerland). Some evidence suggests that Pibul and Pridi were playing a game similar to that of Sukarno-Hatta-Sjahrir in Indonesia. At very least, in Professor Nuechterlein's words, ". . . what seems clear is that Pibul apparently had no objection to Pridi's [underground] activities, because he certainly could have taken steps against the underground if he had wanted to do so."[6]

Early in 1943, Western agents learned of Pridi's double role. The OSS effort to exploit the situation has been told in part in Alsop and Braden's previously mentioned book *Sub Rosa.* Although Thailand is a large country, roughly the size of France, early attempts to infiltrate liaison teams proved unsuccessful. The situation grew more favorable from mid-1944, when Pibul resigned and Pridi became the real power behind the new government. But so unfavorable were operational conditions that not until early 1945 did OSS officers start sending valuable information from Bangkok.

The movement blossomed in the following months, with OSS and

5. Ibid.
6. Nuechterlein, op. cit.

SOE setting up guerrilla camps throughout the country. Such was their success that Pridi, though walking a dangerous tightrope with Japan, wanted to start a guerrilla war.

Fortunately, American and British officers of South-East Asia Command persuaded him to hold off until allied forces could strike simultaneously—a plan voided by Japan's sudden collapse. As one result, Thailand remained the least war-torn of Southeast Asian countries.

An even more complicated political situation influenced the resistance effort in French Indochina—the large land mass, some 285,000 square miles, that forms the eastern promontory of Asia and, in 1940, supported perhaps twenty-three million people.[7]

Such is the impact of recent history that we tend to think of this land in the relatively tidy, if split, geographical terms of today's Vietnam. Yet, only thirty years ago, Vietnam comprised three distinct entities: Annam, Cochin China, and Tonkin. French Indochina included not only Vietnam but the ancient kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos, an enormous and politically variegated land mass boasting old cultures and extremely bellicose histories—histories inextricably connected with the kingdom to the north, China, which intermittently had held much of the southern area in thrall. This helped to account for centuries of revolt, often abortive efforts impeded by bloody internecine wars that kept the land in a state of perpetual if lackadaisical ferment.

Internal divisions brought external penetration. As early as the seventeenth century, warring princes sought military help from abroad. But as Joseph Buttinger has pointed out in his comprehensive political history *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled:*

> . . . It was precisely during these periods of open warfare between the North and South that a few doors were opened to the West. Each party tried to gain an advantage over the other through help from abroad. But through the doors opened for Western arms and Western experts of modern warfare slipped Western explorers, missionaries, and traders as well. Accepting cannons from the Portuguese also meant accepting their missionaries—particularly since most of the technical experts imported from the West were Jesuit priests. And in accepting naval aid from the Dutch, they also had to be granted permission to trade.[8]

By 1627, a Jesuit missionary, Father Alexandre de Rhodes, was busy converting members of the Trinh court in Tonkin; ten years later, Dutch traders opened a factory there.[9] French missionaries joined the effort,

7. Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina 1940–1955* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966).
8. Joseph Buttinger, op. cit.
9. Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

but Vietnamese rulers soon cooled to the new religion, which conflicted with so many basic Confucianist precepts. The region's limited wealth also inhibited trade, which slowed considerably during the eighteenth century. A dynastic war, the Tay Son revolt, further impeded the colonizing process. Ironically, intervention by a French missionary, Monseigneur Pigneau de Behaine, helped one Nguyen Anh to become Emperor Gia Long, the ruler of all Vietnam and voluntary vassal to China.

Although Gia Long and his successor, Minh Mang, improved and strengthened the empire, ". . . the country was not in fact to escape the intellectual and economic stagnation which paralyzed states ruled according to Confucian principles during the nineteenth century."[10]

But where Gia Long respected a sort of armed truce with French missionaries, Minh Mang tried to eradicate Christianity.

> . . . by an edict promulgated in 1833 the profession of Christianity was declared a crime punishable by death, while orders were issued that buildings which had served either for the celebration of the mass, or to house Catholic priests should be demolished. The implementation of this edict was to result in the execution, imprisonment, or exile of a number of European missionaries.[11]

Three years later, having put down a revolt in Cochin China, Minh Mang ". . . closed Vietnamese ports, with the exception of Tourane, to European shipping, while the death penalty was decreed against foreign missionaries discovered in the country."[12]

Although Minh Mang later tried for *rapprochement* with France, the missionary's lot in Indochina was never a happy one, during either Minh's reign or those of his successors. Vietnamese excesses on several occasions led to French naval intervention; in turn, French excesses brought new anti-Christian measures. Having established the friction of a tiny Catholic population in a predominantly Confucianist-Buddhist country, the French scratched it into fire of intervention: in 1859, a French force occupied Saigon and, in 1861, claimed Cochin China as a colony. A treaty forced on the court at Hué in 1862 transferred three eastern provinces of Cochin China to the French, opened the hinterland to traders and missionaries, and even won the French a cash indemnity. The following year, the Cambodian king, Norodom, agreed to protectorate status in order to fend off Vietnamese and Siamese incursions.[13]

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Hammer, op. cit.

Missionaries provided pretext for intervention. A French military officer-historian, Captain Gosselin, wrote in 1904:

> . . . Our compatriots, not well informed on history, suppose that France came to intervene in Annam solely for the protection of missionaries, or to seek vengeance for acts of hostility committed against them and for persecutions against the Catholic religion. The missionaries, in reality, have only been the pretext for our action against *Annam*. The loss of India in the eighteenth century, the increasingly rapid extension in the Far East of our perpetual rival England imposed on us the obligation to set foot in the China seas, the only alternative being our falling into a state of contemptible inferiority. Annam gave us the opportunity, the massacre of Frenchmen who were there as missionaries gave us the pretext.[14]

The French soon expanded their presence. Five years after gaining eastern provinces, continued opposition from western provinces justified French authorities, or so they reasoned, in adding this area to their new colony. The insinuating process continued during the next two decades, both to the west, where France gained predominant influence in Cambodia, and to the north, which she explored for commercial possibilities.

In planting the flag ever farther from Saigon, French colonizers played on traditional regional rivalries, a process never far removed from troops and gunboats. By a treaty of 1884, the boy emperor Kien Phuc ceded all of Cochin China and the cities of Tourane, Haiphong, and Hanoi to France, which placed them in a colonial status; the treaty also reduced Annam and Tonkin to protectorate status. China protested, but, after fighting and losing a war with France, agreed to the acquisitions and signed the 1885 treaty of Tientsin. Two years later, France extended her protective presence to the kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, the whole euphemistically termed the Indochinese Union, a heterogeneous administrative hodgepodge whose three peoples distrusted each other and were distrusted in turn by ethnic minorities such as the Thai of the Tonkinese mountains and the Montagnards in southern Annam.

14. Ibid.

Chapter 43

The French presence in Indochina • Fallacy of the "peace and security" argument • The French contribution • Fallacy of the "non-profit" argument • Failure of French colonial policy • Conditions inside Indochina: the double standard

WHAT TO MAKE of the French presence in Indochina?

Apologists generally argue along two lines. The first holds that France (along with other colonizing powers) brought peace and security to an area that had known only war. This argument has even been repeated by non-apologists; one such recently wrote: ". . . On the other hand, much of Vietnam was immediately pacified, and thus French rule brought peace and security for the first time to an important part of the population."[1] In her comprehensive work *The Struggle for Indochina 1940–1955,* Ellen Hammer noted: ". . . The population of Indochina more than doubled under the French, for they brought peace and security to the country"—but she correctly emphasized that this positive de-

1. Roy Jumper and M. W. Normand, "Vietnam: The Historical Background." In M. E. Gettleman (ed.), *Viet Nam* (New York: Fawcett, 1965).

velopment in no way compensated for the profoundly negative aspects of colonial rule.[2]

This argument presupposes that Indochina, either acting on her own or beneficently influenced by other powers, would not have found peace and security during the twentieth century. The argument hinges on the earlier historical record, certainly a dismal recital of revolts and dynastic wars—but scarcely a more dismal recital than that underlying the emergence of most states. The argument denies progress: it ignores the probability that peace ultimately comes to an area once people tire of war; this occurred after the Hundred Years' War and the Thirty Years' War in Europe, and the peoples of Indochina also enjoyed peaceful periods in their history. It also denies the ability of peoples to work out their own destinies by allowing dominant forces to assert themselves and thereby continue the natural civilizing process. Nor is it altogether an accurate argument: the French presence may have brought peace and security to some, but it brought wholesale misery to millions, because it continued to deprive a large portion of peoples of dignity and hope, not to mention basic subsistence, and where desperate ones challenged French rule, their blood ran deep.

In short, the "peace and security" argument is the height of conceit —the ultimate statement not only of the white man's burden but of the *Christian* white man's burden.

The second argument excuses France on grounds that she acquired these colonial holdings more for reasons of prestige than for economic reasons. In his well-known book *The Two Viet-Nams,* the late Bernard Fall quoted the French historian Henri Brunschwig:

> . . . The colonies were not supposed to be sources of revenue. Their role consisted in disputing the mastery of the seas with Britain and affirming to the face of the world the *présence,* the *grandeur,* and the *rayonnement* of France. It was normal that all this was to be paid for, like all expenditures of sovereignty.[3]

In defense of this thesis, Fall and other writers have presented impressive facts documenting the financial burden of Indochina to the French Government. They point to the immense task of modernizing the nation—of curing tropical diseases, introducing hygiene and hospitals, improving dikes to irrigate hundreds of thousands of acres, draining thousands of new acres, introducing the rubber tree, building new roads and railroads, increasing exports. Such was the monumental task, that

2. Hammer, op. cit. I should point out that this work, in general, is critical of the French presence and policy; see also Dennis J. Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

3. Bernard Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams—A Political and Military Analysis* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).

Fall concluded not only France but all colonizing powers suffered financially from such undertakings:

> . . . thus, the myth of the economic advantages of colonies can be quietly laid to rest, no matter how temptingly simple it makes the explanation of a rather complex problem.[4]

For a scholar of Fall's pretensions, this is surprising naïveté. As we have seen, the Dutch Government profited enormously from its Indonesian colony. Even when home governments suffered budgetary losses in administering colonies, control of these colonies often meant control of more extensive trade areas, with immense economic advantages to the home country. France needed the Indochina base first to prevent Great Britain from dominating Southeast Asia, second to further her own incursions into southern China, whose resources she was exploiting as avidly as were Britain and Germany in the North. Finally, French individuals and companies amassed vast fortunes in Indochina, just as some of the largest British fortunes stemmed directly from opium trade between India and China—and this allowed further capital expansion at home and abroad.

The above arguments also ignore the *moral* responsibility of the colonizing power. Surely no nation has a God-given right to possess another nation, whether to enhance its own prestige (and gain indirect economic profit thereby) or for any other reason. If the distorted philosophy underlying the white man's burden, or what the French called *la mission civilisatrice,* denied assimilation, the favored policy of association none the less bespoke responsibility of enlightenment: the nineteenth-century colonizing power would be responsible for future development—social, political, economic—of the concerned area.

In abrogating this responsibility, in allowing colonizers to pervert what was feckless policy at best, colonizing powers fell flat on their respective faces—and of these powers, France fell the flattest, in Indochina. As Ellen Hammer has written:

> . . . They opened the country to the West. To people bogged down in their own past they brought a new science and technology, new patterns of living and thinking. An alien rule and an alien civilization were intruded into the closed and backward-looking society of Viet Nam. The effect, of course, was highly disruptive. The Vietnamese felt the shock of it in every part of their life—socially, economically, culturally, and politically.
>
> Thus the pattern of land distribution changed, and the gap between rich and poor grew wider. This development was certainly not deliberate on the part of the French, but it was none the less real. . . .[5]

4. Ibid.
5. Hammer, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit., for a detailed and masterly analysis of the process.

Part of the disaster stemmed from the distorted concept of the white man's burden, part from French national failure. From 1870 on, France was a defeated, humiliated, and politically disorganized nation incapable of effectually governing herself, much less an overseas empire. She had no colonial policy. Such was the state of affairs in the turbulent Third Republic that ". . . French colonial affairs became an almost private preoccupation of the Minister of Colonies [in Paris] and of the colonial governors."[6]

The governor general and his ancillary governors and ministers ruled through a French Indochinese civil service whose senior members found themselves subject to political whims of French politicians, just as did the governor general. Buttinger has pointed out that

> . . . Between 1886 and 1926, counting regular and interim governors, the French administration of Indochina changed heads no less than fifty-two times. This fact alone would explain the constant fluctuations of Indochinese policy, as many of these men either arrived with their own ideas or inherited problems which they thought only new policies could solve.[7]

Some governors worked hard at the job. Paul Doumer, who became governor general in 1897,

> . . . was to show that Indochina could be a source of profit to commercial and financial interests, without cost to the French taxpayer, by providing the country with a uniform administrative service, with ample public revenues, and with economic equipment which compared favorably with that of other countries in South East Asia.[8]

Doumer accomplished a great deal in five years, but, as Buttinger concluded:

> . . . It is indeed not often that one man can so lastingly shape the destiny of a country in so short a time. But the Vietnamese people, his chief victims in Indochina, found little in his achievements for which to be grateful, and even less in his person to admire or praise. Doumer ruled Vietnam in the bold and hard manner of the proconsuls of old. He was not without concern for the people he called his "native charges," but his concern was largely nullified by his belief that what was good for France was also good for Vietnam. For the Vietnamese people, sound budgets meant crippling taxes, railroad construction meant conditions of forced labor, while the denial of industries and education meant that their living standard would at best remain as miserable as ever, and they were excluded from the general forward movement of mankind. . . .[9]

6. Fall, op. cit.
7. Buttinger, op. cit.
8. Lancaster, op. cit.
9. Buttinger, op. cit.

Increasingly, however, real power rested in European colonials, or *colons,* who, almost without exception, devoted impressive efforts to milking area resources while almost totally ignoring the welfare of its peoples:

> . . . The peasant labored under a grinding burden of debt. The French tried to alleviate his dependence on the usurer, but much of the credit which they made available went to line the pockets of the large landowners, who borrowed only to relend at exorbitant rates. Usury thrived, and the local Chinese and Indians joined wealthy Vietnamese in raking in the profits. . . .
>
> The Cochin Chinese landlord often collected more in usury than he did in rent. Cochin China was the center of French economic activity in Indochina. The abundant benefits of usury, combined with the French practice of granting extensive concessions in undeveloped land to French companies and rich Vietnamese, led to the development of many large estates owned by absentee landlords. These estates were worked by tenant farmers and landless agricultural laborers. The *ta dien* or sharecropper worked between 60 to 80 percent of the Cochin Chinese farmland. He generally had to give far more than half his annual harvest to his landlord, partly as rent, partly as usurious interest.[10]

Europeans fought any reforms attempted by government, Fall noted,

> . . . and much of what was done in education and social welfare—and in the fields of work conditions, child labor, and tuberculosis prevention particularly, it was a great deal more than any other colonial power had done—was done in the face of the fiercest opposition and counter-pressure from the Europeans.[11]

The record discloses the paucity of accomplishment. Despite such trappings as Pasteur health institutes and a *lycée* in Hanoi and roads and railways (built by the *corvée* system of compulsory labor), Indochina remained a grossly underdeveloped area. Primary and secondary schools were at a premium, as were hospitals, doctors, and nurses.[12] The few Vietnamese who graduated from the *lycée* or from foreign universities had the greatest difficulty in finding commensurate positions.

The French presence loomed generously. To administer India with her 320 millions, the British employed a civil service of forty-eight hundred Europeans; to administer Indochina with her 30 millions, France

10. Hammer, op. cit.
11. Fall, op. cit.
12. Buttinger, op. cit.: ". . . Precolonial Vietnam had been famous for its system of free general and higher education. At least 80 per cent of the people were literate to some degree . . ."; the author also quotes authoritative evidence that, in the 1930s, in the Philippines one doctor existed for every 3,200 natives; in Indochina one doctor existed for every 38,000.

employed five thousand Frenchmen.[13] Everywhere a double standard existed:

> . . . at all echelons, even the most humble . . . [the Vietnamese] were confronted by Frenchmen holding exactly the same or lower jobs but being paid two or three times more. Thus, the French janitor at the University of Hanoi received a base pay that was slightly higher than that of a Vietnamese professor with a Ph. D. from the University of Paris.[14]

A leading Vietnamese nationalist wrote Governor General Beau in 1906:

> . . . Whether in newspapers, or letters, or in conversation, the French always hold us in hatred and contempt. They consider us not merely as savages, but as dogs and swine. Not only do they not treat us as equals, but to them we are something dirty and stinking, to be avoided. In this era, any mandarin who dares to object to a French administrator, no matter how well-founded his objection, is insulted scornfully. More than a few people in the countryside have been beaten to death by Frenchmen. Everyone realizes that the French consider us as animals and brutes; everyone is angry, but who dares to voice his anger? . . . When a Vietnamese meets a Frenchman, whether a civilian or soldier, the Vietnamese is always ready to take flight lest the Frenchman kick or beat him.[15]

Despite the area's significant contribution to the allied cause in World War I—thousands of Vietnamese served in France—the Versailles conference all but ignored the colonial question and France blithely persevered in her incredible attitude.[16] Although France offered a few political sops such as representation in territorial assemblies and later in an area-wide Grand Council, the Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians remained in servile status. Asians could not enter French clubs; Frenchmen addressed even ranking Asians with the informal pronoun *tu,* as opposed to the courteous *monsieur*. Asian inferiority was obvious to all but themselves. For once, neither nationalists nor Communists had to invent propaganda, for what their leaders said and wrote was also said and written by provincial leaders, and such was the dismal situation that hyperbole and invective became truth.

13. Ibid.
14. Fall, op. cit.
15. Buttinger, op. cit.
16. Hammer, op. cit.: ". . . Indochina provided more than half the wartime loans and gifts made to France by her colonies, more raw materials than any other part of the empire except West Africa; and more than 43,000 Indochinese soldiers and almost 49,000 workers were sent to Europe"; see also Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1937): In this comprehensive and pioneering historical survey, Dr. Thompson pointed out that the Vietnamese sent to France were forcibly recruited "by reprehensible methods and violence. . . ."

Prewar social evils also continued: ". . . in 1924 only some 6,200 boys and 1,000 girls out of some 600,000 children of school age were receiving an education. . . ."[17] The few university graduates continued to find themselves shut off from economic opportunity. French administration continued to indulge in the pernicious but extremely profitable opium trade. Periodic famines swept through Tonkin and northern Annam:

> . . . The majority of Tonkinese could afford only two meals a day during most of the year. They managed three around harvest time, when they had to work harder than usual, but this came after a period of privation. Almost every year there was a time before the harvest when the peasant could not afford to eat more than once a day. He did not even have enough rice for that, unless he boiled it so long that it became a soup which looked and tasted like a gluey paste.[18]

Herein lay the fallacy of increasing rice exports. As Buttinger has perspicaciously written:

> . . . These rising exports, and the corresponding profits, would not have been possible if the great stretches of land made cultivable by the French had been given to landless peasants or to peasants with insufficient acreage. In full control of their crop, the peasants could have eaten all they wanted, and very little would have remained for export, unless measures were taken substantially to increase the yield. This was not done because it would have taken time and cost money, which the French in Vietnam wanted to make, not spend. And it could be made quickly only by growing large quantities of rice, and only if the new rice was not consumed but marketed. This is why the policy of creating large estates was adopted, and why landlordism, despite its disastrous social and political consequences, was preserved to the last day of French rule.[19]

The French also retained control of industry and finance, treating ". . . Indochina pre-eminently as a source of raw materials for France and as a market for French manufacturers. They kept the country inside the walls of the French tariff system, forcing the Indochinese to pay more to import from France the goods which they might have bought elsewhere at lower prices. . . ."[20] The highly vaunted rubber plantations and mines remained mostly under French ownership, which worked them with a labor system just short of slave labor.[21]

17. Lancaster, op. cit.
18. Hammer, op. cit.; see also Thompson, op. cit.
19. Buttinger, op. cit.
20. Hammer, op. cit.
21. Buttinger, op. cit.

Neither political representation nor protest righted matters:

. . . The protection of French interests remained the responsibility of an omnipresent Security Service. Vietnamese who wished to leave the region in which they were domiciled had to obtain a passport, while an exit visa was required to go abroad. Mail was censored, domiciliary visits were carried out by police or customs officials without a warrant, and the Governor-General was empowered to intern Vietnamese without trial and to sequestrate their property for a period of ten years. The allegation in clandestine Communist tracts that Indochina was a prison thus had some justification, and even moderate nationalists who were anxious to find a pacific solution to these difficulties complained that Vietnamese were treated like aliens in their own country.[22]

22. Lancaster, op. cit.

Chapter 44

Indochinese resistance to French suzerainty • Early guerrilla wars • Continued resistance • Vietnamese objectives • Rise of nationalism • Bao Dai and Ngo Dinh Diem • The Yen Bay mutiny • Enter Ho Chi Minh • The Vietnamese Communist movement • Ho's peregrinations • Further Vietnamese uprisings • The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao

SOCIETY may condemn a man to hang, but the victim rarely agrees with the verdict, particularly if he is innocent. The Indochinese peoples did not gladly suffer French rule. Throughout the colonizing period, isolated groups fought what usually were guerrilla actions against French arms. When the boy emperor Ham Nghi rebelled, the French deposed him; in 1884, he and his regent fled to the mountains and fought a guerrilla war for three years, a widespread resistance that ended only with Ham Nghi's capture and exile. A few years later, another major insurrection sprang up and lasted for two years before its bloody repression. In the Tonkin Delta, partisan leaders such as Nguyen Thien Thuat, Doc Ngu and De Kieu led the French a merry chase until 1892, when they were subdued:

. . . Here and there, they "transformed villages into fortresses, surrounding them with deep ditches filled with water and protected by bamboo fences

as well as enormous walls of earth crowned with battlements in stone." But as a rule, the war in the delta was fought by small and constantly moving groups of twenty to twenty-five guerrillas. These groups usually attacked by night and only when they were certain to take the enemy by surprise. They wasted no ammunition and promptly retreated when they met a superior force. Retreat, to the despair of the pursuing French, always meant that the guerrillas disappeared, either hiding in rice fields or resuming their original role of peaceful peasants, whom no other peasant or mandarin in the village in which they hid would betray. In the delta, says Isoart, these partisans "had the broadest popular support. Indeed, in a land of vast plains, only the support of the population could assure the existence of the rebellion."[1]

Resistance continued in northern Tonkin, where, as we have seen (Chapter 17), Gallieni and Lyautey had their hands full bringing local nationalist-bandit groups to submission. They were not altogether successful: French forces fought wily guerrilla leader De Tham, the "Tiger of Yen Tre," off and on until 1913, when they caught and executed him.[2]

. . . These men who fought the French in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had no particular wish for social or political reform. Their one desire was to drive out the French so that the Nguyen Emperors and the mandarinal bureaucracy could rule in independence once again and the old order could be secured. They fought for independence from France as their ancestors had fought to oust the Chinese from Viet Nam since the first century A.D.

But as the years passed:

. . . Natural opposition gained stimulus from outside forces: In the early part of the twentieth century they [the Vietnamese rebels] were profoundly influenced by events in China and Japan. The Vietnamese had long been sensitive to political currents across the frontier, and China, so long a citadel of the past, yet crumbling with decadence, was in the midst of a new ferment as the rule of the Manchu emperors neared its close. The Vietnamese learned of reform and then of revolution from China. At the same time, they read in Chinese books about revolutionary nationalism in nineteenth century Europe and studied with interest the Italian struggle for unification and the careers of men like Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour.[3]

Japan's emergence as an international power, in 1905, when she defeated Russia, also worked an important effect: ". . . if the Japanese could reorient themselves so successfully to the modern world, as Gia Long had tried to do many years before, surely other Asians could do

1. Buttinger, op. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. Hammer, op. cit.

the same. Vietnamese nationalists began to talk of 'modernizing' their country so that they would be powerful enough to oust the French."[4] A few even realized that failure of resistance rested on its negative quality: restoration of mandarin rule with all its evils as opposed to assimilation of Western technology and political institutions in order to build a politically viable Vietnam. One of the first far-seeing nationalists, Phan Boi Chau, by 1903 was trying to organize dissident elements into a national revolutionary party.

The work of Chau and others insured continued opposition to French rule. One group of nationalists cut their hair—the Vietnamese wore it traditionally long—and, known as the Hair-Cutters, demanded social reforms. In 1908, thousands of peasants demonstrated and one group of terrorists attempted to poison the French garrison at Hanoi. The famous guerrilla leader in northern Tonkin, De Tham, fought so successfully that the French agreed to a virtual "coexistence" policy with him. In 1912, Phan Boi Chau organized the Phuc Quoc in Canton and ". . . inspired and directed the underground revolutionary movement in Viet Nam."[5]

In 1916, Emperor Duy Tan supported a mandarin-inspired revolt. Its failure brought his exile, and death or imprisonment of leading rebels. Taken with the Vietnamese contribution to World War I, however, it helped cause the French to promise postwar reforms. But Duy Tan's successor, Khai Dinh, a French puppet, failed ". . . to persuade the French authorities to abandon coercive methods of government and to adopt a policy directed to securing the co-operation of the Vietnamese in the administration of the Protectorate." In 1925, the throne went to Khai Dinh's son, Bao Dai. Raised and educated in France from the age of nine, Bao Dai did not return to rule until 1932, when he

> . . . proclaimed his desire to reign as a constitutional monarch. He also announced his intention of reforming the mandarinate and the administration of justice and reorganizing public education. . . .[6]

The young emperor appointed a province governor, Ngo Dinh Diem, his minister of interior and head of a reform commission. French and senior court officials frustrated the commission's work by playing regional power factions and individual leaders one against the other, a disruptive game eagerly embraced by the French commercial community, which also refused the notion of widespread reforms. Combined opposition proved too strong. Diem resigned to begin a life of contemplative protest. Bao Dai resigned himself to role of puppet ruler, his material extravagances paid for by the French. They will enter our story again in later chapters.

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.; see also Thompson, op. cit.; Buttinger, op. cit.
6. Lancaster, op. cit.

As local rulers once contested the French colonizing process, new groups of dissidents contested French administration. In 1927, a young teacher, Nguyen Thai Hoc, founded the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang—the VNQDD, or National Party of Vietnam.[7] Adopting ". . . the methods, organizations, and political program of the Kuomintang," this nationalist group grew to about fifteen hundred members in two years:

> . . . But the party's activities, which included blackmail, assassination and the manufacture of bombs, soon attracted the attention of the French authorities, and after the arrest and interrogation of some of its members the French Security Service discovered the revolutionary aims and extensive ramifications of the organization.[8]

The VNQDD continued to operate, however, and, in early 1930, took the lead in ordering a general rebellion. In the event, four companies of troops mutinied at Yen Bay and killed their officers; sporadic outbursts occurred elsewhere. The French replied quickly and brutally, and VNQDD leaders who survived fled to Yünnan, in southern China. Nguyen Thai Hoc and twelve comrades died on the guillotine. Hoc wrote in his last statement

> . . . that if the French wanted to occupy Indochina peacefully and without revolution, they would have to call a halt to all brutal and inhumane methods, to behave not as cruel masters of the people but as friends. They would have to respect such rights of the individual as liberty of travel, education, association and press. They would have to end the corruption in official places, educate the people, and develop trade and native industries.[9]

Meanwhile, a more vigorous movement was under way. Beginning in 1925, a thirty-five-year-old Vietnamese expatriate and Comintern agent named Nguyen Ai Quoc was training a cadre of young Communists in the Chinese city of Canton. This man, who would one day become famous as Ho Chi Minh, was born in central Vietnam about 1890. Like Mao Tse-tung, his father was a relatively well-off peasant (some authorities describe him as a scholar), an ardent nationalist whose activities in anti-French organizations got him in periodic trouble with authorities. The youngster enjoyed a village education, an experience enlivened by acting as covert courier for his father's seditious letters. After attending the Lycée Quôc-hoc, at Hué, which taught in nationalist rather than French tradition, the student became teacher in a southern Vietnam fishing village.

In 1911, he studied briefly in Saigon, a trade-school course, perhaps in pastry cooking. He then signed on as kitchen boy aboard a French

7. Hammer, op. cit.
8. Lancaster, op. cit.
9. Hammer, op. cit.

ship which sailed to Africa, Europe, and North America. He spent most of World War I in London working as a school janitor and at night as pastry cook in the Carlton Hotel under the famous chef Escoffier. He also joined an Asian revolutionary organization, the Lao-Dong Hai-Ngoa, or Overseas Workers' Association. From London he sailed for America and may have worked for a time in New York's Harlem district.

In 1918, the young man lived in Paris, working as a photo retoucher and political agitator among Vietnamese expatriates. In the following year, he formed a one-man lobby at the Versailles Peace Conference. Announcing himself as representative of the Association of Vietnamese Patriots, he presented a memorandum

> . . . based on Point Six of President Wilson's Fourteen-Point program invoking the interests of colonized peoples, omitted all reference to national independence and merely demanded that a stop should be put to the abuses caused by the arbitrary exercise of power in Indochina and that the Vietnamese should be accorded certain basic liberties including protection from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.[10]

His attempt to enlist allied support failed—not surprising, in view of Great Power determination to avoid the awkward colonial question.

Now a member of the French Socialist Party, the twenty-nine-year-old rebel became increasingly active in politics and spent considerable time working with a large residue of Vietnamese soldiers waiting return from France to the Far East. When Socialists splintered over the colonial question, he joined the new French Communist Party, where he soon began making his mark as a colonial expert. At this time, he attacked French policy in a book, *French Colonization on Trial,* which, smuggled into Indochina, ". . . became the bible of nationalists."[11]

In 1922, he attended the Fourth Comintern Congress, in Moscow, met Lenin, and probably became a member of the Comintern's newly created Southeast Asia Bureau. Subsequently he became active in the Peasant International, or *Krestintern.* In 1924, he moved to Moscow for study at the University of the Toilers of the East and there impressed important party members as an intelligent and hard-working activist.

Posted to Canton in late 1924, he quickly and efficiently organized Vietnamese and other Asian nationalists into a League of Oppressed Peoples of Asia, which was nothing less than ". . . the Comintern front organization for the whole Far East and soon became the Nan-yang or South Seas Communist Party—the parent organization of later Communist parties in Korea, Indonesia, Malaya, India, China, and Vietnam."[12]

Under Ho's aegis, young Vietnamese students graduated from Wham-

10. Lancaster, op. cit.
11. Hammer, op. cit.
12. Fall, op. cit.

poa, the military academy established by Chiang Kai-shek; others received advanced political training in Moscow:

> . . . Ho himself ran an accelerated training course that graduated 20 to 30 Vietnamese political agitators every three months. Between January, 1925, and July, 1927 (when Chiang broke with the Communists), Ho formed 200 *can-bo* (cadres), which were infiltrated back to Indochina.[13]

This beehive of subversion burst into cells with Chiang Kai-shek's sudden crackdown on Communists. When Mao Tse-tung fled south, Ho escaped across the Gobi Desert to the Soviet Union, operated as a Comintern agent in Europe for two years, then returned to the Far East to reorganize the party effort.

Working in Hong Kong under the alias Tong Van So, Ho partially succeeded in restoring party unity and, in October 1930, forming an expanded Indochinese Communist Party.

All this meant swimming against strong repressionary currents. Failure of the Yen Bay mutiny and associated peasant uprisings, while hurting the burgeoning revolutionary movement, played into Communist hands. In September 1930, the party began to lead peasant demonstrations and uprisings in northern Annam (where the peasants ". . . sold their starving children for a couple of francs if they could find a buyer, hoping that they would be fed and that the proceeds from the sale of some of their children would enable them to keep the remaining ones alive").[14]

To reclaim control over peasant-administered local "soviets," the French rushed in troops and, in a chaotic few months, restored order at cost of some ten thousand civilian casualties.[15] Widespread arrests followed, with perhaps fifty thousand persons deported.[16] In the general roundup of the next two years, many of Ho's colleagues in Vietnam, names that one day would become only too familiar in the West—Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Truong Chinh, Tran Phu—went to jail: ". . . in 1932 the number of political prisoners confined in Indochinese jails, penal settlements, and 'special camps' was estimated at 10,000."[17]

Meanwhile, British police in Hong Kong, acting on information supplied by a French Comintern agent, picked up Ho in June 1931. While serving a six-month sentence, he successfully fought extradition by the French in Vietnam (who had sentenced him to death *in absentia*). Released from jail, he slipped away to remote Amoy, then to Shanghai, and finally back to the Soviet Union, where, allegedly, he attended two senior party schools. Apparently untouched by Stalin's purges of this

13. Ibid.; see also Hammer, op. cit.
14. Buttinger, op. cit.
15. Lancaster, op. cit.; see also Hammer, op. cit.
16. Buttinger, op. cit.
17. Lancaster, op. cit.

period, he next appeared in Mao Tse-tung's new base, in northwestern China. After performing relatively menial jobs, he accompanied a Chinese Communist mission to Tonkin, where it trained Chinese Nationalist guerrillas—and where we shall leave Ho for the moment.

While Ho agitated and studied and organized, his Indochinese Communist Party continued in adversity. In the South, in Cochin China, a Trotskyist movement challenged party unity. Although the French broke this up in the late 1930s, general repression continued to hinder the movement. In November 1940, an important party leader in the South, Tran Van Giau, foolishly led a peasant uprising which the French crushed quickly and effectively; they squelched another insurrection in the Lang Son area, in the North, and executed the veteran revolutionary leader Tran Tung Lap.[18] As a result of these and other repressive measures, the party remained weak and divided at the outbreak of war.

In addition to nationalist and Communist movements, two other potential power groups appeared in these turbulent prewar years. These were the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao quasi-religious sects.[19]

The Cao Dai originated in the Saigon area in 1925 and spread through Cochin China and into Cambodia, numbering some three hundred thousand members by 1940.

The Hoa Hao also functioned in Cochin China, particularly in western regions. Although neither group constituted an organized political force, each manifested the divisive nature of Vietnamese politics, and the French feared each sect as a potentially powerful political instrument.

Instead of fostering healthy political growth in Indochina, then, the French spawned only discord: a weak, ineffectual emperor; a squabbling, impotent court; a nationalist party with leaders mostly in exile; a torn and divided but still organized Communist party; two large but politically undeveloped sects—an altogether frustrated, fragmented, underdeveloped, impoverished country of strangely diverse national leaders whose only common ground consisted of an intensely emotional desire for national independence.

18. Hammer, op. cit.
19. Ibid.; see also Lancaster, op. cit.; Buttinger, op. cit.

Chapter 45

The Japanese threaten French Indochina • America's position • French capitulation • American reaction • Decoux's dictatorship • The French resistance plan • President Roosevelt's anti-colonialism • Its effect on French resistance • Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh • Vo Nguyen Giap • Guerrilla operations in northern Vietnam • OSS support of Giap • Ho's strength grows • Allied postwar policy • British and Chinese occupation of Vietnam • Ho proclaims the Democratic Republic of Vietnam • Communist failure in the South

OUTBREAK OF WAR in Europe further diminished the unity of Vietnamese opposition to French rule. The Indochinese Communist Party, faithful to Moscow, denounced the French war against Germany and, in September 1939, was outlawed and forced underground.

But the French administration in Indochina had far more to worry about than the ICP, either above or underground. Her regular army garrison amounted to some eleven thousand troops, a force backed by fifteen modern aircraft and one light cruiser. Thailand's flanking army was a joke; British garrisons in Malaya and Burma, Dutch garrisons in the East Indies, and American garrisons in the Philippines were as unprepared for war as the French in Indochina. Yet each of these areas held a strong attraction for Japan, already moving south.

The fall of Holland and France, in spring of 1940, drastically changed the power picture in the Far East. The power hiatus could only have been filled by American naval forces, but America refused to become in-

volved, a decision due partly to an isolationist foreign policy, to military weakness in general, and to her leaders, particularly Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who woefully miscalculated Japanese strength and intentions.

Japan, intent on cutting the railroad leading from the Tonkin port of Haiphong to Yünnan, in China, in order to deprive Chiang Kai-shek of a major supply line, already had demanded joint control of the Tonkin border. The Japanese ultimatum placed the French governor general, General Catroux, in a virtually impossible position. Isolated and alone, he yielded to Japanese demands, a move that cost him his job. His replacement, Vice Admiral Jean Decoux, fared no better. Washington not only refused to intervene, but actually blocked the sale of aircraft and anti-aircraft guns. In August 1940, the American State Department informed Vichy France that

> . . . the United States was unable to come to the aid of Indochina but that it "appreciated the difficulties with which the French Government was faced and did not consider that it would be justified in reproaching France if certain military facilities were accorded Japan."[1]

England proved no more venturesome: in mid-August, Japanese threats caused her to close the Burma Road for three months, thus depriving China of much needed supply.[2] Lacking British or American support and strongly sympathetic to axis aims, the Vichy government recognized Japan's "pre-eminent position" in the Far East and instructed Decoux to come to an agreement that would retain French sovereignty over Indochina. When Decoux hesitated, the Japanese attacked French border forts and bombed Hanoi. These actions led to an agreement, in late September, whereby Japan occupied three airfields in Tonkin, her total occupation force not to exceed six thousand troops; in addition, she agreed not to send more than twenty-five thousand Japanese through Indochina at a time.[3]

Thus began French Indochina's capitulation, at first a relatively painless process:

> . . . The Japanese seemed quite content to leave a framework of French control in Indochina. Decoux and the officials under him bore the burdens of government and kept order in the country, leaving the Japanese free to use Indochina more or less as they wished—to plug up a gap in the blockade of China, and to serve as a military base and a source of supply in the conquest of China and Southeast Asia. It was a profitable arrangement for

1. Fall, op. cit.; see also Hammer, op. cit.; Buttinger, op. cit.; Lancaster, op. cit.
2. Hammer, op. cit.
3. Ibid.; see also Lancaster, op. cit.

both French officialdom and the Japanese military, and it opened the door to Japanese domination of the country.[4]

The Japanese did not hesitate in asserting supremacy. In January 1941, Thailand sent an expeditionary force into Cambodia and a naval force to Hanoi. The French blew the Thai navy out of the water; Japan interceded, and in March forced the French to cede rich provinces in Cambodia and Laos to Thailand. A few months later, in July, the Vichy government accepted Japan as a defensive partner in Indochina, removed all restrictions as to the number of troops she could station there, and also made available ports and airfields, facilities which

> . . . were exploited without loss of time in order to build up a forward base in Indochina for their plans for expansion in South East Asia.[5]

Japan's move caught Washington by surprise. President Roosevelt now proposed to the Japanese ambassador ". . . the complete neutralization of Indochina in exchange for a guarantee of Japan's 'right of acquisition . . . of supplies and raw materials therefrom on a basis of equality.' "[6] But, only two days later, the President issued his famous Executive Order that froze Japanese assets in America and placed an embargo on petroleum exports to Japan, an act that scarcely promoted favorable relations between the two countries. Japan ignored further proposals by President Roosevelt, including that of a neutral Indochina administered by a six-power protectorate; all discussions abruptly ceased with the surprise attack against Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

The shock effect quickly rocked French forces in Indochina. In Fall's words,

> . . . On the night of the strike against Pearl Harbor, Japanese troops surrounded all the French garrisons, and Decoux was faced with yet another ultimatum: to stay put and cooperate with the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere or face the immediate destruction of his garrisons as well as the loss of even nominal French sovereignty. Decoux yielded, thus saving 40,000 of his countrymen from the immediate ordeal of Japanese concentration camps and saving for France at least the appearance of being in command of the local population.[7]

Fall tried hard to defend this abject surrender. The key question, in his opinion, ". . . in appraising the situation must be whether or not

4. Hammer, op. cit.
5. Lancaster, op. cit., points out that Japanese bombers flew from Saigon Airfield to sink the British battleships HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* off the Malayan coast.
6. Fall, op. cit.; see also Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948).
7. Fall, op. cit.

the situation in Indochina hampered the Allied war effort." He has pointed out that no French units fought against Allied troops; further,

> . . . the continued presence until March, 1945, of 50,000 armed French troops compelled the Japanese to maintain a far larger force "in being" in Indochina than would have been required had those forces been destroyed once and for all in September, 1940, when all the other allies were sitting on their hands. Those are the objective facts of the situation; they do not make the French attitude look particularly heroic or moral—but in eminently practical terms (and those were the terms under which the situation should have been considered at all times, instead of the high-level emotionalism that did prevail), it served the Allied cause in the Far East a great deal better than has been admitted.[8]

With due respect to this writer-scholar who was to meet his death in Vietnam, he failed to consider the effects had a guerrilla campaign been waged by this French force. Even a fighting withdrawal across Thailand into Burma would have proved preferable to capitulation. Had the French promised Vietnamese people postwar independence, they undoubtedly would have supported, in time, any resistance effort against the Japanese and would have proved valuable Asian partners in a postwar commonwealth arrangement.

Decoux wanted none of this. After brutally crushing Communist and nationalist peasant uprisings in 1940 and 1941,[9] he established a dictatorship modeled on Marshal Pétain's fascist National Revolution.[10] At first, life continued almost normally for the French. But, as Ellen Hammer has written,

> . . . Having no responsibility for the conduct of the war, and scant hope, at least at first, of influencing its outcome, isolated from homes and families in France, the French in Indochina created for themselves an unreal world. . . .
>
> They had their problems, too, but these were mostly difficulties of daily living which loomed disproportionately large because they had no others. They experienced shortages of European food when the transports stopped coming. They had few vegetables, no sugar. They lacked machine parts and tools, oils and gasoline, and textiles. Cars and machines began to run down, factories were destroyed by bombs, medicines were used up and could not be replaced.
>
> This was not a heroic atmosphere in which to live. Pétainism thrived and Admiral Decoux sounded its keynote. He ruthlessly applied the laws of Vichy against Gaullists, against liberals, against Freemasons, against Jews. And to

8. Ibid.
9. Buttinger, op. cit.
10. Hammer, op. cit.

Vietnamese, whether nationalists or communists, he applied the same policy. Some eight to ten thousand Indochinese political prisoners, most of them Vietnamese were in French jails in Indochina in March 1945.[11]

In attempting to preserve a status quo that did not exist, Decoux was mounting his cannons in sand. The political threat of the Japanese Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which, as in Indonesia, held considerable appeal for already anti-Western peoples, prompted Decoux and his lieutenants to a counteroffensive. In reply to the popular Japanese appeal of "Asia for the Asiatics," the French began talking long and seemingly in earnest of an Indochinese Federation, ". . . a mutually beneficial organization of different peoples, each with their separate traditions, held together and directed by France."[12] Decoux's courtship extended to the people as well. The French opened new schools, encouraged teaching the Vietnamese language, sponsored public works, organized a youth program over a million strong, brought in more Indochinese to run civil services and promoted others, developed industries, and introduced new crops.[13]

At the same time, however, he made it abundantly clear that France would retain control of Indochina. He failed to understand that he had opened Pandora's box. By admitting and even encouraging forces of nationalism, he was yielding what artificial control he still exercised—a slow process that would culminate finally in total French surrender to the Japanese.

In a world at war, Decoux was attempting to preserve without fighting. In sacrificing honor for survival, he unwittingly was insuring eventual end of French hegemony in Indochina.[14]

Not all Frenchmen subscribed to Decoux's accommodation. As early as 1941, intelligence began filtering from the country, and American agents operating in southern China even established a few networks. A Free French mission that reached Kunming in 1943 enlarged the effort.

As allied victories became known and as allied naval blockade and aerial bombing made life in Indochina increasingly uncomfortable, a good many Frenchmen swung from the Vichy to the Gaullist camp to provide resistance nuclei which, taken with indigenous guerrilla groups, could have grown to considerable dimensions. Working with SOE

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.; the Japanese jailed Decoux in March 1945. After the war, the Gaullist government arrested him and held him in jail for two years. Finally released because of ill health, he was formally cleared of charges in 1949—a decision that raised considerable protest in France.

Force 136 in Calcutta and later Ceylon, and with OSS officers in China, French dissidents conceived a general resistance plan that included a rising against Japanese in event of an allied landing in Indochina.

Several factors hampered the plan's growth and execution.

The first was President Roosevelt's anti-colonial attitude. Roosevelt regarded the humanitarian principles set forth in the Atlantic Charter more seriously than Winston Churchill, who held no intention of losing the British Empire. Of many crosses that Churchill bore as a poor relation, the colonial issue reigned supreme. Roosevelt frequently infuriated Churchill with his nagging concern for India's future, and he left no doubt in Churchill's mind that he would prevent a French return to Indochina.[15] Roosevelt deplored what he felt was indefensible exploitation of this land by French colonials, and he never forgave the French surrender to Japan. Evidence exists, however, that he was willing to recognize special interests of colonial powers so long as they guaranteed colonies eventual independence under separate plans, an attitude picked up and exploited by General de Gaulle at the Brazzaville Conference of December 1943.[16]

As early as March 1943, Roosevelt suggested to Anthony Eden, Britain's foreign secretary, a postwar trusteeship for Indochina, an idea later presented to Stalin and also discussed at the November 1943 Cairo Conference. Roosevelt pursued the topic at Tehran, where he found Stalin in general agreement. The trusteeship question again rose at Yalta, but this time Churchill proved obstructive and the matter quietly rested. Roosevelt died before it could be revived. But, at Tehran, the powers had agreed to immediate postwar occupation of the area by British forces up to the sixteenth parallel, by Chinese forces north of the parallel. The Potsdam conference confirmed this operational decision.

Roosevelt's intransigence dampened clandestine efforts inside the country. So far as the American command in China was concerned, the allied effort would confine itself to collecting intelligence and rescuing downed allied airmen.

The British labored under no such anti-colonial policy. Their attitude, taken with growing strength of the Free French and liberation of France in mid-1944, brought new and awkward forces into play. SOE Force 136, operating out of Lord Louis Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command in Ceylon, began setting up resistance groups that were supposed to work with French garrisons in Indochina. Despite various hindrances, the effort grew: ". . . By the beginning of 1945 an Allied ferry service was dropping men and equipment into Indochina on an average of twice a week."[17]

15. Sherwood, op. cit.
16. De Gaulle, op. cit. (Vol. 3); see also Buttinger, op. cit.
17. Hammer, op. cit.

Roosevelt refused to support the French. In October 1944, he wrote Hull ". . . that we should do nothing in regard to resistance groups or in any other way in relation to Indochina." His words reached American command headquarters in China in November along with an order enjoining American field commanders from giving ". . . American approval . . . to any French military mission being accredited to the South-East Asia Command."[18]

Other factors also hurt the effort. Dissension ruled French garrisons in Indochina. Although a great many Vichyites converted to Gaullism, treachery remained a major factor. So did military stupidity. Despite pleas of resistance agents such as Paul Mus to arm Vietnamese guerrillas, the army refused to release arms brought in by parachute for this purpose. The principal Vietnamese resistance group, the Viet Minh, repeatedly ". . . called upon the French to work with it against the Japanese. But the French authorities had chosen to regard its members as bandits, of which the Tonkinese countryside had seen many, and had started a clean-up drive against them, bottling them up in the forests."[19]

The principal Free French representative in Indochina, General Mordant, was unable to co-ordinate the work of various underground groups from headquarters in Hanoi. Apparently, all French officers were privy to plans for an uprising and were inclined to discuss them openly. As a result, Japanese counterintelligence agents became privy to most details.

In early 1945, the Japanese quietly moved troops from China to reinforce Indochinese garrisons. In March, they surrounded principal French garrisons and arrested senior French commanders. Some units managed to hold out and some to escape and fight as guerrillas in mountainous areas of the North. But despite impassioned pleas, Washington refused to reverse its policy and allow Chennault's 14th Air Force to drop vital supplies. By the time he received a green light, French resistance had virtually ended.[20]

The whole affair proved costly. The Japanese action caught perhaps thirteen thousand French troops outright. Another four thousand fell during the fighting and retreat. About fifty-five hundred soldiers, of whom some two thousand were Europeans, survived the eight-hundred-mile exodus to Yünnan.[21]

18. Cordell Hull, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), Vol. 1.
19. Hammer, op. cit.
20. Ibid.
21. Fall, op. cit., has largely blamed American policy, but Buttinger, op. cit., points out that the attempts of the French ". . . to remain in the country as *maquis* failed, not so much because they did not receive the requested assistance from the American Air Force in China, but rather because of lack of support by the local population. They did not seek this support because they did not want it, for equally unsound political and military reasons. . . ."


CHINA
Red River
TONKIN
Yen Bay
Hanoi
Haiphong
BURMA
Mekong R.
HAINAN
VIETNAM
LAOS
Vientiane
Hué
Tourane
THAILAND
ANNAM
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
VIETNAM
Mekong R.
Phnom Penh
Gulf of Siam
COCHIN CHINA
Saigon
N
THAILAND
SOUTHEAST ASIA 1941
• Towns and Cities
0 100 200 300 miles

M.E.P.

Adding insult to injury, the Japanese simultaneously bestowed their particular brand of "independence" on Vietnam. On March 10, 1945, the Japanese radio announced: ". . . The colonial status of French Indochina has ended."[22] Repudiating the 1885 treaty with France, Emperor Bao Dai affirmed the independence of Vietnam (the Japanese remaining in direct control of Cochin China), his words soon echoed by King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and King Sisavang Vong of Luang Prabang, in Laos.[23]

In the Japanese mind, Indochina was to be a viable political entity in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This enterprise, however, survived but a few months. Scarcely had Bao Dai appointed a prime minister and necessary ministers and officials, than Japan surrendered.

An indigenous resistance movement had developed simultaneously with the French effort. This was largely the work of Ho Chi Minh, whom we left with a Chinese Communist mission in Tonkin early in the war. When this mission moved North, Ho apparently returned to Comintern activities, probably joining a group of Vietnamese nationalists and Communists at Liuchow, in Kwangsi province. He definitely attended the eighth meeting of the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party, held in northern Vietnam in May 1941. As party charter member and important Comintern agent, he was instrumental in establishing a new front organization, the Viet Minh.[24]

Ho now returned to China, to the camp of a powerful war lord, Chiang Fa-kwei, who, with Chiang Kai-shek's blessing, was subsidizing a Vietnamese Special Training Camp outside Liuchow. Although details are contradictory, Ho apparently contested the war lord's own designs on Vietnam and was imprisoned for just over a year, a traumatic experience which he captured in haunting verse:

> . . . Four months leading a life in which there is
> nothing human
> Have aged me more than ten years.
> Yes: in a whole four months I have never eaten
> my fill,
> In four months I have never had a comfortable
> night's sleep,
> In four months I have never changed my
> clothes, and in four months
> I have never taken a bath.
> So: I have lost a tooth, my hair has grown grey,
> And, lean and black as a demon gnawed by hunger,
> I am covered with scabies. . . .

22. Hammer, op. cit.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.; see also, Lancaster, op. cit.

And again:

> . . . My body has been battered under the changing weather of China,
> My heart is sorely troubled by the misfortunes befallen Viet Nam. . . .[25]

While Ho scratched these painful verses in a Chinese jail, the Chinese sponsored a coalition of Vietnamese revolutionary parties which emerged as the Dong Minh Hoi, or Vietnam Revolutionary League. From the resistance standpoint, the most valuable participant in the new party was the Viet Minh. Probably at instigation of OSS representatives attached to Chiang Kai-shek's headquarters in Kunming, the Chinese released Ho and made him head of the Dong Minh Hoi.

Disorganization and internecine feuding of other Vietnamese nationalist units played into Viet Minh hands. Preaching nationalist gospel, Ho had little trouble in winning Kuomintang and OSS support for active Viet Minh guerrilla operations in Indochina. Nor did he fail to insinuate himself and Communist cohorts into leadership of the Provisional Republican Government of Vietnam, organized in March 1944.

Guerrilla operations in northern Vietnam were in the hands of a young history teacher and militant Communist, Vo Nguyen Giap, who commanded some ten thousand irregulars by 1945. Not only did OSS provide Giap's units with liaison teams, which in turn procured arms and supply, but OSS missions operating in Vietnam came to rely on Vietnamese interpreters, many of whom reported back to Giap and Ho.[26]

The Viet Minh apparently performed various missions to OSS satisfaction. In accordance with Washington policy, these primarily concerned intelligence collection and evacuation of downed allied airmen. In return, the Viet Minh consolidated its ranks and won numerous recruits to the Communist cause.

The Japanese take-over of Vietnam, in March 1945, brought further action. The Viet Minh ordered the people to

> . . . Organize demonstrations, processions and strikes; close down all the markets and hinder, through boycott and other means, the enemy's last desperate effort. Destroy all communication and transport facilities; tear down all telegraph wires and destroy their ammunition dumps and foodstores; launch surprise attacks on their isolated outposts and ambush their patrol units in order to prevent them from turning against our population.[27]

In April, Viet Minh leaders proclaimed a liberated zone consisting of seven northern provinces. At war's end, Ho and Giap commanded

25. Ho Chi Minh, *Prison Diary* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962). Tr. Aileen Palmer.
26. R. H. Smith, op. cit.
27. Hammer, op. cit.

a powerful and cohesive guerrilla force whose disciplined organization contrasted strongly with the confused and divisive elements that constituted Bao Dai's government.

On August 13, 1945, the Indochinese Communist Party held a national conference. In a remote village in northern hills, the party, according to its secretary-general,

> . . . advocated an extremely clear policy: to lead the masses in insurrection in order to disarm the Japanese before the arrival of the Allied forces in Indo-China; to wrest power from the Japanese and their puppet stooges and finally, as the people's power, to welcome the Allied forces coming to disarm the Japanese troops stationed in Indo-China.[28]

Three days later, the Viet Minh announced creation of the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam. Meanwhile, British forces had landed in the South, but they numbered a mere 1,400; several Chinese armies were inching down from the north, an aggregate 150,000 troops far more interested in what the occupation could do for them (food, women, loot) than in what they could do for the occupation. French forces either were shaking prison lice from clothes or were strung out in defensive mountain enclaves generally out of touch with each other. Bao Dai's officials, in any event ill-prepared to administer the country, were at each other's throats in the struggle for political pre-eminence. A severe famine developed in the ravaged country. Bao Dai's government fell.

Here was a power vacuum, and Ho's people set about to fill it. On August 19, Ho's main forces occupied Hanoi; a week later, Viet Minh forces moved into Saigon. In early September, Viet Minh leaders (accompanied by OSS officers) stood on the balcony of the Hanoi opera house to proclaim the new Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the DRV).

Ho's hold on this immense country was tenuous in the extreme. But bold action more than paid off. In the North, Viet Minh forces fell heir to French and Japanese weapon dumps—Fall gives the numbers as ". . . 31,000 rifles, 700 automatic weapons, 36 artillery pieces, and 18 tanks." In addition, the Viet Minh purchased ". . . 3,000 rifles, 50 automatic rifles, 600 submachine guns, and 100 mortars . . ." from newly arrived Chinese armies—weapons manufactured in America and supplied by America to Nationalist China.

Bold action did not similarly prosper in the South. Major General Gracey, commanding the small British occupation force, refused to acknowledge Viet Minh authority. Instead, in contravention of his orders, he allowed skeleton French forces to eject the self-proclaimed Viet Minh government from Saigon. He then released French prisoners

28. Fall, op. cit.

from Japanese stockades and allowed them to organize into military units.

Fighting soon broke out between occupation forces and the Viet Minh, fighting that would increase with arrival of Free French expeditionary forces in October.

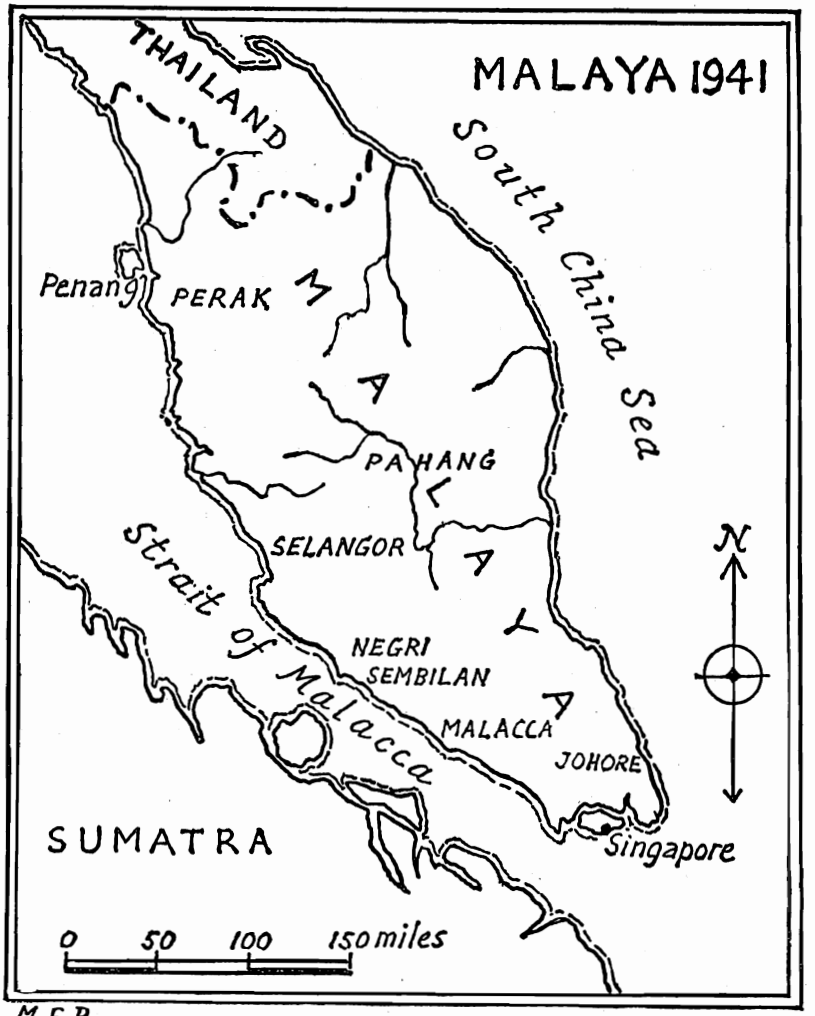
Chapter 46

Japanese conquest of Malaya • Japan's surprise tactics • Prewar British attitude • Japanese army training • The SOE in Malaya • The historical background • British colonization • Origin of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) • Its alliance with SOE • Early resistance to the Japanese • SOE problems • Japanese counterguerrilla operations • MCP organization, training, and tactics • Communist use of propaganda • SOE reinforcements • MCP strength at war's end

THE JAPANESE CONQUESTS of Malaya and Burma required considerably more planning than those to south and east. To achieve desired surprise against reasonably strong defending forces, the Japanese high command introduced a tactical concept that represented as radical a departure from orthodox tactics as the German *Blitzkrieg*. Paradoxically, the oriental version scorned the technological sophistication of its German ally by employing quasi-guerrilla tactics that enabled its forces to strike where the enemy least expected.

British commanders in Malaya and Burma long since had agreed with the Chinese philosopher-general Sun Tzu that jungle is "difficult ground" and no place to wage war. In Malaya, the British considered jungle country "out of bounds" for training:

. . . No specialized jungle technique or equipment had been evolved, and



of all the troops stationed in Malaya only the 2nd Battalion of Argylls had had any serious training in jungle warfare. Nor had the natives of the country been in any way prepared to expect or resist invasion.[1]

The Singapore fortifications, built at a cost of £60 million, defended this vital base only against sea-borne attack.

1. Spencer-Chapman, op. cit.; see also John Smyth, *Percival and the Tragedy of Singapore* (London: MacDonald, 1971).

A veteran of Burma fighting, Major General (later Field Marshal Viscount) William Slim, wrote:

. . . to our men, British or Indian, the jungle was a strange, fearsome place; moving and fighting in it was a nightmare. We were too ready to classify jungle as "impenetrable," as indeed it was to us with our motor transport, bulky supplies, and inexperience. To us it appeared only as an obstacle to movement and to vision. . . .[2]

Deciding to exploit this allied weakness, the Japanese in the mid-1930s began training selected divisions for jungle warfare. The experience caused senior commanders to revise tactical and logistic concepts in favor of small and relatively self-sufficient tactical movements. By drastically trimming bulky supply lines and by exploiting jungle terrain, unit commanders soon achieved extraordinary mobility. Once troops learned to live in the jungle, keeping reasonably comfortable while avoiding sickness and disease, units achieved satisfactory staying power. This was not easily accomplished, nor did the Japanese ever totally master the jungle, but in coming to terms with its traditionally awesome environment, they acquired an invaluable ally which they fully exploited in 1941–42.

A large part of their strength derived from British ignorance. No less an authority than the official British war historian later wrote:

. . . An inadequate staff and neglect of training, partly accounted for the fact that no detailed study of the available information regarding the training and tactics of the Japanese army was made at Command level, despite the fact that Japan was the only possible enemy and that the danger of war in the Far East had greatly increased as a result of the outbreak of war in Europe.

Military attachés in Tokyo had for many years

. . . sent accurate reports to the War Office showing that the Japanese Army was a most efficient force. Yet Malaya Command consistently underrated the efficiency and skill of the Japanese. It may have been the fact that they appeared unable to subdue the poorly-equipped Chinese forces that led to the belief wide-spread throughout the Far East, that their armed forces were inefficient.

That two views of Japanese military prowess existed is seen in the fact that in 1940 Army Headquarters Australia, and Malaya Command held

2. William R. Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Cassell, 1956). This is one of the liveliest command memoirs ever written, but, then, Viscount Slim was surely one of history's liveliest and most human commanders. Perhaps the ablest tactician of World War II, he accepted resounding and humiliating defeat (through no fault of his own)—but, with minimal means and relying largely on charisma and ability, turned it into ultimate victory.

almost opposite views on this vital matter. The 8th Australian Division, before it left its homeland, had been issued with training pamphlets which gave warning that the Japanese were ruthless, had a high standard of armament and technical training, great physical endurance, few bodily requirements compared with British troops, a talent for misleading their opponents, a large potential fifth column in Malaya, and ample experience of landing operations. This pamphlet stated that Japanese troops could move across country at great speed and could be self-supporting for several days; that, as the thick country did not favor static defense, offensive action should be taken against the enemy wherever he was met; and that there was a need for training all ranks in moving through jungle. . . .[3]

In the event, a British intelligence officer who observed diverse Japanese units working down the Malay Peninsula was not as impressed with their tactical performance as he was with the simplicity of their logistics:

. . . Their cooking gear was also of the lightest, and they were living off the country by collecting rice, fowls, and vegetables from the roadside villages. We saw several parties cooking their evening meal. Each man produced a cigarette tin with a loop of wire over the top and, cutting a stick, he hung his tin and boiled his rice over a communal fire. Some of those we watched produced a small tin of fish or other concentrated food, while others seemed to eat the rice alone. The whole meal only took a quarter of an hour to prepare and eat. All this was in very marked contrast to our own front-line soldiers, who were at this time equipped like Christmas trees with heavy boots, web equipment packs, haversacks, water-bottles, blankets, ground-sheets, and even great-coats and respirators [gas masks], so that they could hardly walk, much less fight.[4]

This courageous observer was F. Spencer-Chapman, whom we met earlier when he was training Australian independent companies. Transferred in September 1941, he joined the staff of Special Operations Executive (SOE), which had set up Number 101 Special Training School in Singapore.

Spencer-Chapman later wrote that the school wanted to train ". . . all types of personnel—military and civilian, European and native—in irregular warfare . . ." for special operations throughout Southeast Asia. The concept included training and equipping stay-behind parties, small guerrilla units of Asians commanded by British officers, that would supply intelligence and operate against Japanese lines of communication.

3. S. W. Kirby, *The War Against Japan—The Loss of Singapore* (London: HMSO, 1957).
4. Spencer-Chapman, op. cit.

But the commander-in-chief, Malaya, turned this down on the grounds that it

> . . . would be too great a drain on European man-power, and that in any case white men would not be able to move freely in occupied territory. Objection was taken to the employment of Asiatics on the grounds that a scheme which admitted the possibility of enemy penetration would have a disastrous psychological effect on the Oriental mind. Nor might any Chinese be armed, since many of them belonged to an illegal organization, the Malayan Communist Party. . . .

The British attitude can best be explained by a brief look at Malayan history. An ancient empire like its neighbors, Malaya met the West in the form of Portuguese traders as early as 1511. Western nations, however, asserted only a peripheral trade interest in the peninsula until the end of the eighteenth century. At that time, Malaya consisted of a welter of kingdoms or sultanates, some small, some large, all generally feuding.[5]

Largely to counter Dutch presence in Indonesia, the English East India Company acquired the island of Penang by lease in 1786; in 1795, the British occupied Malacca, which they returned to the Dutch but gained permanently in 1824. Meanwhile, in 1819, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles had left Indonesia to develop the island of Singapore, which he acquired from the sultan of Johore. British influence continued to spread, and, in 1867, the government proclaimed the three settlements a crown colony. A few years later, Great Britain, alarmed by an increasing German presence, began pushing inland, a process encouraged by the breakup of the Johore Empire and a series of fratricidal wars among the rajas.

British influence mounted in Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and the Negri Sembilan to the extent that in 1895 the four states accepted a federation status under British aegis. As the colonizing effort prospered, British capital flowed increasingly into the peninsula. In 1909, Britain won a treaty transfer of the northern states from Siam, and in 1914, the sultan of Johore, the last independent ruler, appointed a British "adviser" to administer the sultanate: ". . . All Malay states south of Siam were then under the protection of Great Britain."

By comparison to the French in Indochina and the Dutch in Indonesia, British colonial administration continued to claim positive gains. Apologists point out that, prior to World War II, Malayans enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the Far East—a statement that would have provided the average rubber or tin worker with scant comfort. Here, as elsewhere, European colonists and indigenous royalty

5. R. O. Winstedt, "Malaysia (History)." In Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968, Vol. 14. My historical introduction is taken from this excellent account.

profited immensely, as did sharp Chinese and Indian traders. Rather than train Malayans for self-government, Britain continued to exercise a paternalistic attitude that remained virtually unchallenged by rich and lazy sultans and resulted in fragmented and unhealthy political environment.

In the 1920s, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) began emerging—the spawn of the Chinese Communist Party, established in 1921. Progress from the Marxist-study-group phase remained slow, the result of party setbacks in Indonesia and China. The MCP itself only emerged in 1930, under aegis of the Nan Yang, or South Seas Communist Party. Professor Lucian Pye, an expert in the field, has described the 1930 child as ". . . an ill-organized movement dedicated to conspiracy. . . ."[6]

The party enjoyed no spectacular growth during the 1930s, but it did train a large cadre of professional revolutionaries who fomented some serious strikes in the 1936–37 period. Foreign, rather than internal, developments, however, changed the MCP ". . . from a curious, at times annoying, but never profound movement into one of rising political power."[7]

The Japanese attack on China brought the MCP into collaboration with the Kuomintang in order to raise funds for Chiang Kai-shek. For this purpose, the MCP established a front group, the Anti-Enemy Backing-Up Society, or AEBUS. In August 1939, the German-Russian alliance turned the MCP and AEBUS away from the Kuomintang, but Hitler's invasion of Russia the following spring returned them to the fold.

Finally, Japanese landings in the north of Malaya in December 1941 brought the MCP into increased importance. Where the British command once refused to arm Asians, it now urgently sought help. But little time remained either to secure or train volunteers. In desperation, SOE officers with command blessing accepted an offer from the AEBUS. Early in 1942, SOE members hastily trained 165 Communists, mostly Chinese, supplied them with arms, demolitions, and food, and sent them north on the peninsula, where each was to raise a small guerrilla unit of ten to fifteen people. SOE officers also established a series of hidden supply dumps to support the guerrillas. Major Spencer-Chapman, who played an important role in this effort and who later took to the field in charge of a small guerrilla unit, has described his adventures in a book earlier cited, *The Jungle Is Neutral.*

Unfortunately, the fall of Singapore and evacuation of SOE headquarters to India vitiated the stay-behind effort. Spencer-Chapman's unit joined Communist groups that had been forming in the jungle. But

6. Lucian W. Pye, *Guerrilla Communism and Malaya—Its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956).
7. Ibid.

these units possessed no radio transmitters, and Spencer-Chapman's radio had been stolen. Moreover, his colleagues had hidden supply dumps so well that most of them were lost. Bandits stole other precious supplies. Out of touch with SOE(India) and reduced to minimum supply, Spencer-Chapman could do little more than strike at targets of opportunity while staying alive and trying to keep his organization intact until help arrived.

His isolation continued for two years. At times, he scored dramatic successes against the enemy. Early in this period, in one two-week flurry, he estimated that his small group of guerrillas

> . . . derailed seven or eight trains, severely damaged at least fifteen bridges, cut the railway line in about sixty places, damaged or destroyed some forty motor vehicles, and killed or wounded somewhere between five and fifteen hundred Japs. Altogether we had used a thousand pounds of explosive and over a hundred grenades or home-made bombs.[8]

This effort convinced the Japanese that two hundred Australians were in the vicinity. The local commander detailed two thousand soldiers to hunt them down.

On a later occasion, Spencer-Chapman learned of a pending Japanese raid against a guerrilla camp. After evacuating the guerrillas, he prepared an observation post so that he could ". . . study the Jap methods of attack":

> . . . At earliest dawn, about 5:45 A.M., without a sound to warn us of what was coming, two or possibly more mortars opened up from the rubber and plastered the whole area with bombs. . . . Apparently the Japs had nobody spotting for the later shots were no more accurate than the earlier ones but they systematically raked the whole area of the camp, and every hut was hit without actually being destroyed. After this there was silence for some time and then machine-gun fire broke out from the hill above the camp and continued for about ten minutes. Of course, there was no target other than the empty huts, and even if the camp had been occupied at the time of the attack, we should all have disappeared into the jungle after the first mortar bomb, and only the heavy baggage would have been lost. After this about a hundred Japanese soldiers and as many Malays and Indians charged down the hill with loud shouts and fixed bayonets. They then stood in a huddle on the parade-ground, gazing round them like a party of tourists, and I only wished I had a machine-gun with me. After shouting and talking excitedly for some time, they set fire to all the huts and retired hurriedly.
>
> I later learned that at about four o'clock that morning the Japs had surrounded the Chinese *kampong* which lay a mile from the camp and had sent the 160 inhabitants—men, women, and children—away in the lorries which had brought the troops. When they had reached a deserted area of tin-tailing

8. Spencer-Chapman, op. cit.

ground on the way to Kuala Lumpur, they had made the men dig a trench and had then stood everybody in a row beside it and had tommy-gunned them to death.[9]

In ensuing months and years, the Japanese did not materially alter counterguerrilla operations. Although they enjoyed co-operation of a great many Malays and Indians, and some Chinese, they scored few successes.

After the British surrender at Singapore, the MCP established headquarters in remote Johore and formed the Anti-Japanese Union and Forces (MPAJUF), which consisted of two main branches, the Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU), and the Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). The party ordered AJU members to remain in villages and towns to endure rigors of occupation while secretly supporting the AJA, the rather grand title for the few guerrilla bands that existed in the jungle under leaders the British SOE had helped to organize and train. Chinese squatters along the jungle fringe acted as liaison between the two factions.[10]

The movement never proved a real threat to the Japanese. In August 1942, the *kempetai,* or secret police, arrested and executed top party leaders in Singapore, and, in the following month, eliminated a good portion of the Central Committee and top guerrilla leaders by a surprise raid in the Batu Caves area of Selangor.[11] The party's secretary-general, Lai Teck, survived, however (some authorities think he betrayed his comrades), as did his able and industrious assistant, Ch'en P'ing, and, under their leadership, the movement continued.

But, as Professor Pye later wrote:

. . . The great effort expended by the MCP in organizing the MPAJA did not mean that the party leaders contemplated engaging in extensive military operations against the Japanese. Rather, it was recognized that the function of the army was to provide an opportunity for individuals to feel that they were contributing something to the defeat of the hated Japanese without forcing them to expose themselves to the risks involved in fighting. Since the Japanese had introduced personal insecurity in Malayan society and the MCP sought to present itself as a sanctuary, it would have been foolhardy, in terms of the purposes of the party, to require the members of the MPAJA to face unnecessarily the insecurities of actual warfare. The leadership of the MCP had the task of effectively substituting indoctrination, propaganda, and camp life for actual military operations, thus ensuring that all members of the MPAJA felt they had gone through the rigors of combat without at the same time risking the organization in any serious test of battle. Not only

9. Ibid.
10. Pye, op. cit.; see also Blair, op. cit.
11. Pye, op. cit.

did the men have to believe that they were warriors who had proved themselves in a struggle of great violence, but the entire Chinese community had to be convinced that the MPAJA was a champion of all loyal Chinese and a powerful force striking against the Japanese enemy.[12]

To accomplish these goals, the Central Committee established eight regional guerrilla "groups." Each group controlled a number of "patrols." A patrol consisted of about one hundred men (and a few women) divided into sections of eight to ten that operated from a series of jungle camps.

Major Spencer-Chapman spent nearly a year with a guerrilla patrol operating in Pahang, east of the Main Range. This unique experience offered a splendid opportunity to study Communist guerrilla organization and operations at the working level.

Centralized command ruled in the best Marxist-Leninist-Maoist tradition:

. . . The control of guerrilla headquarters, in spite of its geographical vagueness, was absolute and all-embracing, being limited only by the difficulties of communication. Policy, discipline, routine, ethics, and above all political ideology were entirely regulated from above—and as the penalty for disobedience was death, opposition in word or spirit was practically unknown.[13]

The vertical administrative concept helped central headquarters to retain control:

. . . group and patrol leaders had complete power within their commands but none outside, nor would they ever dare to take the initiative. Even a patrol leader could not visit another camp in his group without permission from group headquarters, and there was no communication between groups except with the express permission of general headquarters. Every detail had to be referred above and the answer, if it came at all, would take several months to receive.[14]

Group headquarters consisted of four officers: the all-powerful political leader, a military commander, a quartermaster, and "a teacher-cum-propaganda worker who was invariably a Party member and probably the second most important officer of the four." In addition, however,

. . . Attached to group headquarters were usually one or more outside workers whose status depended on their own personality or their standing in the M.C.P. Their task, perhaps the most important of all, was to cultivate the minds of the outside people so that they would support the camps,

12. Ibid.
13. Spencer-Chapman, op. cit.
14. Ibid.

to allocate the areas of influence and the food lines between the various patrols, and to supervise the systematic discovery and eradication of traitors and informers. These men, who were usually the best educated and most intelligent of the guerrillas—and often most charming and delightful people—spent only a small proportion of their time in the camps and the rest in the *kampongs* or on tour.[15]

Patrol headquarters, where Spencer-Chapman spent most of his time,

> . . . was a replica of group headquarters, but there was in addition a military second-in-command who supervised the guard and training. Its members were allowed very little initiative and would often go to any length to avoid responsibility. . . .[16]

Lack of arms and equipment constantly hindered the guerrilla effort, as did insufficient training and poor communications. Bad planning doomed most operations to failure, particularly if anything went wrong. Only a few guerrillas had received any training, and much of Spencer-Chapman's effort went to teaching them basic fundamentals of guerrilla warfare. Although, in general, he found keen and receptive students, he also noted a distinct morale problem:

> . . . At this time [1942] many of the Chinese who had joined the guerrillas in a fit of enthusiasm were becoming disillusioned. They hated the rigorous camp discipline which even prevented them from visiting their *kampongs,* and found the food inferior to what they were used to in their own homes. In the early days there seemed every hope of keeping the Japanese out of Malaya, but now it looked as if they had come to stay. Consequently there were many desertions, either back to the *kampongs* or even to become informers to the Japanese. . . .
>
> The facility with which the Chinese, otherwise so single-minded in their hatred of the Japanese, could turn informer was a perpetual source of astonishment to me. In the year that I spent with this patrol no less than six of its members were tried for treachery and summarily shot, and several others who had fled from the camp and turned informer were hunted down and dispatched outside. . . .[17]

Awkward as was the vertical command concept, it paid off in that defectors could offer only slight information to the Japanese, usually no more than the location of a jungle camp, which could be easily changed. Intense unit discipline and indoctrination resulting in *gung ho* psychology peculiar to the Communists also held down desertions, even

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

though only about 10–15 per cent of the group were Communists. In a guerrilla camp, according to another authority,

> . . . all orders were discussed. Any man could bring a charge against another; the matter would then be debated in session and the sentence decided by majority vote, though this could be overridden by Headquarters. With the acute shortage of leaders these methods not only resulted in failure to take action but made junior and sometimes senior leaders frightened of giving definite orders. While punishments for minor offenses ranged from cutting down rations to depriving a man of his weapons, the death penalty was passed for what, by non-Communist standards, would appear to be comparatively minor crimes. These included stealing AJUF property or that of outside helpers, and in one case a man was sentenced to death for selling an AJA bicycle. . . .[18]

Deterrence and retaliation figured prominently in the Communist code. The Central Committee maintained special "traitor-killing" camps, one of which Spencer-Chapman later visited and whose twenty members claimed to have killed over a thousand informers. Armed with weapons captured from local police stations, they also liberated guerrilla prisoners, destroyed police records, intimidated Japanese work parties, and performed sabotage at will.[19]

Within camps, the rank and file impressed Spencer-Chapman as devoted and willing guerrillas. Indoctrination played a large role in training. Sections often operated on their own. A considerable part of their effort went to staying alive, no easy task in Malayan jungle, as Major Spencer-Chapman's frequent and severe illnesses emphasized. They also recruited wherever possible, the policy being ". . . to train at least as many reserves as there were men already in the camps." Training, by necessity, remained basic, as did ordinary camp routine. Propaganda played a constant role. Spencer-Chapman described a camp play in three acts:

> . . . In the first act a Chinese family discussed the war; the son of the house asked his father for permission to join the guerrillas, but this was refused. In the next scene, the Japs—hideous and ridiculous little men with small black moustaches and huge spectacles—entered the house led by an informer. They ravished the daughter, tied up or killed the parents and, finding a bottle of *samsu,* became incapably drunk. In the final scene, the son of the house, who had run for aid into the jungle, reappeared with a band of guerrillas who overpowered the Japs and rescued any compatriots who were still alive. After two hours of this there was a short halt for sweet coffee and cakes made of grated coconut, palm sugar, and spices. Then the concert continued

18. Blair, op. cit.
19. Spencer-Chapman, op. cit.

in the same strain for another hour, to conclude at last with more speeches and the "Internationale" shouted by everybody into the still, starlit jungle night, and so to bed.[20]

Operational results varied considerably from patrol to patrol and from group to group. Although the Menchis group was too weak to take on the Japanese, the Kuantan guerrillas allegedly fought them quite often. Certainly the Japanese hated and feared the bands, as evidenced by brutal retaliations against various tribes suspected of supporting them.

Supply shortages greatly restricted operations. But once the British reorganized forces in India and opened the Burma front, the Malayan theater grew in importance, particularly since active guerrilla units could prepare the way for an allied landing. In May 1943, a small SOE liaison team reached the peninsula by submarine. Though other teams buttressed this effort, the distances were so great, supplies in such short quantity, delivery means so stringent, enemy troops so active, and the theater of operations so elongated and difficult to traverse that resistance continued to languish. The area remained out of air range from India and Ceylon until advent of the Liberator bomber, in 1944.

In November 1944, the MPAJA began to receive regular airdrops, and, in 1945, various shortages began to ease. In early February 1945, Spencer-Chapman transmitted his first radio message, and, by July, a number of SOE teams—something over three hundred men—were working with indigenous guerrilla units and had armed an estimated thirty-five hundred men.

Japanese surrender, in August, summarily terminated this effort. British troops landed in due course, and, within a few months, most guerrillas had turned in arms and been paid off.

Unfortunately this did not end the matter. Malayan Communists may not have fought the Japanese as actively as the allies desired—Pye credits them with killing only a few hundred Japanese—but they ended the war politically well organized:

> . . . about 7,000 guerrillas came out of the jungle fully convinced that it was their might which had defeated the enemy, and they were welcomed by large elements of the civil population as heroes.[21]

Although a good many AJA members yielded arms (for a considerable sum of money), enough weapons remained hidden to constitute severe threat to internal security if utilized for improper purposes.

Nor did AJA's official demise, at the end of 1945, dispel threat of subversion. The MCP remained intact, with none of its virility sacrificed by temporary acceptance of British rule. What the British mistook for internal peace, unfortunately would prove little more than uneasy truce.

20. Ibid.
21. Pye, op. cit.

Chapter 47

The Japanese invade Burma • Allied defeat • Allied strategy • Stilwell versus British and Chinese • Historical background • British colonial administration • Saya San's rebellion • The Thakin movement • Aung San's collaboration with the Japanese • SOE organizes guerrilla units • SOE difficulties • The North Kachin Levy

WHEN THE DUST of Japanese conquest settled in Southeast Asia, the picture, in spring of 1942, looked something like this: Japanese armies occupied Malaya and Burma as well as Indochina (in alliance with Vichy-French civil and military forces) and Thailand, whose government had declared in favor of the Japanese. Remnants of the Burma army, hastily reinforced by reserve Indian army divisions, were defending some four to five hundred miles of India-Burma frontier. (See map, page 593.) This force belonged to British India Command, under General Wavell, soon to be replaced by General Auchinleck.

Up north, in Assam, about nine thousand Chinese troops who had escaped from Burma were being reorganized by an American officer, Lieutenant General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. By Combined Chiefs of Staff direction, Stilwell commanded the China-Burma-India theater; wearing a second hat, he served as chief of staff to Chiang Kai-shek. After his hasty appointment, he had flown into Burma titularly to com-

mand the two Chinese armies present; in reality, he accomplished little more than witnessing disorganized and costly retreat, an experience not without lessons, as Slim also discovered.

Still another Chinese force that had escaped from Burma was reorganizing in Yünnan province, bordering northeastern Burma. China herself stood on the defensive against strong Japanese armies. Loss of the Burma road irrevocably cut Chinese Nationalist armies from land communication with India, the single remaining supply life line being the hastily organized and still ineffectual American airlift over the Himalayas, the famous "Hump."

Allied reverses elsewhere meant continued supply shortages, with first claim exercised by the airlift to Kunming. India herself writhed with internal disorder, particularly in Bengal and Sind, where authorities had their hands full defeating local insurgencies.[1]

Dark days, indeed.

Dark days made darker still by national interests colliding with strategic thunder. Allied strategy, as determined by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, directed British-American-Chinese forces to exert maximum pressure against the Japanese in Burma in order to prevent reinforcements from being shifted to the Pacific theater and also to prepare the way for a future offensive designed to re-establish land communication with China.[2]

Stilwell ultimately envisaged a three-prong attack: the British from the west; his own Chinese-American force from the northwest; the Yünnan Chinese force from the northeast. The plan suffered British and Chinese disapproval. For political reasons, the British wanted to return to Rangoon, in the south, and then only when they held a preponderance of strength. Chiang Kai-shek, convinced that America would ultimately defeat the Japanese, wanted only to build and preserve military strength for the showdown he believed would come with Mao Tse-tung's Communists in northwestern China.

In short, during those dark months of 1942–43, three major allied commands headed in three different directions, a dispersion of effort that would adversely affect nearly every aspect of operations including those in enemy-held country.

As might be imagined, British exodus from Burma in spring of 1942 left a confused resistance situation, particularly since a late start had prevented Special Operations Executive (SOE) from establishing clandestine resistance groups.

Such was the state of the art and apathy of the regular military establishment regarding intelligence that the task could never have been

1. Philip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India—The Guardians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), Vol. 2 of 2 vols.
2. Slim, op. cit.

simple. Considering the country's internal state and the divisive forces at work, it could never prosper.

Burmese nationalist leaders, influenced by relatives and friends who were victims of pacification pogroms of 1885–90 (see Chapter 16), refused to be satisfied with British administration of what they regarded as their country, a country older, by far, than England.

As happened elsewhere in Southeast Asia, blatant exploitation of human and natural resources, coupled with the rise of Japan after 1905 as an international power, provided ample fuel to keep the grumbling pot of nationalism at a boil. In the century's early years, young Burmese students educated in Britain, many of them as lawyers, returned to practice in Rangoon and Mandalay and, almost from the beginning, exhibited an uncomfortable independence in relations with British magistrates and civil servants. A few Burmese newspapers appeared to rally further the forces of nationalism, which even prior to World War I inextricably mingled with Buddhism.[3]

The Great War weakened without destroying Britain's control of Burma. But nationalist opposition now became more vocal. One nationalist movement, the Wuntharnu, demanded with some success a boycott on British goods because of continued refusal to give the Burmese self-government. In 1920, a university strike spread to ". . . a nationwide movement of protest against British rule in general."[4]

Although the British offered palliative measures, for example introducing in 1923 a diarchy, or dual government, similar to that in India, Burmese extremists regarded the move as little more than a meaningless gesture. Defenders of imperialism have argued that such acts undoubtedly formed a necessary prelude to self-government, and there is much to be said for the argument. Certainly this particular reform signaled the rise of Burmese political parties and a parliamentary form of government, though whether this is good or bad is debatable in view of today's confused state of Burmese politics.

Unfortunately, reforms never outrun crises: the very word, reform, suggests previous neglect, and this was true of British colonial administration in Burma, where private Western interests frequently contravened Whitehall intentions. The world economic depression in 1930 raised numerous boils on an already irritated rice-paddy economy. A former monk and native quack, Saya San, felt called upon to cure the

3. Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967). A professor of history and veteran diplomat, the author enjoys advantages derived from personal experience. If the Westerner objects to a nationalist bias in this and similar revisionist works of history, the Easterner for long has been exposed to Western bias in traditional histories. Hopefully, another decade will provide a working synthesis for the oft-bewildered student.

4. Ibid.

disease. Jumping from boil to boil, he hit upon the Tharrawaddy district of Lower Burma, where

> . . . the stocks of rice remained unsold, and although there was plenty of food there was nothing else. Many had lost their lands to the Indian money-lenders long before and, with the price of rice touching rock bottom, the Indian landlords would not engage labor to cultivate their fields. Those who still owned lands just sat on their stocks of rice, unable to find the cash to re-pay the interest on their debts. Their clothes had been worn out during the year, but without the cash to buy new supplies the men went about half naked and the women sat behind closed doors. Such dire poverty they had not even heard of before. To add to their troubles, the annual taxes were overdue. . . .[5]

Saya San's remedy proved worse than the disease. The Tharrawaddy rebellion soon spread to central and Upper Burma, involving the Shan states. In some ways reminiscent of the 1887 situation (see Chapter 16), it involved guerrilla bands led by natives such as Saya Nyan, a schoolteacher, and a hermit, Bandaka. Lacking arms, outside support, and central leadership, the insurgents fought uncoordinated actions and, in 1932, succumbed to British arms. Professor Htin Aung claimed that the rebellion cost ten thousand rebel lives with nine thousand rebels captured and 128 ringleaders later hanged. He concluded that this rebellion ". . . was perhaps the nearest Asian counterpart of the peasants' rebellion in medieval England, and it was a rebellion born of sheer desperation."[6]

Neither rebellion nor suppression settled very much. Indigenous political ferment continued, but with a significant addition: an extremist university student movement. Adopting a nationalist cause, these young rebels expressed disapproval of British university administration (including a civil-servant faculty) ". . . by coming to classes in their shirt sleeves and walking noisily along corridors in wooden slippers. Dressed untidily in homespun clothes, they deliberately assumed an uncouth, obstinate, and stupid appearance. . . ."[7]

Meanwhile they were organizing a militant movement undreamed of by British officialdom. Charter members went so far as to take the prefix-name "Thakin"—this because British officials and officers since 1886 had called themselves *thakin* or "master." The Thakin movement was reinforced by a massive university-student strike in 1936, headed by Maung No and Maung Aung San, the latter's grandfather having been a prominent guerrilla leader in 1886. After the strike subsided, the two leaders joined the Thakin movement and greatly strengthened it.

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

The outbreak of World War II, in Europe, only aggravated matters in Burma. Political arrests by the British drove dissident parties such as the Thakins underground. Their leader, Aung San, escaped to Amoy, where he attempted to contact left-wing Chinese groups; meanwhile, in Rangoon, his followers contacted Japanese agents, who offered aid if they would rebel against the British.

For some time, Japanese agents had been active in the country, stirring up dissidence and collecting intelligence for two purposes: the first, to weaken British administration and force the government to close the Burma Road, by which arms and supply reached China; the second, to prepare the country for ultimate invasion by Japanese troops.

British weakness in general immensely aided the Japanese task, especially after Dunkerque when Britain, in Winston Churchill's words, stood ". . . naked before her foes." In July, she temporarily closed the road as a "friendly" gesture to Japan, but three months later, when that country failed to sheath its aggressive claws, Britain reopened the vital road.

Japanese agents meanwhile reached Aung San in Amoy and, with his agreement, hustled him off to Tokyo for special indoctrination in the Asia for the Asiatics concept. Returning to Rangoon in March 1941, Aung San selected a number of volunteers—known in Burmese history as the "Thirty Comrades"—and, with Japanese connivance, took them to Formosa "for intensive military training."[8] There they agreed to work with the Japanese army in the invasion of Burma.

In the event, they did this and, as will be seen, attracted numerous recruits to carry out various fifth-column activities. According to Professor Htin Aung,

> . . . Aung San and his group genuinely believed that the Japanese would declare Burma to be an independent sovereign state the moment war broke out between Japan and the allies.[9]

Not everyone in Rangoon was so misled, and, in the country, the British retained some good friends, particularly among diverse mountain tribes. Beginning in late 1941, an SOE mission partially armed some fifteen hundred members of a loyal hill tribe, the Karens, and this irregular force screened the British army's left flank during the initial retreat.

When the British moved north up the Irrawaddy Valley, the Karens buried their arms and returned to their villages to await contact by SOE officers. As retreat continued, the British sent most regular Burmese soldiers home: ". . . Each man was given his rifle, fifty rounds [of ammunition], and three months' pay, told to go to his village, wait for our

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

return, and be ready to join any organization we should start to fight the Japanese in Burma."[10]

These men came mostly from hill tribes traditionally friendly to the British, and SOE officers on the way out of the country managed to organize a guerrilla unit from the Shans in the East and several units from the Kachins in the Northeast. Taken with the Nagas and the Chins along the western border, these hill tribes, each varying in strength from fifty thousand to over a million, represented a potential force of understandable interest to SOE, which spent the rest of the war trying to raise them against the Japanese.

A variety of operational factors frustrated this effort. Shattered remnants of the Burmese army consumed all available weapons and supplies, already scarce because of demands levied by Stilwell in the North and by Chiang's insatiable appetite in Kunming and Chungking.

A chronic shortage of delivery means also existed. Even when proper planes were available (late in the war), long distances, difficult weather, and rugged and unhealthy terrain made airdrops a costly and discouraging business.

SOE also lacked Burmese-speaking officers to head essential liaison teams, and though former planters and civil officials partially repaired this deficiency, the few early teams still had to work in a dangerous political climate. If a liaison party survived local political vicissitudes to contact a friendly tribe, it found little or no resistance organization among tribesmen, nor were radios technically up to sustained transmissions necessary to arrange essential supply drops.

In central and southern Burma, only a few intelligence-collection missions existed by end of 1944, mainly in Arakan. SOE experienced better luck in the Northeast, working with the Kachins. Here the British early had established an outpost at Fort Hertz that supported an organization called the North Kachin Levy, or NKL. Eventually amounting to six "companies" of guerrillas, the NKL provided intelligence essential for orthodox operations and, as will be seen, performed valuable work both on its own and in conjunction with those forces.

With these exceptions, the Burma resistance movement remained fairly stifled, although, in later stages, it picked up momentum. In the interim, however, other developments were proving of decided interest to guerrilla warfare: allied attempts to build armies suitable for fighting under the unorthodox tactical conditions imposed by the Japanese presence in Burma; and, an offshoot, the creation of special task forces to wage guerrilla warfare behind enemy "lines."

10. Slim, op. cit.

Chapter 48

A modern major general (I): William Slim • His analysis of Japanese tactics • He adapts to the tactical challenge • First Arakan offensive • A modern major general (II): Vinegar Joe Stilwell • His Chinese command • Retreat from Burma • Observations on the Chinese army • Stilwell's training programs • Orde Wingate and guerrilla warfare: Palestine and Ethiopia • His concept of "Long Range Penetration" operations • The first Chindit operation

BRITISH-CHINESE RETREAT from Burma left remnant survivors in a state of shock reminiscent of Roman legionaries who fell victim to Goth incursions in the third century. Fortunately for the allied cause, two military commanders of exceptional merit picked up fragments and formed them, eventually, into first-class fighting forces. One of these commanders was British, Major General William Slim, the other American, Major General Joseph Stilwell.

A supremely able and highly imaginative commander, the fifty-year-old Slim exercised that commodity too often lacking in his colleagues: professional objectivity. Wounded at Gallipoli in World War I and again in Mesopotamia shortly after the war, Slim served two extensive post-war tours in the Indian army in addition to normal staff and command assignments. Early in the war, he commanded a brigade in Major General Frank Messervy's famed Gazelle Force, which chased Italians out of East Africa. Again wounded, he recovered to command an Indian di-

vision in Syria-Persia-Iraq, from where he was rushed to the Far East.

Even while this stocky, jut-jawed Englishman chewed defeat in trying to hold his corps together during the nine-hundred-mile retreat through Burma, he was analyzing reasons for Japanese success.

Surprise headed the list, along with its corollary, British unpreparedness. But what impressed him most was Japanese use of the jungle. Slim later paid eloquent testimony to enemy quasi-guerrilla tactics:

> . . . The Japanese obviously were able to move for several days at a time through jungle that we had regarded as impenetrable. This was not only because they had local Burmese guides, but they traveled lighter than we did and lived much more off the country. Nearly all our transport was mechanical, and this stretched our columns for miles along a single road through the jungle, vulnerable everywhere from air and ground.[1]

To exploit this supreme weakness, the Japanese employed the basic tactic of the hook:

> . . . Their standard action was, while holding us in front, to send a mobile force, mainly infantry, on a wide turning movement round our flank through the jungle to come in on our lines of communications. Here, on the single road, up which all our supplies, ammunition, and reinforcements must come, they would establish a "road-block," sometimes with a battalion, sometimes with a regiment. We had few if any reserves in depth—all our troops were in the front line—and we had, therefore, when this happened, to turn about forces from the forward positions to clear the road-block. At this moment the enemy increased his pressure on our weakened front until it crumbled. Time and again the Japanese used these tactics, more often than not successfully, until our troops and commanders began to acquire a road-block mentality which often developed into an inferiority complex.[2]

Such tactics depended on an efficient intelligence organization, which the Japanese founded in part on British unpopularity in Burma. In contrast, the British intelligence system was practically non-existent. Slim later wrote:

> . . . It is no exaggeration to say that we had practically no useful or reliable information of enemy strength, movements, or intentions. Our first intimation of a Japanese move was usually the stream of red tracer bullets and the animal yells that announced their arrival on our flank or rear.

In the early fighting,

> . . . our only source of information was identification of enemy units by their dead and by documents found on them. Exploitation of even this source

1. Slim, op. cit.
2. Ibid.

was limited because in the whole corps there was only *one* officer who could speak and read Japanese reasonably well. . . .[3]

The Japanese not only depended on Burmese guides, informants and saboteurs (who cut telephone lines), but did not hesitate to employ guerrilla stratagems the more successful because of being outlawed by Western rules for land warfare—and therefore unexpected. Slim described one attack

> . . . covered by numerous small parties of hostile Burmans and Japanese, disguised as peaceful villagers. These tactics were difficult to counter, as the countryside was covered by numbers of genuine refugees trying to escape from the battle area. It was always a toss-up for our men whether the group of Burmese men, women, and children, wandering past their positions with their creaking bullock carts, were what they seemed or Japanese with concealed machine-guns.[4]

On other occasions, the Japanese wore uniforms taken from dead soldiers of Burma Rifle regiments.

Only the monsoon halted this fantastic Japanese drive, which, by late spring 1942, had pushed British and Chinese from Burma. Fortunately for the allied cause, several strategic forces intervened to keep Japanese divisions poised on China-India borders, a respite used to reorganize defeated armies and begin the long road back.

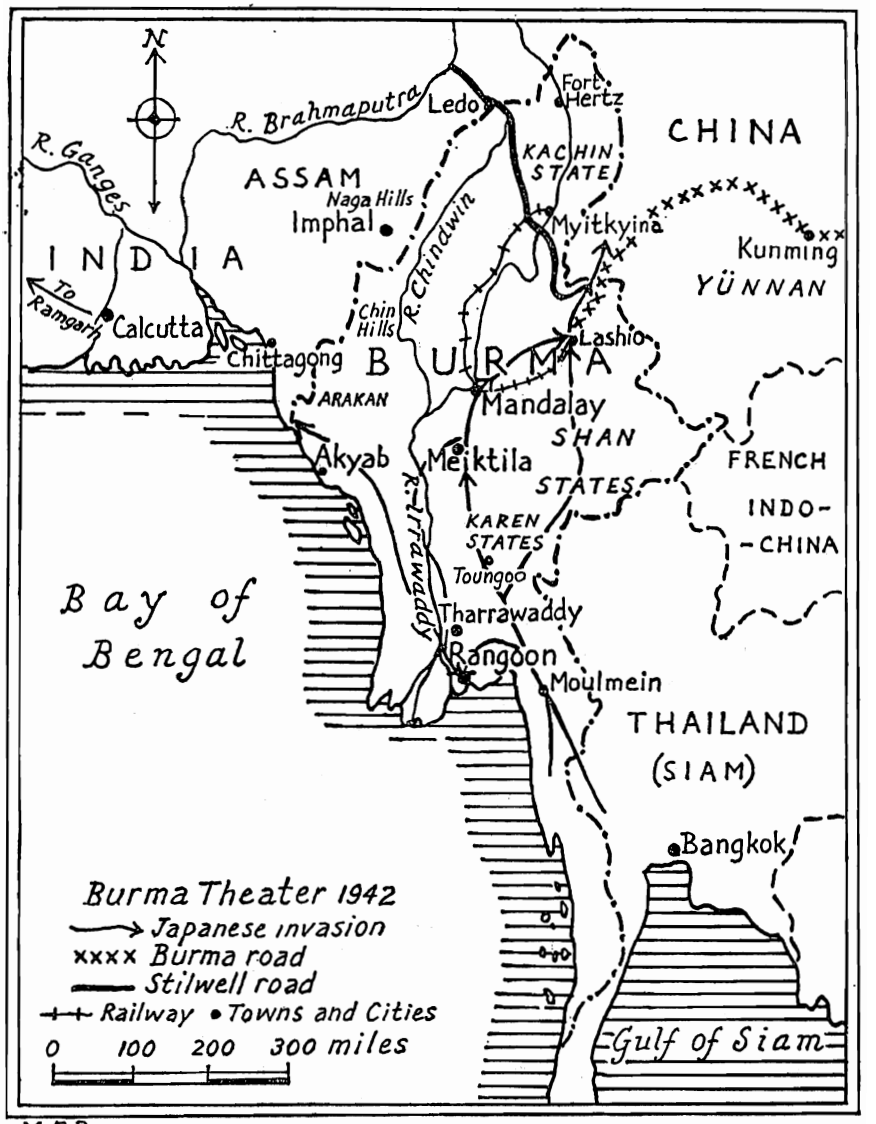
Slim realized that a successful return would require tactics never taught in a Western staff college. A successful return demanded extraordinary command adaptability—an abandonment of orthodox thinking in favor of untried and sometimes even unknown tactical procedures.

Slim started putting his ideas to test as commander of 4 Corps. His soldiers, most of whom were Indian but who included Gurkhas, Burmese, and British, had to learn to live in jungle before being able to use it ". . . for concealment, covered movement, and surprise." All units, including medical sections, became responsible for their own security: ". . . there are no non-combatants in jungle warfare."

Unit commanders had to rely on patrols, for ". . . patrolling is the master key to jungle fighting." Commanders also had to practice fluid tactics: they had to get used to having Japanese parties in their rear, and, when this happened, regard not themselves, but the Japanese, as "surrounded."

Officers had to stop thinking in terms of frontal attacks; instead, ". . . attacks should follow hooks and come in from flank or rear, while pressure holds the enemy in front." In defense, ". . . no attempt should be made to hold long continuous lines. Avenues of approach must be covered and enemy penetration between our posts dealt with at once

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.



by mobile local reserves who have completely reconnoitred the country."

Commanders had to acquire and retain mobility, for ". . . by mobility away from roads, surprise, and offensive action, we must regain

and keep the initiative." Commanders also had to start thinking in terms of supply by air—bulky road columns had to go.[5]

Slim and his division commanders were still wrestling with this immense transition problem when they were committed to the first Arakan offensive.

Originally envisaged as an allied drive into central and northern Burma, it started 4 Corps into action in mid-December 1942, a series of operations that at first progressed favorably. In early January, however, the effort fell victim to a number of misfortunes, chief among them a well-dug-in and determined enemy who launched powerful counterattacks; but sickness in British ranks also played a major role, as did lack of command co-ordination and insufficient training.

At the last minute, Chiang Kai-shek also proved intractable and refused to allow either Stilwell's force or the Yünnan force to participate. The 4 Corps action lingered on until early spring—a tactical failure. Slim regarded the experience as worthwhile, however, in that he learned what deficiencies still had to be overcome in his units and in that it tended to verify his tactical ideas, including resupply of an entire division by airdrop.

While Slim fashioned his force, "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, also in India, was accomplishing what many Western commanders considered impossible: training Chinese divisions to fight modern warfare.

Stilwell was not a newcomer to the China scene. A West Point graduate, the sixty-year-old Stilwell had spent fifteen years in pre-war China, where, concentrating on language study, he learned a great deal about Chinese history and culture. As military attaché in Peking, he was known as a family man, virtually a teetotaler, who appeared only at "command" social functions; as a troop commander, he was known for professional excellence punctuated by picturesque, profane, and, at times, coarse language. Although tall and lanky, his eyes deceptively quiet and even morose behind steel-rimmed glasses, Stilwell brings to mind something of the Smedley Butler, something of the Patton—vigorous and on occasion overbearing, he probably suffered an inferiority complex; the reader can gain an excellent insight into his thinking and behavior from his various writings, which T. H. White expertly edited after the war, and also from Barbara Tuchman's recent (1971) and excellent biography, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1913–1945*.[6]

Although Stilwell was familiar with the Chinese army, he was not prepared for the scene that greeted him in early 1942, when Chiang

5. Ibid.

6. Joseph W. Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers* (New York: William Sloane, 1948). Ed. T. H. White; Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1913–1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

Kai-shek ordered him to take command of two Chinese armies fighting in northern Burma. Finding himself more onlooker than commander, due to jealous Chinese generals, he was appalled at the professional ineptitude and personal corruption that claimed commanders on every level. The experience convinced Stilwell that if the Japanese were to be driven from northern Burma, which was essential to reopen land communications between China and India, he would have to train and equip a new Chinese army.

Stilwell had studied the Chinese military problem before the Japanese invasion. Chiang's four million troops, he knew,

> . . . were a starved, sickly, underarmed, misled mass of peasant soldiers whose control and administration was [sic] shot through and through with politics, personal jealousies and incompetence. It was a conscript army; for every soldier who died at the front, ten died of disease or deserted in the rear. The courage of its soldiery was never questioned; many of its individual officers were men of shining integrity—but as an instrument of war it had only a biological usefulness. It reacted, but could not act of itself.[7]

Stilwell realized the impossibility of retraining the entire army. Instead, he wanted to produce thirty "modern" divisions, a plan accepted by Chiang Kai-shek even before the Japanese invasion.

In summer of 1942, Stilwell vigorously pursued this plan. The American military mission in Kunming began to train and equip "Yoke Force," designed to strike into northeastern Burma from Yünnan. In India, Stilwell himself used the nine thousand Chinese survivors of the retreat from Burma as nucleus for a new army to be fleshed out by soldiers flown from Kunming over the Hump. In the event, he received about sixty-six thousand soldiers whom he turned into four divisions.

Stilwell was convinced, and Slim agreed with him, that if the Chinese soldier could be removed from control of corrupt and inefficient officers, he could be trained and equipped to perform as well as any other national, including the Japanese. The British co-operated in Stilwell's plan by furnishing an old Italian-prisoner-of-war camp, Ramgarh, in central India. As White later wrote:

> . . . What Stilwell proposed to do was this: to take raw troops, divorce them from the possibility of retreat, abandon fixed supply lines as completely as did Sherman in Georgia, make them dependent on air drops alone, drive them two hundred miles through jungle, swamp, and mountain to conquer a skilful, entrenched and desperate enemy.

Stilwell's accomplishment, like Slim's, has never been fully appreciated in Western military circles. In White's words:

> . . . Stilwell's insistence that the use of modern arms was not merely a matter of mechanical know-how, but a matter of discipline, training and military

7. Stilwell, op. cit.

organization, met Chiang's theory head on. It was impossible, felt Stilwell, to graft American instruments of war on the ancient doctrines of the Chinese army and government and win a modern war.[8]

Though close to the mark, White should have gone further. Stilwell's secret was to give the Chinese peasant something to fight for—pride in himself. Mao Tse-tung already had accomplished what Stilwell was trying to accomplish. This was no easy task when dealing with illiterate conscripts commanded by poorly trained and exceedingly corrupt officers, and Stilwell did not fully accomplish it. Chinese officers, in general, proved the most difficult. Feckless, ill-disciplined, and often venal, they forever hindered the best efforts of American instructors. Graft and inefficiency pervaded all levels—Major General Dorn, in charge of training Yoke Force, wrote in what Barbara Tuchman termed desperate jest: ". . . The obvious remedy is to clear out the Chinese Government and start afresh."[9]

Stilwell nonetheless accomplished considerable. Once American instructor teams cleaned up the troops, properly fed, clothed, equipped, and paid them, they offered the simplest possible instruction. Stilwell realistically envisaged less-sophisticated tactics than either Slim or Wingate. Wherever possible, he wished to avoid frontal attacks, both because the Chinese proved hopeless when it came to precise timing required for co-ordinated attacks and because they did not have adequate supporting weapons. Stilwell preferred the original Japanese tactic of establishing a roadblock behind the enemy, then engaging his front to hold him for a flank attack from the jungle. Integral to his plan were irregular units such as Wingate's.

Stilwell and his American training cadres worked swiftly and efficiently. By late 1942, the lanky general believed, perhaps optimistically, that Chinese forces in India and Yünnan could participate effectively in the Slim-Wingate offensive. He had reckoned without Chiang Kai-shek, however. Wanting to retain his forces intact to fight Communists once allies had won the war against Germany and Japan, Chiang refused to release divisions either in Yünnan or India. Failing to sway the Generalissimo, Stilwell could only swear—and keep on training.

Slim and Stilwell were not the only commanders with imagination and flair in India. If they professed a sort of bent military orthodoxy, Brigadier Orde Wingate preached tactical heterodoxy in the Lawrence tradition.

The eldest of seven children, Orde Wingate was the son of an Indian army officer. Raised in a deeply religious English household, he

8. Ibid.; see also F. Eldridge, *Wrath in Burma* (New York: Doubleday, 1946): The British also paid the Chinese and provided uniforms.

9. Tuchman, op. cit.

graduated from the Royal Military Academy in 1923 and became a regular-army artillery officer. After routine garrison service and a six-year stint in the eastern Sudan, Wingate was ordered to Palestine as a staff intelligence officer.[10]

Here he made a service reputation by introducing counterinsurgency tactics against Arab terrorists who were raiding Jewish settlements and blowing up oil lines. Noting the almost total failure of orthodox tactics, Wingate argued successfully for small unit patrol tactics at night. Against considerable opposition, he himself organized "Special Night Squads" composed of Jewish reserve constables commanded by British officers and NCOs—a concept that enjoyed impressive success under Wingate's undeniably charismatic leadership. Badly wounded during one action, Wingate was awarded the DSO and dubbed the Lawrence of Judea. From stubby beard to ancient tropical helmet to grease-stained uniform, he played the part—sometimes fulsomely.

While Wingate's tactics could scarcely be faulted—the reader will find the entire fascinating story in Christopher Sykes's comprehensive biography *Orde Wingate*—his means of achieving tactical success were highly suspect: He indulged in one tantrum after another, even against commanders favorable to his views; if a recruit misbehaved either in training or on patrol, Wingate was apt to strike him; when a *Kibbutz* leader walked on a terrorist mine and was killed, Wingate retaliated with a daylight raid in which innocent villagers were shot. Sykes has explained these actions as those of a highly strung, impulsive man of unquestionable talent.[11] Those readers with extensive military experience will reply that good leaders can obtain success with more-acceptable methods.

Even worse, however, Wingate early became an ardent Zionist, convinced that Palestine must become a state with its own national army. At times, his zeal for Zionism brought him uncomfortably close to treasonable disclosure of confidential information to Jewish leaders. Desirable as it might have been for these leaders to have the information, it surely was not the function of a captain, a junior staff officer, to provide it.

Wingate increased his reputation in the brief Ethiopian campaign in 1940–41 when he organized, trained, and commanded Gideon Force, an irregular unit of natives under British officers. Again, his tactical thinking could scarcely be faulted. But he erred operationally in trying to use camels where camels could not be used, and he also erred in insisting on an initial cross-country march:

. . . He owned after that he was wrong. He was too much under the influence of preconceived ideas formed in Palestine and he overlooked the fact

10. Christopher Sykes, *Orde Wingate* (London: Collins, 1959); see also L. Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War* (London: Arthur Barker, 1955).
11. Sykes, op. cit.

that marching on compass-bearing was one thing in well-mapped country and another in country for which the maps were unreliable. He wore out his men, beasts and machines unnecessarily.[12]

However, in subsequent operations against Italian garrisons, he displayed considerable tactical agility, relying largely on mobility and frequently deception to gain tactical surprise. He preached and wrote a qualitative approach to irregular warfare, for instance calling for small attacks: ". . . twenty men is a good number to work with, but fifteen is better than twenty, and at night ten is better than fifteen." He stressed psychological warfare and he again proved the charismatic leader who displayed unquestionable personal courage.

Two other factors entered, however, in assessment of Wingate's contribution to the campaign. The first was enemy weakness. Italian defenders did not provide a test of arms. The British advanced, the Italians retreated. While Gideon Force was running out of camels and otherwise suffering enormous hardships in cross-country advance, two orthodox British forces were making excellent progress with much less effort. General Cunningham's force of three divisions advanced over a thousand miles in thirty days, a feat not many guerrilla forces could equal.[13]

The second was personal weakness. In Cairo and Khartoum before the campaign, Wingate continued to behave strangely and often abominably:

> . . . Among many extraordinary affectations he took to wearing a miniature alarm clock strapped to his wrist so that he could time his interviews exactly by the ringing of the bell. He took again to brushing his body instead of bathing and caused much amazement to some people with whom he had business by receiving them naked in his room in the Grand Hotel, brushing himself thoroughly the while. . . . His rudeness now went to grotesque lengths. . . .[14]

His temper continued short and with it physical cruelty appeared. An interpreter's mistake caused him to knock the man down with blows of a hide whip; he struck an Ethiopian soldier wrongly turned out. He fought almost constantly with colleagues, juniors or seniors. He fell out almost at once with the able Daniel Sandford, a man of extensive experience in Ethiopia who masterminded the campaign and who served during it as the emperor's political and military adviser. As had happened with Zionism, the emperor's cause became Wingate's cause, and he grew convinced that his own country was defeating the emperor's best interests.

In Cairo, after the campaign, bitter and ill from malaria, he wrote a

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

lengthy and vitriolic report that, according to his friend and protector, Wavell, ". . . would almost have justified my placing him under arrest for insubordination."[15] After detailing his qualitative theory of guerrilla warfare—which, he argued, contrasted with Lawrence's saturation theory—Wingate tore into authorities who, in his opinion, had sabotaged Gideon Force. Attacked from all sides, Wingate continued to nurse real and imagined grievances, a hideous period that ended with a serious attempt at suicide.[16]

After lengthy recuperation in England, he rewrote his report and expanded his thinking into a proposal for "Long Range Penetration" operations. Friends saw that this material reached Winston Churchill and the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Alan Brooke. Their influence, in part, brought orders in early 1942 for Wingate to report to Wavell's staff in Burma ". . . for operational and liaison duty with the Chinese in Burma."[17]

Wingate was thirty-nine years old when he arrived, shortly after the fall of Rangoon. A stocky, powerful-looking man of medium height, he impressed most people with a sort of Old Testament melancholy and a professional intensity that at times bordered on the fanatic. Wavell appears to have backed Wingate's long-range penetration concept. A young major who became intimately associated with Wingate, a regular officer named Bernard Fergusson, later described the plan in his splendid book *Beyond the Chindwin:*

> . . . Briefly, his [Wingate's] point was that the enemy was most vulnerable far beyond his lines, where his troops, if he had any at all, were of inferior quality. Here a small force could wreak havoc out of all proportion to its numbers. If it should be surprised, it could disintegrate into smaller prearranged parties to baffle pursuit, and meet again at a rendezvous fifteen to twenty miles farther on its route. Supply should be by air, communication by wireless: these two weapons had not yet been properly exploited. His proposal was to cut the enemy's supply line, destroy his dumps, tie up troops unprofitably far behind the line in the endeavor to protect these vulnerable areas, and generally to help the army proper on to its objectives.[18]

Wavell gave Wingate, as nucleus of a force, remnants of a guerrilla organization commanded by a brave and resourceful officer, Michael Calvert. Three battalions brought the new command to brigade strength: the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade, a heterogeneous force of about three thousand British, Gurkha, African, and Burmese soldiers that Wingate divided into seven lightly equipped mobile columns. Each column in-

15. Charles J. Rolo, *Wingate's Raiders* (London: G. G. Harrap, 1944).
16. Sykes, op. cit.
17. Ibid.
18. Bernard Fergusson, *Beyond the Chindwin* (London: Collins, 1962); see also Rolo, op. cit.; Michael Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952).

cluded a specialist guerrilla force, a signal section, and a small RAF section ". . . to direct, organize, and advise on supply by parachute."

Wingate's first operation was scheduled to complement the Arakan offensive earlier described. But when Chiang Kai-shek refused to let either Stilwell's force or the Yünnan force participate, Wavell, in early February 1943, canceled Wingate's part in the operation.

Wingate would not be put off. In vigorous prose, he offered Wavell what both believed were convincing arguments:

> . . . if the expedition were cancelled, "the vast majority of Staff officers who denied the theory of Long Range Penetration would . . . continue to deny it"; the brigade stood in peak condition and could only decline if not committed to action; the British would remain ignorant of Japanese military methods unless Wingate provoked them to action; the Japanese were apt to overrun Fort Hertz in the north as well as to implant themselves on both sides of the Chindwin; without "the serious interruption of enemy plans and confusion in his military economy throughout Burma," such as 77 Brigade would bring about, the Japanese would be "free to develop offensive intentions."[19]

Wavell should have questioned Wingate's logic, which contradicted his tactical concept. The finest brigade in the world could scarcely prove a theory if the major operational ingredient—an attacking army—was missing. In addition, only two months earlier, Wingate had expressed serious doubt as to his brigade's readiness for what in anyone's tactical book was a major operational commitment.

So far as Japanese military methods went, Slim and other veterans of the Burma retreat were sufficiently familiar with the enemy to respect him—as we have seen, the experience converted Slim to a new tactical concept. If doubt still existed as to enemy fighting qualities, Wavell or Wingate only had to read U. S. Marine Corps operational reports from the Pacific war, or from their own 4 Corps in Arakan.

Wingate's fears concerning Fort Hertz were more imaginary than real, at least according to Ian Fellowes-Gordon, who commanded a guerrilla company to the south and who later wrote that the first enemy attempt to "clean out" the area, in December 1942, was easily defeated.[20] Subsequent attempts made but slight progress, and, from the enemy standpoint, the area remained of secondary priority until Stilwell's campaign to capture Myitkyina.

At this time, the Japanese were holding Burma with at least four divisions, battle-tested, dug in. The argument that a small brigade, not yet battle-tested (what military men call "blooded"), could divert and de-

19. Sykes, op. cit.

20. Ian Fellowes-Gordon, *Amiable Assassins—The Story of the Kachin Guerrillas of North Burma* (London: Robert Hale, 1957).

feat major units was a totally unjustified conceit, the more so since the brigade would operate in an area of but slight tactical importance.

Wavell nonetheless accepted Wingate's arguments and allowed the brigade to move out. Of subsequent accounts, my own favorite is Fergusson's, in *Beyond the Chindwin,* but Calvert's account is also worth while, as is Sykes's.

The columns crossed Chindwin River in two groups. Complete with bullocks, elephants, mules, horses, and a few messenger dogs, the men pushed through two hundred miles of some of the most difficult jungle terrain in the world. After numerous difficulties, including brushes with the enemy that scattered two columns, the remainder of the Chindits, as they would become known, reached the Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad. Here Calvert's and Fergusson's columns blew some bridges and cut the line in several places.

The columns then crossed the Irrawaddy in an attempt to cut the Mandalay-Lashio railroad. By now, however, a good many men were nearing the end of their strength; the columns had stirred up the enemy and were on the run, which hindered scheduled airdrops, already made difficult by terrain and weather. The sick and exhausted columns disintegrated into small parties that eventually struggled back across the Chindwin. Some eight hundred troops did not return. Of the 2,182 who reached India, only six hundred were sufficiently fit ". . . for active soldiering again."[21]

From the operational standpoint, Wingate's first raid was a supreme and expensive flop, but Slim, Fergusson, and others were correct in awarding it a psychological value reminiscent of that given Doolittle's expensive air raid on Tokyo in 1942. Blown up by army and press into major victory proportions, it flashed a beacon of hope at a very discouraging time for England, and even Slim concluded that it ". . . was worth all the hardship and sacrifice his men endured. . . ."[22]

Although this must be a debatable conclusion—it is difficult to believe that England would have *surrendered* without the Wingate "success" —it unquestionably improved national morale. That would have been all right, but, unfortunately, people who should have known better, including Alan Brooke, Winston Churchill, and Wingate himself, started believing their own propaganda. In making an operational mountain out of a mountebank, the British and eventually the Americans only threw more grit into an already groaning tactical machine.

21. Sykes, op. cit.; see also Bernard Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall* (London: Collins, 1970).
22. Slim, op. cit.

Chapter 49

Wingate's fame • South-East Asia Command • Slim inherits Fourteenth Army • Slim's genius • Wingate's new "stronghold" concept • Slim's second Arakan offensive • Wingate's second offensive • His death • Stilwell's northern command • Merrill's Marauders • The Kachins • Japanese occupation excesses • Aung San deserts the Japanese • The Karen guerrilla offensive • Japanese evacuation • The postwar political situation

THANKS to cooked press reports and tired allies who embraced them, Wingate's failure brought him considerable fame and even influence. He returned to England a hero. Already familiar to important members of the Establishment, he basked in strategic and tactical heterodoxy, a fulsome period capped by Winston Churchill's taking him (and his wife) to the Quebec Conference.

Already winged, Wingate's fortunes soared. As Christopher Sykes has pointed out, he became ". . . a sort of point of agreement" between Churchill and his discordant chiefs of staff, and also between British and American chiefs. On the voyage to Canada, he persuaded Churchill and the British chiefs to favor an offensive in Burma—a plan calling for a second Chindit expedition of six brigades, or some 26,500 men. The British chiefs went so far as to specifically allocate units, including Slim's one jungle-trained division, to Wingate's command and to recommend to New Delhi that Wingate become the army commander in

Burma! Although Auchinleck firmly squashed the latter notion, at Quebec President Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff embraced Wingate's operational proposals.[1] General Henry Arnold, chief of the U. S. Air Force, personally promised him air support. After ordering special arms and equipment in America and London, Wingate returned to Delhi, an acting major general holding right of direct communication to Churchill whenever necessary!—an unfortunate instruction on the prime minister's part, an act that in effect belied trust in appointed commanders.

Wingate's cup was full, running over, for the Quebec Conference also ordered a new South-East Asia Command (SEAC), headed by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, who knew and supported Wingate. In late 1943, Mountbatten took over, with Stilwell as deputy commander (Stilwell remained Chiang Kai-shek's chief of staff as well as commander of American forces), and SEAC became responsible for allied operations in Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Siam, and Indochina.[2]

One of Mountbatten's early acts in autumn of 1943 created Fourteenth Army, with Slim in command. This was no particular plum:

> . . . including Stilwell's Chinese, the greatest number of divisions I ever had under my command in action at one time was eighteen. They fought on a front of seven hundred miles, in four groups, separated by great distances, with no lateral communications between them and beyond tactical support of one another.[3]

Fourteenth Army units had known only defeat. Composed predominantly of Indian soldiers, most of its neglected divisions stood bewildered and confused, highly unsure of themselves. The army lacked thousands of items needed to live and fight. Malaria, dysentery, and other tropical diseases ravaged entire units.

Here was an army that, in Frederick the Great's words, was ". . . fit only to be shown to the enemy at a distance." In converting it to a viable offensive force, Slim's accomplishment ranks high in military annals.

1. Roosevelt loved the unorthodox, as did Churchill, possibly as one means of deflating pompous admirals and generals, but undoubtedly also from standpoint of political appeal. Inspired by his son James, a marine officer strongly influenced by Evans Carlson (see Chapters 27 and 39) President Roosevelt foisted the Raider-battalion concept on the Marine Corps, which did not want it, the argument being that this was merely making elite units out of units already elite. Roosevelt won, but when A. A. Vandegrift became commandant he soon disbanded such ancillary units as the Raiders, Paratroopers, and Beach-Jumpers.

2. Vice-Admiral the Earl Mountbatten, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia, 1943–1945* (London: HMSO, 1951).

3. Slim, op. cit.

What was his secret?

In two words, leadership and simplicity. Like Scipio Aemilianus in Spain twenty-one centuries earlier, Slim splintered (and sometimes burned) the dead wood that invariably accumulates in large commands. What was left received massive doses of conditioning already injected into 4 Corps. Every man in Fourteenth Army was put through weapons training: ". . . the whole headquarters from the Corps Commander downwards went through qualifying courses in rifle, pistol, Bren gun, bayonet, mortar, and grenade. . . ." All units conditioned themselves to life in the jungle. Slim rightly charged unit commanders with responsibility for their men's health. In relatively short time, preventive medicine drastically lowered malaria incidence as well as other jungle diseases. To vary monotonous and not particularly healthful rations, corps and divisions started duck farms and fish saltings besides cultivating ". . . huge market gardens almost in the battle line."[4]

Slim emphasized patrolling as the key to jungle fighting. In time, training-patrols gave way to reconnaissance patrols, then small combat patrols, and finally unit offensives in such preponderant strength against minor targets as to guarantee victory and thus build a feeling of superiority. But training concentrated on the small unit:

> . . . Companies, even platoons, under junior leaders became the basic units of the jungle. Out of sight of one another, often out of touch, their wireless blanketed by hills, they marched and fought on their own, often for days at a time. They frequently approached the battle in scattered columns, as they did for the crossings of the Irrawaddy, and concentrated on the battlefield. . . .[5]

To serve these units, Slim and his staff worked out greatly simplified supply procedures based on airdrops. Aircraft were never in generous supply, and unit commanders had to reorient their entire thinking in order to survive and fight well. Instead of relying on elaborate bridging units, for example, commanders taught men to swim and to make rafts from jungle materials; army engineers commandeered old boats and launches and built new ones to support infantry river crossings and to wage guerrilla warfare along waterways; airplanes used parachutes made out of jute to supply columns, and on occasion used such makeshift containers as old inner tubes to drop water. Resupply by air became standard operating procedure, and, in consequence, greatly increased ground mobility by drastically reducing supply columns and echelons.

Slim pared staffs to the bone, cut paper work to a minimum. At his own headquarters,

> . . . every fortnight each section was ordered to sort its papers and destroy everything not essential. My order, rigidly enforced, was, "When in doubt,

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

burn." We constantly practised moving until the drill for it was thoroughly mastered; we could pack in a couple of hours and open up a properly camouflaged working headquarters in the bush in less. A large part of headquarters I kept permanently in tents and we frequently moved out into the jungle for several days at a time. . . .[6]

Applying a carefully thought-out formula of leadership based on spiritual, intellectual, and material factors, and on years of experience, Slim infused his army with unity of purpose, a sort of command osmosis absorbed by the most junior commander, who understood, respected, and acted upon the army commander's *intention:*

. . . this acting without orders, in anticipation of orders, or without waiting for approval, yet always within the overall intention, must become second nature in any form of warfare where formations do not fight closely *en cadre,* and must go down to the smallest units. It requires in the higher command a corresponding flexibility of mind, confidence in its subordinates, and the power to make its intentions clear right through the force.[7]

Slim was still training his army when the allied chiefs, meeting at Cairo in November 1943, agreed to an expanded Arakan offensive. But at the Tehran Conference immediately following, the grandiose scheme of multipronged invasion fell victim to various shortages. When the Combined Chiefs canceled part of the plan, Chiang Kai-shek immediately withdrew Chinese participation. Instead of the reconquest of Burma, Fourteenth Army, including Wingate's new force, undertook a limited offensive beginning early in 1944.

As with the earlier Arakan offensive, this change of plan pulled the rug out from under Wingate's long-range penetration concept. To save his operational skin, he now came to the surprising conclusion that his group, suitably reinforced, should provide the main effort by operating from a series of "strongholds" established miles behind enemy lines. A "stronghold" would serve two purposes: by defending an airfield, it would provide an administrative-supply base for his columns; by constituting a distinct threat, it would attract the enemy to attack a defended point. In Wingate's words, ". . . the stronghold is a machan overlooking a kid tied up to entice the Japanese tiger."[8]

Wingate's new concept was expensive in men and material. Primarily for this reason, Slim objected to it; the Combined Chiefs had not improved his temper by allocating his one ". . . completely jungle-trained division" to Wingate's command. Slim also argued that the Japanese were not going to be so easily drawn from their major defensive complex and that even if they were, Wingate's people ". . . were neither trained nor equipped to fight pitched battles, offensive or defensive."[9]

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Otto Heilbronn, op. cit.
9. Slim, op. cit.

The forceful and politically powerful Wingate nonetheless sold the idea to Mountbatten, who authorized ". . . ever-increasing scales of defensive equipment, artillery, anti-aircraft guns, mines, machine-guns, sandbags, and the rest."[10] To transport and supply this miniature army, the U. S. Air Force provided Wingate with Philip Cochran's special unit ". . . containing not only fighters and light bombers for close support, but transport aircraft, gliders, light planes for inter-communication and evacuation of wounded." This caused added hard feeling in SEAC and in Tenth Air Force:

> . . . It was represented very strongly by the air staffs, American and British, that it was uneconomical permanently to lock up what was an appreciable proportion of our total air strength in Burma in support of one subsidiary operation.[11]

Other responsible officers expressed certain misgivings. Bernard Fergusson logically feared ". . . the threatened repetition of the starvation conditions of the year before [the first Chindwin operation] and of renewed reprisals against our Kachin and other helpers within Burma." Wingate had to argue vigorously with Fergusson to keep him in command of 16th Brigade. Wingate's expansionist theories also alarmed Mountbatten—not surprising, since Wingate argued that if the present operation succeeded, he would need twenty to twenty-five brigades, or some one hundred thousand troops, not only to occupy Indochina but to join hands with the Americans in the Pacific![12]

Despite this infighting, which reached majestic proportions, Slim kicked off the second Arakan offensive with a series of probing efforts. These met only limited success and soon stung the Japanese into a counterinvasion of India. Although this surprised him, units that once had folded and fled now held and fought back. The enemy penetrated as far as Imphal. They paid heavily for their presumption. One major strike force lost almost its total of seven thousand. Slim himself later marked the Arakan battle as ". . . one of the historic successes of British arms. It was the turning-point of the Burma campaign. . . ."[13]

Wingate's force meanwhile had gone into action in early March, two brigades being airlifted and one marching into the interior of northern Burma. For the most part, the columns performed very well in this second offensive, Fergusson's 16th Brigade, for example, covering some 450 miles of incredibly difficult jungle terrain.[14] On March 12, Wingate wired an optimistic progress report directly to Churchill and concluded:

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Sykes, op. cit.
13. Slim, op. cit.
14. Bernard Fergusson, *The Wild Green Earth* (London: Collins, 1946).

". . . Enemy completely surprised. Situation most promising if exploited."[15]

In the following days, the brigades continued to consolidate their strongholds. The operation was still in a crucial stage, however, when, on March 23, Wingate took off from Imphal in a Mitchell bomber which crashed with no survivors.

His successor, Major General W. D. A. Lentaigne, continued the operation, which, lacking the simultaneous advance of a regular army, deteriorated into a series of virtually independent actions. In early May, SEAC ordered the brigades to evacuate.

While Slim and Wingate were committing their forces, Stilwell was buzzing between Delhi, Ramgarh, and Chungking in desperate effort to launch an offensive from the north. Finally gaining Chiang Kai-shek's approbation, Stilwell started his divisions moving southeast from Ledo in April 1944. His Northern Combat Area Command comprised three brigades, each consisting of one American battalion and two Chinese battalions, supported by light tanks and aircraft. Integral to the operation was a U.S. medium-range penetration unit, Merrill's Marauders, trained to fight primarily in jungle. As the entire force moved south, it would also find itself fronted and flanked by friendly Kachin guerrillas.

Merrill's Marauders had started life as the 5307th Composite Unit Provisional, assigned to Orde Wingate's command. With considerable difficulty, Stilwell had brought about its transfer to his command. One veteran later described the unit in terms that belied its code-name "Galahad":

> . . . It was 3,000 infantrymen so recruited as to ensure that they would exhibit the extremities of human character, the worst as well as the best, the best as well as the worst. It was a band of men who were unready and ill-prepared for the mission they had and who lived with fear. It was an organization that was never given time to organize, that was caught up in historical currents and crosscurrents far beyond its control or even understanding, that was mismanaged, that was driven until the accumulation of hardships and strain and the seeds of corruption it contained brought about its undoing.[16]

Colonel (later Major General) Frank Merrill, who had been Stilwell's G-3, or operations officer, commanded the unit, which attempted to snake behind the Japanese and strike from the flanks. As with Wingate's columns, American infantrymen soon began to tire and then flounder in difficult terrain and climate. Although they performed good work, the Marauders lasted only about a hundred days—and their life-span probably would have been shorter but for Kachin guerrillas.

15. Sykes, op. cit.
16. Charlton Ogburn, *The Marauders* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

Originally under British command, the Kachins had been operating out of Fort Hertz since early in the war. Known as Northern Kachin Levies, or NKL, the guerrilla companies, of about 125 men, fanned out quite far south, where each carved out a drop area and turned to performing a twofold mission: gathering intelligence and killing as many Japanese as possible. Although the factors that allowed them to survive —vastness of terrain coupled with general enemy weakness—adversely influenced their mission, they nevertheless performed well, soon becoming skillful practitioners of guerrilla warfare. One company commander, Ian Fellowes-Gordon, later recalled his experiences in a book, *Amiable Assassins*.[17] Working south of Sumprabum, a town occupied on and off by Japanese, his patrols frequently encountered the enemy. In fighting them, Fellowes-Gordon relied primarily on jungle ambushes and on a simple booby trap made by a grenade with a special instantaneous fuse cupped between a piece of split bamboo and tripped by a wire. He also noted that

> . . . every N.K.L. position had, as a matter of course, a large number of sharp bamboo stakes projecting from the ground and concealed in the undergrowth round the position. When the Japs were fired on, they invariably flung themselves down at the side of the path or the road and the number transfixed by our *panjis* was often more than those killed by our firearms. . . .[18]

In December 1943, a theater reorganization placed NKL under Stilwell's Northern Combat Area Command. As Detachment 101 under OSS command, the companies performed invaluable service, during Stilwell's advance in spring of 1944, by harassing enemy units, dislocating communications, and by guiding Merrill's columns through the tortuous terrain. In the final push on Myitkyina, two Kachin groups working with Wingate's columns effectively prevented enemy reinforcement, while still another unit led the strike column almost to the airfield at Myitkyina without arousing the enemy.[19]

Detachment 101, according to two American writers, Alsop and Braden, in their earlier-cited work, *Sub Rosa,* continued to grow to a strength ". . . of more than 500 Americans, with organized guerrilla bands of 8,500 native Kachins." In the war's last stages, which saw retreat of the Japanese 56th Division, Kachins fell on enemy columns, killing and wounding thousands. Had Chinese Yoke Force moving down from Yünnan lived up to tactical expectations, the joint effort could have annihilated the Japanese division. In the event, Yoke Force, restrained by Chiang Kai-shek, who wanted to save it for postwar purposes, moved like molasses.

17. Fellowes-Gordon, *supra.*
18. Ibid.
19. Alsop and Braden, op. cit.; see also R. H. Smith, op. cit.

The primary secret of OSS success, according to Alsop and Braden, was the difference in attitude between OSS and SOE officers vis-à-vis the Kachins, who ". . . hated the Burmese, the Chinese, and the British, with varying degrees of intensity." According to Detachment 101 veterans,

> . . . unlike the British, they did not treat them as "natives." The Americans were, they said, quite natural and open with the Kachins, asked their advice, which was frequently badly needed, and even on occasion slapped them affectionately on their bare backs. The Kachins, after their initial amazement, reacted highly favorably to this treatment, and took the Americans to their hearts.[20]

While no one can doubt the schism between American and British social behavior, including that exhibited toward aborigines, this is much too pat an explanation. British officers had worked with Kachins since mid-1942 and, as related, had built them into a formidable guerrilla force by the time Americans took over. The authors should also have pointed out the operational freedom and support accorded to OSS. SOE never enjoyed such financial and logistic benefits. Camaraderie is important, as long as it is sincere, but so is gold—and so, in some cases, is opium.

Desperately needing porters to carry supply from drop areas to ambush sites, the British had procured them by paying in strictly rationed quantities of opium—a disgusting and pernicious practice best forgotten by SOE. OSS not only picked up the practice but began to pay guerrillas as well as porters in opium[21]—a practice that undoubtedly proved more popular than even jocular American backslapping.

Political considerations also entered the picture. To the OSS, northern Burma was a place to punch a road through—one shudders at what our officers whispered to Kachin chiefs about postwar independence and other political goodies. To the British, Burma was a possession they would continue to govern after the war, so British officers could promise nothing to tribesmen.

Nor do the authors point out that the British enjoyed considerable success in working with other Burma tribes. Slim relied on intelligence provided by "V" force in Arakan, where British officers led small units of Chin tribesmen. Wingate also used "Dahforce," which consisted of Kachins led by British officers; the independent Lushai Brigade ". . . operated for six months . . . across two hundred miles of jungle mountains, against the enemy flank and rear," operations greatly aided by Shan tribesmen.[22]

But the most important British guerrilla success occurred in the South

20. Alsop and Braden, op. cit.
21. Fellowes-Gordon, op. cit.
22. Slim, op. cit.

and not only involved Karens but also the Burmese puppet army, supposedly controlled by the Japanese.

The Japanese quickly disillusioned the Thakins, the Burmese dissidents led by Aung San. Not only did Tokyo refuse to declare Burmese independence, but it disbanded the Burmese Independence Army. In its place, the Japanese established the Burma Defense Army, a force of five to eight thousand, titularly headed by General Aung San but actually controlled by Japanese advisers backed by military forces.[23] Similarly, a puppet government under Dr. Ba Maw exercised no real civil power. This was held by a Japanese military government, which ". . . treated Burma as if it were an occupied enemy territory."[24]

But where Ba Maw and his followers accepted the status quo, Aung San again rebelled. As early as May 1942—shortly after the fall of Mandalay—he sent a lieutenant to India to ask British help in establishing an underground movement. Although this led to nothing except intense criticism from other nationalists, his judgment was vindicated as Japanese occupation continued. Professor Htin Aung, himself scarcely pro-British, wrote that three years of Japanese rule proved ". . . more irksome than some sixty years of British rule."[25]

As in the Philippines, Japanese behavior in Burma became so stupid as to defy credulity. Military police of a Gestapo type controlled major cities. A minor traffic violation by a cyclist earned a slap in the face; if a girl hesitated to show a cholera-inoculation card, a Japanese military policeman would pull up her skirt in full view of the public to search for inoculation marks on her buttocks. Arrests, beatings, tortures, and forced-labor camps became the order of the day. In Professor Htin Aung's words, ". . . the Japanese imposed a reign of terror."

Meanwhile, Aung San had organized a secret anti-Fascist league comprising most of his old followers but including nationalist and Communist components as well as a considerable number of Karen hill tribesmen, although the extent of Aung San's control of the latter is still obscure.[26] In late 1944, Aung San again contacted the British to ask for money and arms. Although SOE was actively at work organizing and arming Karen tribes, its officers wanted to help Aung San as much as possible. But civil-affairs staff officers, influenced by the Burmese government-in-exile, opposed giving aid on grounds that Aung San's organization ". . . especially after the liberation of Burma would be more trouble than use. . . ."[27] Mountbatten and Slim decided in favor of SOE, however. Slim later wrote:

23. Sweet-Escott, op. cit.
24. Htin Aung, op. cit.
25. Ibid.
26. Slim, op. cit., stated that he did not control the Karens; see also, Sweet-Escott, op. cit.; see also Mountbatten, op. cit.
27. Slim, op. cit.

. . . I did not expect the B.N.A. [Burmese National Army] to exert any serious influence on the campaign, but I hoped they would—as in fact they did—occasionally cut up stragglers, harass small parties, and ambush vehicles, but I made no changes in my plans because of any help expected from them.[28]

In the event, Slim received a great deal of intelligence from this secret force; according to one authority, Operation Nation

. . . provided some eighty percent of all the intelligence received from Japanese-occupied Burma, and played a worth while part in mopping up enemy units left behind in the rapid advance of the Fourteenth Army.[29]

Slim also received a great deal of help from Karens, who, contacted by British liaison teams, had been partially armed and equipped in early 1945. During Fourteenth Army's advance south from Meiktila, this guerrilla force prevented a Japanese division from reinforcing the key town of Toungoo. Once Slim controlled Toungoo, his Dakota planes supplied the guerrillas with over thirteen hundred tons of supplies, a miraculous figure when compared to aid previously furnished. Despite enemy pressures from all sides, Karen force continued to grow to about twelve thousand strong while effectively harassing Japanese who were trying to fall back on Moulmein. Blair estimated that this force killed about 12,500 Japanese while indirectly accounting for many more during final Japanese retreats.[30]

The Japanese left Burma in a terrible mess. Slim later wrote that

. . . insecurity and dacoity [brigandage] were rife. Great acreages had gone out of cultivation, while trade had vanished with the breakdown of communications and the loss of security. The almost complete absence of consumer goods had spun the Japanese paper currency into wild inflation. The whole population was short of clothing, necessities, and above all of food. Indeed, large sections of it were on the verge of starvation. Towns had been burnt and many were deserted, their inhabitants having taken to the jungle where they lived hazardously in miserable destitution. The Japanese throughout their occupation had done little or nothing to meet the essential needs of the civil population. Even where bombs and battles had spared them, public utilities, water supplies, and roads had, through Japanese indifference, deteriorated to a shocking degree.[31]

Nor was the political situation happy. At the approach of allied forces, Ba Maw and followers fled to the Japanese camp. For all practical purposes, Aung San, commanding general of the Burmese National Army,

28. Ibid.
29. Blair, op. cit.
30. Ibid.; see also Sweet-Escott, op. cit.
31. Slim, op. cit.

held real power. Wisely recognizing this, Slim soon sent for the young nationalist leader. At their first interview, Aung San ". . . began to take rather a high hand," an attitude eventually dispelled by Slim, who not only held powerful cards but evinced an obvious concern for the war-torn country.

Nor was the dialogue then and later one-sided. In Slim's words:

> . . . I was impressed by Aung San. He was not the ambitious, unscrupulous guerrilla leader I had expected. He was certainly ambitious and meant to secure for himself a dominant position in post-war Burma, but I judged him to be a genuine patriot and a well-balanced realist. . . . I have always felt that, with proper treatment, Aung San would have proved a Burmese Smuts.[32]

With Mountbatten's blessing, Slim attempted to woo this important personality. Professor Htin Aung concluded that the British ". . . behaved as true liberators and treated the Burmese with sympathy and consideration. General Aung San and his Burmese troops were even absorbed into the British forces."[33] This arrangement continued under a British military governor, Major General Hubert Rance, who wisely recognized Burmese political aspirations and dealt reasonably with Aung San's new and powerful party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), which was rapidly becoming the core of a new national congress.

By the time of Japanese surrender, British and Burmese were working more or less together to put the country right. Htin Aung later wrote that, at this time, Aung San and his party were still aiming at dominion status ". . . rather than full independence."

Unfortunately, the policy of moderation and conciliation practiced by the British military soon gave way to a civil policy of vindictiveness and stubbornness. Although the British managed to avoid bloodshed, they quickly lost control and were soon forced to grant the unhappy country its independence.

32. Ibid.
33. Htin Aung, op. cit.

Chapter 50

China in World War II • Chiang Kai-shek's strategy • American aid • Continued Japanese gains • Chiang's government and army • Chiang and Roosevelt • Stilwell versus Chiang and Claire Chennault • The Miles mission • SACO operations • Miles's failure • Mao Tse-tung's strategy and tactics • The coalition problem • Patrick Hurley's mission • The Dixie Mission • Mao's increasing strength • Stilwell's relief • Wedemeyer takes over • The deteriorating Nationalist position • The Yalta conference and the "Far Eastern Agreement" • Mao prepares to strike

FROM THE STANDPOINT of guerrilla operations, China also proved disappointing—perhaps the inevitable result of conflicting interests both there and abroad. Western leaders regarded the war as an all-out battle against Germany and Japan, and naturally assumed that Chinese leaders would do everything in their power to defeat the common enemy.

But Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung regarded World War II as but an interlude in civil war. Each believed that America ultimately would defeat Japan. They saw themselves, as Dr. Griffith has observed, ". . . in the situation of those ancient ministers who craftily 'used barbarians to control barbarians.' "[1]

Despite intensive American efforts, Chiang and Mao devoted far more effort to husbanding men and resources for the postwar showdown than in fighting Japanese. Although the veneer of rapprochement ap-

1. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*

peared between Nationalist and Communist camps, civil war continued to manifest itself in a variety of divisive ways.

Failure of American officials from President Roosevelt on down to grasp this disappointing fact and take appropriate countermeasures led to a disastrous policy which indirectly played a significant role in Chiang's demise on the mainland of China.

To review briefly, Chiang faced real trouble by December 7, 1941. For two years, Japanese armies had controlled Manchuria, northern China, and important cities in the Southeast; Mao and the Communists controlled a large area in the Northwest. Nationalist strategy, as determined by Chiang and a newly created emergency body, the Supreme National Defense Council, ". . . was one of hoarding strength and waiting, keeping the army intact for one final smashing offensive."[2]

Considering the disorganized condition of government and military, this strategy might have been necessary. But it carried an immediate and costly price tag. As Professor Harrison has pointed out,

> . . . the official defense of China depended upon the Chinese civil population, *without* the army, to take the blows and to act as the buffer between the enemy and the Nationalist forces. Thus, after 1939 the Kuomintang fought a siege warfare from South China and abandoned North China to the Communist forces, who were quite prepared to wage guerrilla warfare with the help of the Chinese civil population.[3]

Chiang's strategy seemed quite clear: to trade space for time, time to enable the army to rest and reorganize. His supply lines to the West remained open while his political piano tinkled louder and louder—tunes calculated to shame Washington and arouse American public opinion in his favor. Roosevelt already had tried to help him financially by purchasing Chinese silver in 1937; in 1941, he authorized Claire Chennault to organize the American Volunteer Group, the famous Flying Tigers, composed of American pilots—regular officers hastily resigned from their respective services—flying the latest pursuit aircraft.

Nonetheless, the situation continued to deteriorate. One by one, supply lines to the West were falling to enemy control. By mid-1941, Japan already dominated the greater part of Indochina, including the important railway from Haiphong to Kunming, and was exerting strong pressure in Thailand, whose government capitulated in December. Within a few months, the Japanese flag flew over Hong Kong, the Malay Peninsula, most of Indochina, and most of Burma. By spring of 1942, China was encircled, her only supply line being by air over the Hump.[4]

2. Harrison, op. cit.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.: One land route remained, through central Asia. The Russians refused to permit passage here for political reasons, namely fear that Western aid would be used against Communists in the Northwest.

America's entry into the war somewhat altered this dismal picture. A shower of gold, $500 million in 1942 alone (at the time an astronomical sum), filled Chiang's empty coffers, and when his associates and senior officials and generals made off with that, more was forthcoming. The trickle of supply over the Hump also continued to support Chennault's valorous effort. Meanwhile the militarily able Lieutenant General Stilwell and his task force of advisers arrived, vanguard of a small military and diplomatic army ready to help Chiang cure Nationalist China's ills while building strong forces that ultimately would expel the Japanese from China.

The newly arrived Americans found plenty of ills. A corrupt and ineffective government was sucking the country dry. The people daily experienced all the evils that Mao Tse-tung and his Communist agents so effectively exploited. Extortion, usury, police and army coercion, impossibly high taxes and rents, unfair prices for produce—Chinese peasants could have been living two centuries earlier. The army was even worse, a conscript mass commanded by corrupt and, in general, poorly trained and inefficient senior officers. Two astute observers, Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby, later wrote in their excellent, if controversial, book *Thunder Out of China,*

> . . . the Chinese did not fear to fight for their country; there was no deficit in patriotism. But they knew what recruiting camps were like. Government regulations could be read with a mirror. Officers were forbidden to mix sand with the rice they fed the recruits; they were forbidden to seize any clothes, baggage, or personal possessions a conscript carried with him; they were forbidden to torture, tie up, or lock their recruits in barred rooms at night; they were forbidden to ask families of deserting recruits to pay for the uniforms and food the soldier got at the induction center. Conditions in combat units were horrible, but by comparison to conditions in induction centers they were idyllic. Recruits ate even less than the starving soldiers; sometimes they got no water. Many were whipped. Dead bodies were allowed to lie for days. In some areas less than 20 per cent lived to reach the front. . . . Near Chengtu one camp had received some 40,000 men for induction. Many had already died on the way; only 8,000 were still alive at the camp at the end of the drive. One batch of 1,000 inductees was reported to have lost 800 recruits through the negligence of its officers.[5]

Survivors fared badly. Division commanders received pay for their troops, passing on only what they judged fitting; unscrupulous commanders frequently sold unit rations; supplies, including arms and ammunition, disappeared into the vortex of greed to be sold to any buyers, Communists included. Armies lived off the countryside, robbing peas-

5. White and Jacoby, op. cit.

ants and raping their women, human locusts as perverted as the enemy. In January 1943, Stilwell vented private feelings in his journal:

. . . Cowardice, rampant, squeeze [bribery] paramount, smuggling above duty, colossal ignorance and stupidity of staff, total inability to control factions and cliques, continued oppression of masses. The only factor that saves them is the dumb compliance of the *lao pai hsing* [the common people]. The "intellectuals" and the rich send their precious brats to the States, and the farmer boys go out and get killed—without care, training, or leadership. And we are maneuvered into the position of having to support this rotten regime and glorify its figurehead, the all-wise great patriot and soldier—Peanut. My God.[6]

Stilwell, by this time, suffered no illusions concerning either mission or boss. To make the Chinese peasant a good fighter, drastic army reforms were necessary to ameliorate the fear and distrust that permeated feckless ranks. Although Stilwell forced Chiang to furnish over sixty thousand men for training in India, where he proved his thesis by fashioning them into four fairly efficient divisions, these were a drop in the bucket. And other training programs did not enjoy Ramgarh's success. As supplies continued to arrive over the Hump, other of Chiang's divisions received American arms, equipment, and training. But, without repair of basic and traditional abuses, this was like hanging tinsel on a dead Christmas tree.

The major villain was Chiang Kai-shek. Unable or unwilling to redress Kuomintang evils, he had come to deny existence of these evils. Time insulated him ever further from reality. Sun Yat-sen's ghost long since had fled his conscience; in its place ruled only the vain, cruel, contemptuous, and uncaring spirit of past Peking emperors. While he paraded himself to the West as China's savior, he was in reality a xenophobic dictator without real plan, a weak, not very bright man, a prisoner held in a life cell of vanity and fear. Dominated by his wife and her powerful family, wedded to venal and disloyal advisers, forced to bribe and otherwise coerce independent war lords and underworld leaders in order to survive, Chiang resembled a feudal ruler being driven mad by forces he could not identify. He therefore chose not to believe in their existence. In July 1942, General Stilwell exploded in a letter to his wife:

. . . This is the most dreary type of maneuvering I've ever done, trying to guide and influence a stubborn, ignorant, prejudiced conceited despot who never hears the truth except from me and finds it hard to believe. . . .[7]

6. Stilwell, op. cit.; see also C. F. Romanus and R. Sunderland, *The China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell's Problems* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1956); see also Tuchman, op. cit.
7. Stilwell, op. cit.

The situation fairly screamed for a prescient diplomat with a pipeline to the President, a strong ambassador enjoined to present a policy of *quid pro quo*—we'll help you, Chiang, but, at the same time, you must clean your own house.

In the context of 1942, this approach perhaps was impossible. Roosevelt's China policy was based as much on romanticism as on reality, what Churchill liked to call "the great American illusion." We don't know the President's real feelings about Chiang—they met only once, in Cairo, briefly—but, as Barbara Tuchman has written, Roosevelt's admiration cooled considerably as war continued and Chiang remained intransigent regarding necessary internal reforms. Unfortunately, a powerful Nationalist China lobby existed (and still exists) in Washington; Roosevelt, consummate politician that he was, held no intention of antagonizing its members. Perhaps, had the President been fully briefed on Chiang's despotism, he, too, would have been disillusioned, as were so many American officials on the spot. Roosevelt, however, seems to have been fooled, perhaps willingly, by Chiang's flamboyantly advertised personal asceticism and his widely proclaimed and utterly meaningless New Life Movement.

By ennobling Chiang as a member of the Big Four, Roosevelt virtually placed him above reproach or, at very least, far from control either of a tired and embittered American ambassador, Clarence Gauss, or a spunky, not always tactful lieutenant general in the U. S. Army, Joseph Stilwell.

Stilwell's mission was primarily military, not political. Considering that he was checkmated before he started, he still played a pretty good game, frequently giving Chiang and his cohorts bad moments. He would have done much better, but for a divided American camp. For Stilwell not only had to fight entrenched Chinese bureaucracy at every turn, but he almost immediately collided with Major General Claire Chennault, and he also had to suffer Commander M. E. Miles, who headed the clandestine U. S. Naval Group, China, and later OSS-Far East.

Claire Chennault, airman, a short, stocky man of rugged features, a flier's piercing eyes, brown, and a stubborn chin, but soft of speech and pleasant enough until the name of Stilwell cropped up.[8]

Chennault, legendary boss of Flying Tigers, American champion of the Generalissimo and his clique. As commander of 14th U. S. Air Force he believed, as did many Air Corps brethren, that war could be won only in the air. Chennault's strategic beliefs, vigorously promoted by his aide, politically powerful Joseph Alsop, suited Chiang's position per-

8. A. C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958).

fectly: use of American air power would preserve the Nationalist army for postwar showdown with the Communists.

On Chennault's recommendation, Chiang obtained Combined Chiefs of Staff approval to construct a series of airfields in eastern China from where, so they argued, planes could interdict Japanese shipping and, in time, bring the air war to Japan proper. Stilwell fought this plan, arguing that the Chinese army could not possibly protect the fields and that the Japanese could move into the area at will. In spring of 1943, in Washington, Stilwell lost the argument to Chennault, and the fields were built.

A year later, the Japanese did open a major offensive and soon overran the airfields, stopping only at Kweilin. Chennault accused Stilwell of deliberately weakening Nationalist defenses to prove himself correct. Chiang Kai-shek echoed the charges and ordered Stilwell to transfer Chinese divisions from the Burma front. Stilwell refused, and the ensuing imbroglio led eventually to his dismissal.

That did not alter the ugly fact of the Japanese offensive. Not only did it cost Chiang a great many material resources, all in short supply, but it sent Nationalist and allied morale plunging. In retreating from Honan, one Nationalist army so ravaged the population that the people ". . . turned on them and destroyed them."[9] By yielding large areas to repressive Japanese occupation forces, the Nationalists only added to peasant disaffection, thereby enriching the ground for the Communist subversive effort.

Stilwell fared no better with the U. S. Navy. For an experienced naval officer, "Mary" Miles was painfully naïve, as is variously disclosed in a posthumously published book, *A Different Kind of War*.[10] An Annapolis graduate, the forty-two-year-old Miles arrived in Chungking in spring of 1942, his primary mission to establish a series of clandestine radio stations along the southern coast in order to transmit weather reports and Japanese shipping movements.[11] In carrying out this mission, Miles contributed satisfactorily to the war effort, but he also paid the piper by attaching himself, and thus the American flag, to one of the most sinister persons in the Far East: Lieutenant General Tai Li, head of Chiang's secret police.

The liaison could have been suffered had Miles remained limited in his operations. Unfortunately he saw himself as an oriental Lawrence, and, in attempting to set up a widespread guerrilla organization, he was soon rubbing elbows with a variety of cutthroats familiar to readers of *Terry and the Pirates*. In his later words,

> . . . ultimately there were more than a thousand of us [Americans], working intimately with a hundred thousand guerrillas, with two or three hundred

9. Harrison, op. cit.
10. M. E. Miles, *A Different Kind of War* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).
11. Ibid.; see also Morison, op. cit.; R. H. Smith, op. cit.

thousand plainclothesmen, with fourteen active guerrilla columns and innumerable saboteurs who came to be adept at following our patient, cooperative tactics.[12]

A qualified superior at this point should have introduced the control question. Miles and the majority of his officers spoke very little Chinese. As he later wrote, ". . . When I arrived I soon saw how utterly dependent we were bound to be on our interpreters whom we correctly called 'liaison officers.'" One can suggest that these "liaison officers" were hand-picked by General Tai Li and that the Americans were told precisely what Tai Li wanted them to be told.

Miles perforce had to depend on information supplied by Tai Li. His early attempts to establish transmitting stations fell victim to Japanese counteraction. S. E. Morison later wrote:

> . . . By the end of 1942 Miles realized that the weather-reporting network would have to be turned into a secret army to be really useful. Tai Li needed more guerrillas to protect the weather men, and more Americans to train the Chinese. On Commander Miles's recommendation an agreement was signed 15 April 1943, establishing the Sino-American Co-operative Organization (SACO), commanded by Tai Li with Miles as his deputy. Volunteers were carefully screened by the SACO office in Washington and put through a special training course before being sent out to China. No "old China hands" with preconceived ideas were wanted. . . .[13]

Later attempts to merge Miles's effort with OSS activities by making Miles director of OSS in China proved futile when Tai Li refused to carry out Washington's orders.[14]

SACO rapidly expanded. Miles's and Tai Li's headquarters, Happy Valley, outside of Chungking, supported five separate intelligence efforts as well as a number of guerrilla-training units headed by American officers. Later in the war, Miles commanded some 2,500 Americans, whose logistic appetite never ceased growing. From June to November 1944, American pilots flew in the incredible total of 869 tons to support SACO operations. This included 150 tons of ammunition, 60 tons of arms, 75 tons of explosives, 227 tons of gasoline [!], 51 tons of passenger baggage [!] and 185 tons of miscellaneous items such as trucks, office supplies, clothing, and mail—items hardly compatible with a mobile, hard-hitting guerrilla organization.

Considering SACO's size and impressive logistic support, operational results against the Japanese seem surprisingly mild. Although ". . . comprehensive weather maps were being broadcast daily to the Pacific Fleet" by October 1944, along with information on coastal shipping,[15] this activity scarcely justified SACO's expense. A less preten-

12. Miles, op. cit.
13. Morison, op. cit.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

tious organization could have fielded small and select Chinese teams, much as Australian coastwatchers operated, and precisely as Mao's Communists were doing in Yenan. Colonel David Barrett, who commanded Dixie Mission, the American observer group sent to Yenan in 1944, later wrote:

> . . . The Communists were also of great assistance to us in collecting weather reports of vital importance to our Navy and Air Force. With their cooperation, and under the supervision of our Signal Officer, Captain Domke, large numbers of small radios, with instructions concerning their operation, were sent to distant parts of the Communist-controlled area, and an astonishingly large number of useful reports, sent by means of these small radios, were received in Yenan.[16]

Regarding damage to the enemy from guerrilla operations, Miles's own claims probably err on the side of optimism, particularly the figure of seventy-one thousand Japanese killed. Although guerrillas, variously trained and commanded by American teams, at times scratched the enemy façade, their reports should not have been taken at face value. Chinese face is omnipresent. One Chinese guerrilla leader was not going to be outdone by another, a characteristic also familiar to most non-Chinese guerrillas. One fact is certain: the effort in no way prevented the Japanese army, itself greatly weakened, from carrying out the 1944 offensive against Chennault's exposed airfields.

As Miles developed his mission, he invariably collided with Stilwell, who, on one occasion, "held up all SACO's air shipments for six months."[17] Tai Li's intransigence also caused OSS to undertake an independent effort. As early as 1943, American military and civil officials wanted to arm Mao Tse-tung's guerrillas, a notion successfully fought by Chiang Kai-shek. During the successful Japanese offensive of 1944, the issue again grew dominant, and, as will be seen, played a role in Stilwell's dismissal.

But Miles and his group were also falling from official favor. When General Albert Wedemeyer replaced Stilwell, in late 1944, he dropped Tai Li in favor of General Chen Kai-ming. Miles later wrote that Wedemeyer apparently did not realize that Chen was Tai Li's number-two man—nor, apparently, did Miles see fit to tell him.[18] Wedemeyer suffered Miles's independent operations until spring of 1945, when Admiral King, Chief of Naval Operations, placed the naval group under Wedemeyer's command.[19]

16. David D. Barrett, *Dixie Mission: The United States Army Observer Group in Yenan, 1944* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1970).
17. Morison, op. cit.
18. Miles, op. cit.
19. Wedemeyer, op. cit.

Miles's supreme error lay in trusting Tai Li so completely, particularly in view of contrary evidence presented by older and more knowledgeable China hands than himself. As one result, Miles's reports forsook the realm of objectivity, when he was being paid to be objective. He later wrote, for example, ". . . over and over again I had sent in information that proved beyond a doubt that the Yenan Communists were being supported by Russia and supplied with Russian arms."[20] Leaving aside the dubious accuracy of such evidence—evidence undoubtedly supplied by Tai Li's agents and not confirmed by American observers in Yenan—this was not really Miles's mission, and certainly not his official worry.

Without doubt, Miles meant well, but, considering his rabid anti-Communist attitude, his all-out support of Tai Li and various mercenaries produced an ironic conclusion to his mission: God alone knows how many Chinese peasants became active Communists because of evils perpetrated by these men acting with American compliance and support!

In Yenan, to the northwest, Mao and his Communists were also dragging heels in the war against Japan. Mao allegedly had made his plans clear in October 1937, when he told his followers:

. . . The Sino-Japanese war affords our party an excellent opportunity for expansion. Our fixed policy should be seventy percent expansion, twenty percent dealing with the Kuomintang, and ten percent resisting Japan. There are three stages in carrying out this fixed policy: the first is a compromising stage, in which self-sacrifice should be made to show our outward obedience to the Central Government and adherence to the Three Principles of the People [nationality, democracy and livelihood, as outlined by Dr. Sun Yat-sen], but in reality this will serve as camouflage for the existence and development of our party.

The second is a contending stage, in which two or three years should be spent in laying the foundation of our party's political and military powers, and developing these until we can match and break the Kuomintang, and eliminate the influence of the latter north of the Yellow River. While waiting for an unusual turn of events, we should give the Japanese invader certain concessions.

The third is an offensive stage, in which our forces should penetrate deeply into Central China, sever the communications of the Central Government troops in various sectors, isolate and disperse them until we are ready for the

20. Miles, op. cit.; a former Naval Intelligence officer on Admiral Nimitz's staff has stated that the information passed by Naval Group China was not only useless but tainted, because it came from Tai Li and his people: letter in the author's private files.

counter-offensive and wrest the leadership from the hands of the Kuomintang.[21]

Even had Mao been inclined to wage more vigorous war, he would have found rough going. He was not strong enough to repeat the "Hundred Regiments Offensive" of 1940. General Okamura's policy of "Kill all, burn all, destroy all" continued to hurt Mao in 1941 and 1942. Okamura later claimed that his forces killed about a hundred thousand of Mao's guerrillas and that he would have eliminated them altogether except that, in late 1942, the Japanese high command began transferring seven of his best divisions to the Pacific theater.[22]

By late 1942, Japan had assumed the strategic defensive in China and Southeast Asia. In northern and central China, large garrisons defended major cities which were linked by strong points to keep open lines of communication. As Americans continued to press in from the Pacific, Japanese first-line strength diminished, with a corresponding reliance on Chinese puppet troops ". . . of negligible combat efficiency and questionable loyalty." According to Dr. Griffith,

> . . . on rare occasions, Chinese Communist troops drove greatly inferior Japanese units from strong points in *hsien* towns or along the railways. But when the Japanese wished, they could invariably return in sufficient strength to force Communist withdrawals. . . . No authentic records support the proposition that Communist military operations succeeded in forcing the Japanese invaders from an extensive territory they physically occupied and wanted to hold. . . .[23]

Nor did Mao hold any such pretensions. Convinced that America would win the war, he devoted these years to consolidation and expansion. As Dr. Griffith concluded,

> . . . the new policy put into effect in 1941, essentially political in nature, was to fill vacuums created by the withdrawal of Japanese garrison troops, to seep into rural areas administered by Chinese traitors and collaborators and "defended" by puppet ("bogus") troops . . . [who] speedily acquired the prudent habit of taking to their heels before the Communists fired a shot. When "bogus" troops were captured, they were indoctrinated and integrated.[24]

The reader will recognize these tactics as an extension of those employed against Nationalist forces prior to the war. Essentially, they were

21. Freda Utley, *Last Chance in China* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1947). This document was published by the Supreme National Defense Council, in Chungking, in 1944. While its authenticity can be challenged, it still presents an accurate enough blueprint for what happened; see also Wedemeyer, op. cit.
22. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.

tactics of the poor. Although they resulted in steadily increasing Communist strength, Mao was never strong enough to undertake conventional operations against the Japanese. Like Tito in Yugoslavia, he needed arms and equipment, and, as attempts to gain these from either Russia or America failed, his frustrations grew.

Had he been supplied with arms, American observers reported, he might have constituted a significant threat to the Japanese presence.[25] As it was, he continued with nibbling guerrilla tactics while politically consolidating the area—and he also continued to tie up fifty thousand troops screening Chiang's two-hundred-thousand-man blocking force.

Unable to mount an offensive against the Japanese in China, Stilwell turned increasingly to the Burma front. By proving there that the Chinese, properly trained, equipped, and led, could win battles, he hoped to force Chiang's hand and bring about reforms necessary to produce a viable combat army. His star rose visibly in spring of 1944, when his predominantly Chinese force reached Myitkyina, the first major tactical success enjoyed by the Nationalists since 1937. (See maps, Chapters 24 and 48.)

Stilwell's success, however, meant absence from Chungking at a critical juncture. The Japanese meanwhile had launched an offensive against Chennault's forward airfields in eastern China, a move virtually uncontested by Chiang's divisions—precisely as Stilwell had warned. To Chiang's pleas for help in the form of divisions from the Burma front, Stilwell turned a deaf ear: the solution, he explained, lay in Chiang's making peace with the Communists, thus freeing some two hundred thousand Nationalist troops and fifty thousand of Mao's troops for operations against the Japanese. He also favored, as he had previously, arming the Communists, though this was probably as much to force Chiang to implement necessary reforms as it was to help Mao build a modern army.

The threat did make Chiang more pliant. In June 1944, Chiang told Vice-President Henry Wallace that he ". . . would welcome the assistance of the President in the settlement of the Communist problem, even though it was an internal one"; he also agreed to send a team of American military-civil observers to Mao's headquarters at Yenan, a move

25. U. S. Department of State, *United States Relations with China—With Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1949). Hereafter cited as USDS-China, this was subsequently published as *The China White Paper—August 1949* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1967), 2 vols.; see also U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States—Diplomatic Papers 1944—Volume VI—China* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967). Hereafter cited as USDS-Foreign Relations China (1944); see also Barrett, op. cit.

previously recommended by Stilwell's headquarters but refused by Chiang.[26]

As enemy action continued through summer and threatened to cut China in two, Roosevelt took increasingly positive action. In July, he promoted Stilwell to four-star rank and told Chiang that he wanted him made commander-in-chief of the Chinese armies. He also sent two personal representatives to Chungking, Major General Patrick Hurley, to iron out existing problems between Chiang and Stilwell, and Donald Nelson, to work out a more generous aid program.

By the time Hurley and Nelson arrived in Delhi, Stilwell had announced the capture of Myitkyina and had started another offensive from Yünnan. The three traveled to Chungking in early September.

At sixty-one years of age, Patrick J. Hurley featured considerable experience in arbitration. A self-educated Oklahoma lawyer and decorated veteran of World War I, he had served government with the same unflagging zeal that had made him a fortune from representing private oil interests. A cabinet officer in the Hoover administration, he more recently had functioned as Roosevelt's ambassador to New Zealand and to Iran, besides representing the President to Stalin and other foreign figures.

Tall and lean, with a neat mustache and tailored uniform heavy with decorations, genial Pat Hurley looked the perfect diplomat. The look deceived. Hurley believed that ". . . contagious friendliness could be made a fundamentally effective part of diplomacy." If his Oklahoma drawl and fund of homespun stories amused President Roosevelt, they bored most people. This aside, in negotiations demanding the deepest knowledge and objectivity, Hurley preferred prejudice to fact. Basically an idealist, either unwilling or unable to differentiate between national ambitions and attainable objectives, he was becoming an increasingly embittered man, at odds with anyone who disagreed with him.

He was already convinced that Britain and Russia were fighting only for sinister imperialist purposes, as opposed to Atlantic Charter ideals, and in China his suspicions hardened into soul-destroying conviction that the U. S. Department of State consisted of two parts, half pro-British, half pro-Russian—the whole scheming to subvert the foreign policy of the United States, which he, Patrick J. Hurley, alone seemed intent on preserving. When his personal diplomacy failed disastrously, Hurley sought to blame others, whom he accused of disloyalty and subversion. Pat Hurley came to China to advance the American dream; he helped set the stage for the American nightmare.

Hurley's primary error consisted of oversimplification. The maze that

26. USDS-China, *supra*.

he walked into is well suggested by his later biographer. The directive that sent him to Chungking read in part:

. . . Your principal mission is to promote efficient and harmonious relations between the Generalissimo and General Stilwell and facilitate General Stilwell's exercise of command over the Chinese armies placed under his direction. . . .[27]

Harmonious relations between Chiang and Stilwell meant resolving the issue of aid to the Communists. According to Lohbeck, Roosevelt and Hurley agreed on a formula:

. . . The purpose of the armed Communists being the overthrow of the Government of the Republic of China, it would be futile for the United States to attempt to uphold the Republic while arming a force bent upon its destruction. The President therefore decided that lend-lease material could not be used to arm the Communists unless and until they acknowledged the National Government of the Republic of China, and the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.[28]

It followed that Hurley's mission became that of making peace not only between Chiang and Stilwell, but between Nationalists and Communists —the latter already forming a divisive issue between Chiang and Stilwell.

By the time Hurley arrived in Chungking, in September, an American military-civil mission was working with Mao Tse-tung in Yenan. The Dixie Mission, as it was known, had arrived in July under command of an experienced China hand, Colonel David Barrett, American military attaché in Chungking.

Mao and his lieutenants welcomed the Barrett mission, in general cooperating with their fact-finding requirements. Old China hands, including Barrett, were favorably impressed with what they saw, but they almost immediately recognized a political-military situation unfamiliar to Western warfare. Although Barrett and his army officers lectured on American training methods and tactics to Communist officers, Barrett later wrote:

. . . I doubt our talks meant much to the Communists, as their training methods were markedly different from ours. These methods were intended, moreover, for troops usually operating under conditions entirely unfamiliar to Americans. The Communists could almost always count on the cooperation and support of a local population which had excellent opportunities to acquire important information about the enemy and were eager to report

27. Don Lohbeck, *Patrick J. Hurley* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956); see also Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation—My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

28. Lohbeck, op. cit.

it whenever they could. Thus their training, unlike ours, laid little stress on scouting, patrolling, air reconnaissance and other means of gathering enemy intelligence.[29]

In August 1944, an important civil member of the team, John Service,

. . . wrote the Department of State an objective summary reporting that the Communists were actively supporting the war "because this gives them an opportunity to mobilize, organize, and indoctrinate the people and to create and train an efficient army."[30]

In November, another diplomat on the team, John Paton Davies, told State Department seniors: ". . . The Chinese Communists are so strong between the Great Wall and the Yangtze that they can now look forward to the postwar control of at least North China. . . ."[31] Service complemented this unsettling fact with his own rational if blunt findings and conclusions:

. . . This total [Chinese Communist] mobilization is based upon and has been made possible by what amounts to an economic, political and social revolution. This revolution has been moderate and democratic. It has improved the economic condition of the peasants by rent and interest reduction, tax reform and good government. It has given them democratic self-government, political consciousness and a sense of their rights. It has freed them from feudalistic bonds and given them self-respect, self-reliance and a strong feeling of cooperative group interest. The common people, for the first time, have been given something to fight for. . . . Just as the Japanese Army cannot crush these militant people now, so also will Kuomintang force fail in the future. . . . With this great popular base, the Communists likewise cannot be eliminated. Kuomintang attempts to do so by force must mean a complete denial of democracy. This will strengthen the ties of the Communists with the people; a Communist victory will be inevitable . . . I suggest the future conclusion that unless the Kuomintang goes as far as the Communists in political and economic reform, and otherwise proves itself able to contest this leadership of the people (none of which it yet shows signs of being willing or able to do), the Communists will be the dominant force in China within a comparatively few years.[32]

While Barrett, Davies, and Service were so occupied, a storm of monumental proportions had broken in Chungking. A few days after Stilwell's return, in September, the continuing Japanese advance had forced him to order demolition of the large American base at Kweilin,

29. Barrett, op. cit.
30. Griffith (CPLA), *supra;* see also USDS-Foreign Relations China (1944), *supra.*
31. USDS-Foreign Relations China (1944), *supra.*
32. Lohbeck, op. cit.

an act that earned harsh words both from Chennault and Chiang Kai-shek. Hurley, meanwhile, continued to confer with Chiang, who finally agreed to recognize Stilwell as his new commander-in-chief, but in return demanded control of lend-lease supply. He also demanded return of Chinese divisions from Burma, which Stilwell refused to consider.

Stilwell at this point was a tired man, his normal irascibility honed razor-sharp. He had recently spent six active months in a jungle campaign that claimed as victim most men half his years. He had heard all Chiang's promises before, and, although he got on well enough with Hurley, he was hardly impressed with Hurley's optimistic forecasts of a favorable settlement with the Peanut.

The storm brewed throughout September. Hurley was convinced that he had persuaded Chiang to his way of thinking; Stilwell, from sad experience, pointed out that Chiang forever said yes and always did no. Stilwell's attitude is clear from a cable sent to General George Marshall on September 22:

> . . . Chiang Kai-shek is following his usual policy. At first he readily agreed to the command arrangement and also by inference agreed to use the communist army under my command, then he began the delaying action, which still continues. He protests that there are many difficulties which have to be smoothed out and this takes time. Actually, he believes that our advance in the Pacific will be swift enough and effective enough to spare his further effort, and he would like to avoid the bitter pill of recognizing the communists and putting a foreigner in command of the army. . . .[33]

On September 26, he informed Marshall:

> . . . Chiang Kai-shek has no intention of making further efforts to prosecute the war. Anyone who crowds him toward such action will be blocked or eliminated. . . . Chiang Kai-shek believes he can go on milking the United States for money and munitions by using the old gag about quitting if he is not supported. He believes the war in the Pacific is nearly over, and that by delaying tactics, he can throw the entire burden on us. He has no intention of instituting any real democratic regime or of forming a united front with the communists. He himself is the main obstacle to the unification of China and her cooperation in a real effort against Japan. . . . I am now convinced that, for the reasons stated, the United States will not get any real cooperation from China while Chiang Kai-shek is in power. I believe he will only continue his policy and delay, while grabbing for loans and postwar aid, for the purpose of maintaining his present position, based on one-party government, and reactionary policy, on the suppression of democratic ideas with the active aid of his Gestapo.[34]

33. USDA-China, *supra.*
34. Ibid.

Fired by such cables, the imbroglio, toward the end of the month, reached ultimatum proportions, inspired ironically by Roosevelt's intervention. Chiang now demanded Stilwell's recall. In October, the American general left Chungking, his job taken over by Major General (soon promoted to Lieutenant General) Albert Wedemeyer.

Wedemeyer might have been in a different army from Stilwell. Also a West Pointer, the forty-eight-year-old general had served in Washington before joining Mountbatten's staff in Ceylon. As he makes clear in his book *Wedemeyer Reports,* he fancied himself a global strategist of no mean talent. Unlike Stilwell (whom he disliked and who held him in genial contempt), the husky Nebraskan sympathized deeply with Chiang Kai-shek and set about to bail him out militarily.

Hurley meanwhile continued trying to bail Chiang out politically. In early November, Hurley flew to Mao's headquarters at Yenan. He brought a draft agreement from Chiang Kai-shek (probably drawn up by the U. S. Department of State), which would have incorporated Mao's forces into the Nationalist army in return for legalizing the Chinese Communist Party.[35] Despite considerable bonhomie—Hurley's habit of emitting Indian war whoops on the odd occasion appalled both American and Communist camps—the talks did not prosper. Mao believed that he was powerful enough to demand a coalition government, and this amounted to the main feature of his rebuttal to Chiang's draft. Hurley returned to Chungking with Mao's Five-Point Proposal; Mao's chief lieutenant, the young and bright Chou En-lai, accompanied him.

Subsequent talks with Nationalists and Chou dragged on inconclusively—not surprising, in view either of Chiang's intransigence or of Mao's relatively strong bargaining position. More to the point, neither side made any obvious effort to carry the war to the Japanese—a serious deficiency that was soon to exercise an important and harmful influence on American strategy.

When President Roosevelt flew to Yalta, in February 1945, the European war was approaching climax, but the Pacific war, though progressing well for the allies, was far from won. Although danger seemed slight of the enemy developing an atomic bomb, Hitler still spoke of new and secret weapons of great power. Question marks embraced the American-British atomic-bomb effort: scientists could not, in early 1945, promise a bomb that worked, let alone a delivery date.

Roosevelt met with Stalin before American marines landed on Iwo Jima. Despite Wedemeyer's military reforms and reorganization, Chiang seemed no more anxious than ever to fight the Japanese. Despite Hurley's ambassadorship, Chinese Nationalists and Communists remained

35. Barrett, op. cit., gives the draft treaty and also describes in detail the frustrating but always fascinating subsequent conferences and counterdrafts; see also USDS-Foreign Relations China (1944), *supra.*

at each other's throats, to the enemy's immense profit. Roosevelt and Churchill had been advised by their respective chiefs of staff ". . . that the war in the Pacific would last eighteen months after the end of hostilities in Europe."[36] According to military estimates, the invasion of Japanese home islands would cost perhaps one million American lives. Roosevelt's interpreter at Yalta, later Ambassador, Charles Bohlen, has recently pointed out that, according to American military estimates, it would have ". . . cost about 200,000 more in American casualties to assault the Japanese islands before rather than after Soviet entry into the Pacific war."[37]

The agreements made at Yalta aroused enormous controversy in postwar years. Leaving aside arrangements for Poland and the rest of Europe, Roosevelt was criticized and still is for negotiating Far Eastern questions without China's presence and in controverting certain clauses of the Cairo Declaration.

The document in question, the "Far Eastern Agreement"—". . . negotiated by Roosevelt, Stalin, Harriman, and Molotov without the full knowledge of either the State Department or the Joint Chiefs of Staff and without Churchill's participation until the very end"—granted Stalin four major concessions, abridged by Professor Richard Leopold in his excellent work *The Growth of American Foreign Policy:*

> . . . Stalin obtained four things exactly as he wished: the annexation of the Kuriles, the cession of southern Sakhalin, the naval base at Port Arthur, and the maintenance of the *status quo* in Outer Mongolia. His desire to lease [Port] Dairen and to control the Chinese Eastern and South Manchuria [railroad] lines did not fully materialize, the port being placed under international jurisdiction and the railways under joint operation.[38]

The agreement concerning Outer Mongolia and Manchuria would require concurrence of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. In return for these concessions, Stalin promised to enter the war against Japan, once Germany had surrendered. Just as important, the final clause of this top-secret agreement read:

> . . . For its part the Soviet Union expresses its readiness to conclude with the National Government of China a pact of friendship and alliance between the USSR and China in order to render assistance to China with its armed forces for the purpose of liberating China from the Japanese yoke.[39]

This document was neither as evil as postwar critics have made out, nor as sound as defenders have claimed. Two important considerations

36. C. E. Bohlen, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).
37. Ibid.
38. Richard Leopold, op. cit.
39. Ibid.

governed presidential thinking at Yalta (the claim that Roosevelt was feeble-minded, later advanced by Wedemeyer, Hurley, and others who were not present, and picked up by the right wing, must be discounted in view of overwhelming contrary evidence; ill he was, crazy he was not): One was the human and material cost to the United States of invading Japan, the other his belief that he could handle Stalin after the war, that, in William Bullitt's words, ". . . he could convert Stalin from Soviet imperialism to democratic collaboration."[40]

Roosevelt can scarcely be faulted for respecting the first consideration, and only a curious kind of American would suggest that the Joint Chiefs of Staff distorted their report in Stalin's favor. One of America's ablest wartime intelligence officers, Rear Admiral Ellis Zacharias, later wrote a fitting epitaph for the JCS report: ". . . It was an unfortunate and altogether wrong estimate, its authors being deceived by a purely military and quantitative evaluation of the enemy, a treacherous trap into which even the greatest military leaders are likely to fall occasionally."[41]

Roosevelt can be and has been heavily criticized for the ego inherent in his assumption of personal supremacy over Stalin. In the final analysis, however, it is what raises him above his predecessors or successors —the insistence on attempting to alter the great-power concept in favor of world government. In his desire for a free, peaceful, and prosperous world, Roosevelt embodied the real spirit of the American ideal.

Roosevelt recognized that the only hope for an ultimately peaceful world lay in a viable United Nations. Critics have condemned him for paying too much attention to military strategy and not enough to postwar politics. But at Yalta and elsewhere in intercourse with Stalin, Roosevelt acted with the knowledge, very realistic knowledge, that the United Nations or a similar organization could not function without Stalin's participation. Finally, such was deployment of forces, that Stalin had immediate access to the controversial areas which he would have occupied in any case. As Ambassador Bohlen concluded:

> . . . It cannot be said that Yalta was a success, but, as I wrote earlier, there are no grounds for supposing that it was the folly or the weakness of the Western powers which made this true. The map of Europe would look exactly the same as it does today if there had never been a Yalta Conference.[42]

How many, if any, of the Yalta decisions were passed by Stalin to Mao Tse-tung is not known. Chiang Kai-shek was not consulted, only because his senior councils were so riddled with spies that Tokyo would

40. W. C. Bullitt, "A Report to the American People on China," *Life*, October 13, 1947.
41. Lohbeck, op. cit.
42. Bohlen, op. cit.

have learned all.[43] Ambassador Hurley informed Chiang of the agreement in June 1945. Chiang ". . . seemed disappointed but not upset"[44] and began planning for appropriate talks with Russia.

At this time, Nationalist-Communist talks were still in progress under Hurley's aegis. Whether Mao ever intended to join the Nationalist government is not known; he probably would have, had circumstances warranted this interim measure. But he was in no hurry to do so. In Chungking, his trusted and most able lieutenant, Chou En-lai, at once had recognized and defined divisive influences surrounding Chiang, news welcome to Mao. Stilwell's abrupt departure and Chiang's subsequent failure to cleanse his military stables (much less his house of government) also contrasted with Communist army strength, daily growing more powerful. In April 1945, General Chu Teh, its commander-in-chief, reported to the Seventh Party Congress, in Yenan, a regular army strength of nearly one million, augmented by a militia of well over two million, an organization devoted to bringing ". . . Mao's revolution to almost 100 million peasants living in the plains, valleys, and mountains of North China."[45]

43. USDS-China, *supra.*

44. Leopold, op. cit.; see also Wedemeyer, op. cit., who was present and who credits Chiang with a more severe reaction.

45. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*

Chapter 51

Conflict in policy: the China question • Hurley and Stalin • Kennan's warning • Truman's inaction • The military position: Nationalists versus Reds • Postwar political situation • American marines land • Chiang occupies Manchuria • The Communist presence • Early clashes • Hurley's resignation • The Marshall mission • Fighting breaks out • Chiang's continued complacency • Marshall's warning • Limited Nationalist gains • Nationalist morale crumbles • Communist guerrilla offensives • The Wedemeyer mission • His analysis and recommendations • William Bullitt's accusations • His "domino" theory • Chiang's continued demands • Lin Piao's "Seventh Offensive" • Mao's guerrilla tactics • Chiang loses Manchuria • Mao moves south • The final debacle • American failure to analyze Chiang's defeat

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S DEATH and ensuing confusion in Washington played directly into Chinese Communist hands by prolonging and even intensifying the divisive nature of American policy. When Harry Truman became President, in April 1945, three distinct schools of thought existed among concerned officials in China.

The first might be called the Stilwell syndrome: the continuing effort, mainly by Department of State representatives, both in the Chungking embassy and in Wedemeyer's headquarters, to make common cause with Mao's Communists for two reasons: first to more effectively fight the Japanese; second to force Chiang into political, economic, and military reforms by suggesting that the soft rug of American support could be pulled from under him to leave him standing on the cold floor of reality. Some powerful non-Communist Chinese political leaders agreed with this policy, as did many knowledgeable American military officers and most American journalists in the area.[1]

1. U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States—Diplomatic Papers 1945—Volume VII—The Far East—China* (Washington: U. S. Gov-

Ambassador Hurley did not agree, and succeeded in having leading proponents of military co-operation variously transferred and even persecuted. He emphasized his attitude in January 1945, when the Communist general, Chu Teh, asked for a loan of $20 million in U.S. currency in order to procure ". . . the defection of officers and men of the Chinese puppet government and for use in encouraging sabotage and demolition work by puppet troops behind the Japanese lines." Hurley turned this down: ". . . I am of the firm opinion that such help would be identical to supplying arms to the Communist armed Party [sic] and would, therefore, be a dangerous precedent. . . ." In Washington a month later, he vigorously opposed powerful arguments of his chargé d'affaires, George Atcheson, to furnish arms and supply to the Communists.[2]

Hurley himself was actively pursuing a conciliation policy that he believed was going to result in amalgamation of Nationalist and Communist forces. He had convinced himself that the Chinese problem was totally internal—this primarily the result of an earlier conference with Molotov, who promised to back Chiang Kai-shek's government—and that he, good fellow, could bring about a working conciliation between the two major power factions. A meeting with Stalin in April 1945 confirmed his belief. The Russian leader, as Hurley reported to Washington,

> . . . wished us to know that we would have his complete support in immediate action for the unification of the armed forces of China with full recognition of the National Government under the leaderhip of Chiang Kai-shek. In short, Stalin agreed unqualifiedly to America's [Hurley's] policy in China as outlined to him during this conversation.[3]

Hurley's naïveté frightened among others the American chargé d'affaires in Moscow, George Kennan. Kennan had studied the Russians and their language for years and now cabled Ambassador Harriman, who had returned to Washington at President Roosevelt's death:

> . . . There was, of course, nothing in Ambassador Hurley's account of what he told Stalin to which Stalin could not honestly subscribe, it being understood that to the Russians words mean different things than they do to us. Stalin is of course prepared to affirm the principle of unifying the armed forces of China. He knows that unification is feasible in a practical sense only on conditions which are acceptable to the Chinese Communist Party. . . .
>
> Actually I am persuaded that in the future Soviet policy respecting China will continue what it has been in the recent past: a fluid resilient policy directed at the achievement of maximum power with minimum responsibility

ernment Printing Office, 1969). Hereafter cited as USDS-Foreign Relations China (1945); see also USDS-China, *supra.*

2. USDS-China, *supra.*
3. Lohbeck, op. cit.

on portions of the Asiatic continent lying beyond the Soviet border. This will involve the exertion of pressure in various areas in direct proportion to their strategic importance and their proximity to the Soviet frontier. . . .

After detailing what he believed to be specific Soviet aims, Kennan concluded:

. . . It would be tragic if our natural anxiety for the support of the Soviet Union at this juncture, coupled with Stalin's use of words which mean all things to all people and his cautious affability, were to lead us into an undue reliance on Soviet aid or even Soviet acquiescence in the achievement of our long-term objectives in China.[4]

Both Harriman and Secretary of State Edward Stettinius took this prescient warning to heart and attempted to impress Hurley with the complexity of the situation, including its perils:

. . . Mr. Harriman feared that Ambassador Hurley might give Chiang Kai-shek an "over-optimistic account of his conversations with Stalin" and he thought it might be advisable to suggest to General Hurley that he should be careful "not to arouse unfounded expectations. . . ."[5]

Albert Wedemeyer would have heartily applauded this advice. Unlike Hurley, with whom he had been quarreling for some time, the American general saw the greatest danger in postwar Russian moves and was convinced that the Kremlin ". . . sought from the outset to wreck the Nationalist Government" through its control of Chinese Communists. Primarily for this reason, he agreed with Hurley that America should not furnish arms and supply to the Communists (although on the occasion of a severe epidemic he did send Yenan eleven tons of medical supplies).[6] In March 1945, John Vincent of the Chungking embassy, tried to persuade Wedemeyer to supply the Communists with arms:

. . . General Wedemeyer refused to be a part of the State Department scheme—replying that while he did not have enough information to make a definite answer as to the possible usefulness of the Communist troops against Japan, he was against the idea of building up the Communists' strength. And General Wedemeyer, in helping to clarify the confusion over the actual military power of the Chinese Communists, "discussed the Chinese military problems with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on March 27, 1945. They were all of the opinion that the rebellion in China could be put down by comparatively small assistance to Chiang's Central Government."[7]

4. Ibid.; see also George F. Kennan, *Memoirs* (London: Hutchinson, 1968).
5. Lohbeck, op. cit.
6. Wedemeyer, op. cit.
7. Lohbeck, op. cit.

A very harassed President Truman bought bits and pieces from each of the three schools. While willing to accept the State Department's expressed long-range goal, ". . . the establishment of a strong and united China as a necessary principal stabilizing factor in the Far East," he also made it clear that if Nationalists wanted American help they would have to carry out overdue reforms, not to mention fighting the Japanese.

In essence, then, Truman merely continued an already unsatisfactory policy, whose pragmatism remained subservient to its poverty. Like Foch in 1918, he should have walked in his garden and asked himself: *De quoi s'agit-il* (Just what is the problem)? The problem obviously was an intractable Chiang Kai-shek, whose external power position derived in part from strategic factors, in part from conflicting American policy with a strong emotional bias.

The end of the war would solve the strategic aspect. The policy aspect was the difficult one, and such were the ponderous and complex factors that perhaps a complete solution did not exist. A partial solution could have resulted, however, by twisting loose threads of executive policy into a rope or even a noose with which to confront Chiang Kai-shek.

Truman did nothing of the kind. While summer months spun away, one branch of his power maintained diplomatic dalliance with Chinese Communists, whose strength was and remained space-time-will; another paid court to Chiang, who, also reassured by the powerful China lobby in Washington, remained confident of continuing American support; a third, in the form of Pat Hurley, kept buzzing from one camp to another like some kind of crazy bee gathering in meaningless political pollen.

The situation screamed for dynamic action; the administration replied by mediocrity, best expressed by one of Wedemeyer's reports in the final days of the war:

> . . . Based on [my] limited knowledge, neither the Chinese Communist Party nor the Kuomintang is democratic in spirit, or in intentions. China is not prepared for a democratic form of government with 95 per cent of her people illiterate and for many other cogent reasons. The inarticulate masses of China desire peace and are not particularly interested in or aware of the various ideologies represented. An opportunity to work, to obtain food and clothing for their families and a happy peaceful environment are their primary concern.
>
> Conditions here could best be handled by a benevolent despot or a military dictator, whether such dictator be a Communist or a Kuomintang matters very little. From my observation practically all Chinese officials are interested in their selfish aggrandizement. I retain the impression that the Generalissimo's friendship offers best opportunity at this time for stabilization in the area, political and economic.[8]

8. Harry S. Truman, *Year of Decisions 1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1955).

If astute American officials were not pleased with Chiang Kai-shek's inept government, very few, if any, thought in the confused summer and autumn of 1945 that China would ever fall under Mao Tse-tung's control. Most observers agreed that the talks engineered and steered by Ambassador Hurley between Nationalists and Communists would lead eventually to coalition government. When these talks terminated, in September, and the first military skirmishes developed in northern China and Manchuria, informed persons spoke in terms of temporary suspension, not war.

Nor did the first shooting incidents create panic. In numbers, Chiang held a comfortable military balance. By war's end, the Nationalist army numbered around three million men, and would soon increase. Despite deficiencies noted by Stilwell and others, this army included five divisions equipped and trained by Stilwell's India command, two of them having proved themselves in combat. In addition, Chiang's army included some twenty-five divisions trained and equipped by the American military mission at Kunming, and some of these were also battle tested.

Chiang's modern divisions contained artillery, armor, transport, and communication units, and, thanks to Stilwell's teachings and Wedemeyer's various reforms, had attained a degree of operational sophistication undreamed by either Nationalist or Communist commanders. Chiang also possessed an air force of about eight groups, with a pool of some five thousand American-trained pilots. Finally, Chiang knew that the Western horn of plenty would continue spewing forth dollars and airplanes and guns and tanks and bullets and food to help him achieve stable postwar government.

Mao Tse-tung, by comparison, was a poor relation. His army may have numbered around a million, but it remained essentially a guerrilla force that lacked small arms and supply in all categories, let alone supporting arms, such as armor, artillery, and aircraft. Nor did Mao's prospects for substantial aid seem great. In the treaty signed between Nationalist China and Russia in August, Stalin promised to support Chiang's government, and, at this stage, he did not seem to be going out of his way to help Mao. In refuting Kuomintang claims believed or at least reported by some American officials, Ambassador Hurley, as late as December 6, 1945, ". . . told the Foreign Relations Committee that the Chinese Communists were not getting help from Moscow."[9]

On paper, then, the numerical balance favored Chiang—a later State Department estimate suggested a ". . . five to one superiority in combat troops and in rifles. . . ."[10] In the minds of Chiang and his closest Kuomintang advisers, elimination of the Japanese threat had brought back the problem of the early thirties: suppression of Communist ban-

9. Leopold, op. cit.; see also Lohbeck, op. cit.: Hurley later changed his mind.
10. USDS-China, *supra.*

dits. That the problem's dimensions had drastically altered, Chiang refused to admit. And, despite Wedemeyer's warnings, he also refused to repair deficiencies in government and army. In autumn of 1945, he displayed even greater arrogance of ignorance than formerly. He fancied himself much stronger than he was, the Communists much weaker than they were. With considerable optimism, even elation, he insisted on occupying not only northern China but all of Manchuria as rapidly as American planes and ships could move his armies.

The Japanese surrender had found Nationalists unprepared to move forces rapidly to major cities in central and northern China, there to reassert governmental authority and to begin the immense task of repatriating nearly four million Japanese soldiers and civilians.

After appealing successfully to the Americans for transportation, Chiang forbade Chinese Communists to accept surrender of Japanese arms. In turn, General Douglas MacArthur ordered Japanese units *not* to surrender to Chinese Communists. Simultaneously, an impressive American airlift carried three Nationalist armies to key points in eastern and northern China, including Shanghai, Nanking, and Peiping. Wedemeyer asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for seven U.S. divisions ". . . in order to create a barrier through North China and Manchuria against Soviet Russia."[11] Not having seven divisions available, the JCS sent a U. S. Marine Corps task force of about fifty thousand troops, which landed in October ". . . and occupied Peiping, Tientsin, and the coal mines to the north, together with the essential railroads in the area. . . ."[12] Ostensibly landed to accept surrender of Japan's North China Army on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek and to start repatriation of Japanese nationals, the marine force in reality attempted to deny the area to Communist influence—an impossible task in view of its limited numbers and of Communist organizational strength in the countryside.

The sad truth was that none of these measures had frightened Mao Tse-tung, any more than had Chiang's paper strength. While peace talks continued with Nationalists, Mao sent units by forced marches to northern China and Manchuria. Some Japanese units voluntarily surrendered to these on-the-spot forces; others resisted in at least token fashion. In northern China, Communists soon controlled most of the countryside and, from that power position, began claiming control of most railroads. Incidents, including quite serious skirmishes, now began between Communist forces and Nationalist-American forces.

Largely because of Chiang's weakness in northern China, Wedemeyer had vigorously objected to his occupation of Manchuria, arguing that Chiang could not afford to move there until he had consolidated

11. Wedemeyer, op. cit.
12. USDS-China, *supra*.

his position in northern China. Wedemeyer argued primarily on logistic grounds. The problem of maintaining large forces a thousand miles north loomed enormous in its own right; add the possibility of Communist interdiction of vital lines of communication and, as Wedemeyer foresaw, a formula emerged for potential disaster. Instead, he wanted Chiang to arrange a five-power guardianship over Manchuria by the United States, Great Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union, and send ". . . his best administrators as well as military leaders to North China, south of the Great Wall, to insure that his control there would be firmly established."[13]

Chiang's complacence forbade compliance. He insisted on sticking to his overly ambitious plan, and the American Government very foolishly acquiesced. After delay caused by procuring cold-weather clothing from Alaska and by inoculating troops, American planes and ships began lifting Chinese armies into Manchuria, an impressive effort that involved nearly half a million men.[14]

Meanwhile, under terms of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements and the Sino-Soviet treaty, Soviet troops had occupied Manchuria and had accepted the surrender there of Japanese forces. The agreement called for the Soviets to remain for three months. But such was the delay in deploying Nationalist armies, that, in November, Chiang asked Stalin to extend his occupation. Stalin gladly agreed—his locustlike minions were stripping Manchuria's industrial plants, nor did the Soviet dictator object to Chinese Communists rapidly infiltrating the area.

Whether the Chinese Communist move accorded with Stalin's wishes is a moot question, despite later assertions by a vociferous American faction who endeavored to paint a black-and-white picture of a scene fraught with nuance and subtlety. Some evidence exists that Mao acted independently and presented Stalin with a *fait accompli* which he may not have welcomed, but which he could not reverse.

Whatever the case, when the Japanese surrendered, Mao had sent an army to Manchuria by forced marches across Jehol. Commanded by capable Lin Piao, this force had two targets: one, the cities and all-important Japanese arms dumps; the other, the countryside and all-important peasants who would bear arms to make a new field army.

No question exists that Chinese Communists acquired Japanese arms. If the Russians tried to deny them access to dumps, they didn't try very hard. An American army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rigg, who was assistant military attaché in China, was in Manchuria at this time. In Changchun, a Soviet officer in charge of one of these depots told him that Chinese Communists had attacked. ". . . We shot at them, but our

13. Wedemeyer, op. cit.
14. USDS-China, *supra.*

guards were too few. They were overwhelmed and had to flee." Colonel Rigg ". . . found little variance to this pattern. The Soviets placed a few guards over arms depots; but they were always 'attacked.' . . . Whether the Chinese were invited to attack at a given time I cannot verify, but the results were always the same. The Reds of China got the arms. . . ."[15]

The Reds of China were getting more than arms. A large part of Lin Piao's effort went to recruiting peasants for his new army. This effort prospered for the same reasons as earlier Communist successes: a simple "pitch" that exploited existing grievances and offered immediate and visible reforms. Lin's soldiers also treated peasants with a consideration that contrasted, as in the past, with the rapacious performance of Nationalists, who soon began arriving in large numbers. Wedemeyer had feared precisely this development. One of his reasons for trying to steer Chiang away from Manchuria was

> . . . his conviction that National Government abuses and malpractices had already created serious discontent among the local population in areas taken over from the Japanese, and even this soon after the end of the war against Japan had seriously alienated a considerable amount of sympathy for the National Government.[16]

As the build-up of Communist and Nationalist troops continued in Manchuria and northern China, serious clashes began to end Western hopes for coalition settlement. The Cassandra tone of Wedemeyer's final reports on Nationalist combat efficiency deepened Washington gloom. Although Hurley had succeeded in forging a Nationalist-Communist agreement that, in October, he told Truman ". . . promised to lead to true peace in China," his own behavior grew increasingly morbid. For months, he had been complaining of slights by State Department officials as well as impugning the loyalty of certain of his Chungking subordinates. Instead of returning to China, as he promised Truman, he suddenly resigned and, on November 27, delivered a speech at the National Press Club that, in Truman's words, attacked ". . . the administration, the State Department, our foreign policy and me personally."[17]

Truman now appointed a special representative with personal rank of ambassador, the recently retired and extremely able General of the Army George C. Marshall, to try to negotiate a peace.

Despite Wedemeyer's gloomy prognostications, Marshall succeeded in bringing both sides to the conference table, where Mao's representative, Chou En-lai, ". . . acknowledged the leadership of Chiang Kai-

15. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*
16. USDS-China, *supra.*
17. Truman, op. cit.; see also Acheson, op. cit.

shek and disavowed any desire to establish a separate government."[18] This favorable beginning unfortunately meant very little. When it came to working out participation in a government, each side remained intransigent. Chiang, his confidence increased by a series of minor military victories in early 1946, demanded full control of Manchuria prior to initiating legislative reforms; Mao Tse-tung, aware that his own power was growing daily in the area, refused to accede.

While talks continued, clashes between the two armies grew more frequent and severe. In March, the Russians transferred garrison areas to Nationalists and withdrew their forces. Active fighting set in.

Although Marshall arranged another cease-fire, in spring of 1946, he was holding two tigers by the tail and finally had to let go. His failure did not surprise Wedemeyer, who had originally warned

> . . . that he would never be able to effect a working arrangement between the Communists and Nationalists, since the Nationalists, who still had most of the power, were determined not to relinquish one iota of it, while the Communists for their part were equally determined to seize all power, with the aid of the Soviet Union.[19]

Wedemeyer returned to America in April 1946, critical of administration policy and scornful of Marshall's efforts. In July, Marshall received a rather more helpful associate in the person of Dr. J. Leighton Stuart, the newly appointed American ambassador.

At this stage, neither Stuart nor anyone else seemingly could disturb Chiang Kai-shek's complacency. On the military front, Marshall warned him that he was not winning in Manchuria, that, at best, Nationalists ". . . were holding their own while draining away those forces needed to hold China proper."[20] To a high-ranking government official,

> . . . General Marshall emphasized that the tactics being followed by the Government were such that in its efforts to prevent communism the Government was creating conditions favorable for a Communist regime. He cited as an example the existing financial and economic situation which would be made more serious by continuation of military operations and added that civil war, accompanied by economic chaos, would provide fruitful breeding grounds for communism.[21]

Chiang refused to respect Marshall's views and also vigorously rebutted a strong warning by President Truman to settle the problem by negotiation and not force. When Chiang opened an offensive in northern China in the autumn, Truman placed a limited embargo on arms shipments to China. Despite these and other measures, the Communists

18. Leopold, op. cit.
19. Wedemeyer, op. cit.
20. Harrison, op. cit.
21. USDS-China, *supra.*

openly accused Marshall of belonging to Chiang's camp. In November, Chou En-lai returned to Yenan, and, in December, Marshall returned to America and, shortly after, became secretary of state.

Marshall delivered a final warning to Chiang Kai-shek: In his opinion, the Communists were too powerful to be eliminated by military force alone; in view of current Nationalist military expenditure—about 70 per cent of the total government budget—the country would face economic collapse before eliminating the Communists. Chiang replied that he would exterminate the Communists in from eight to ten months.[22]

For a time, Nationalist armies seemed to give the lie to Marshall's warnings. In winter of 1946–47, they incontestably held major cities of northern China and Manchuria; in March 1947, a Nationalist offensive in northern China captured a number of Communist-held towns, including the capital, Yenan.

But these gains proved dangerously illusory, as stated in a report by Ambassador Stuart:

> . . . Although the Government claims it routed over 100,000 Communist troops, this appears to be a gross exaggeration since American observers during the return of Communist mediation personnel reported the virtual evacuation of Yenan. It has long been apparent that the Communists have prepared well for this eventuality and that they never had any real intention of defending Yenan should such action appear to be costly. Rather it is more in keeping with their long developed tactics to evacuate any given point in the face of enemy pressure, draw him into a pocket, and thereafter gradually sap his strength with guerrilla tactics. Furthermore, Government lines are seriously extended into territory which can be counted upon to be hostile in all respects.[23]

Sadly, Chiang and his principal advisers either would not or could not recognize the true nature of this war. Nationalist armies in Manchuria and northern China behaved like conquerors, looting and raping virtually at will. Local commanders used puppet troops and even Japanese troops in carrying out the occupation. Professor Harrison wrote that

> . . . in the countryside the Kuomintang returned the land titles of the landlords and permitted them to demand impossible back rents and interests for the years they had been absent. In addition, returning officials attempted to collect back taxes for the years of Japanese occupation. No actions could

22. Ibid.: Widespread optimism infested the Chinese military high command. Chiang's chief of staff publicly claimed that the Communists would be defeated in six months; Chiang himself told Ambassador Stuart that ". . . by the end of August or the beginning of September the Communist forces would either be annihilated or driven into the far hinterland."

23. Ibid.

have been more calculated to enrage the peasants and throw them into the waiting arms of the Communists.[24]

Nepotism, corruption, and inefficiency continued to infest top-heavy officer ranks already torn with intense jealousy and internecine feuds. Dr. Griffith has pointed out that, in Manchuria, ". . . General Tu Yu-ming, commander in chief of the North-east Combat Command, did not speak, except officially, to General Hsiung Shih-hui, Chiang's administrator of this vast area." At a time when running the elusive enemy to ground called for most-carefully co-ordinated operations, the army was disintegrating into a welter of feuding factions, and American advisers could not persuade Chiang to relieve incompetent generals who were friends in favor of competent leaders whom he did not trust.[25] As early as spring of 1946, ". . . entire companies and battalions of provincial troops" had begun to defect to the Communists; in October an entire Nationalist division went over to the enemy.[26] Morale plunged further when Nationalist armies cooped themselves in the cities for winter—what Chiang called "sitting the enemy to death,"[27] but what proved to be the death warrant of his own armies.

On the other hand, and contrary to Kuomintang belief, attrition warfare suited the enemy, whose forces had grown remarkably strong in Manchuria, primarily the result of incessant political effort that exploited Nationalist weaknesses. In early 1947, Lin Piao assumed command of a new People's Liberation Army. In April, he began attacking small Nationalist garrisons throughout Manchuria; in May, his Fifth Offensive forced almost all Nationalist garrisons in Manchuria on the defensive. At month's end, the American consul general at Mukden reported that deteriorating Nationalist morale was a

> . . . matter of wide public knowledge and talk. It is reflected in jumpy nerves of military garrisons, efforts to evade conscription, and reliable information from all sectors of Nationalist territory (including points distant from current fighting) indicating that Nationalists in a panicky state are feverishly building trench systems everywhere with only "Maginot" defense strategy in mind. There is good evidence that apathy, resentment, and defeatism are spreading fast in Nationalist ranks causing surrenders and desertions. . . .
>
> This does not mean Manchurian collapse is necessarily imminent. It does mean, however, that Nationalist morale has reached a point where there is the possibility of a sudden debacle laying all Manchuria open to the Communists whenever they choose to take it. . . .[28]

24. Harrison, op. cit.
25. Griffith (CPLA), *supra;* see also USDS-China, *supra:* the reports of Major General Barr are particularly informative.
26. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*
27. Schurmann, op. cit. (Vol. 2).
28. USDS-China, *supra.*

By autumn, Communists virtually controlled the area, with exception of isolated Nationalist garrisons in the big cities. Meanwhile, other Communist forces, in northern China, were striking at Chiang's lines of communication, primarily railways, as Wedemeyer had foreseen. The deteriorating situation had caused President Truman to send General Wedemeyer as his personal ambassador to make still another survey. The Wedemeyer Mission reached China in July 1947.

Wedemeyer did not like what he found, and he took the unusual step of saying so in an address the following month to Chiang Kai-shek, his ministers, and the State Council. Wedemeyer told his listeners that, due to inefficiency and corruption at all civil and military levels, they had lost the opportunity for military victory and now had to fight an insurgency situation with political and economic means. The American general laid his adverse conclusions on the line in terms of Stilwellian candor reinforced by chilling accuracy:

> . . . I believe that the Chinese Communist movement cannot be defeated by the employment of force. Today China is being invaded by an idea instead of strong military forces from the outside. The only way in my opinion to combat this idea successfully is to do so with another idea that will have stronger appeal and win the support of the people. This means that politically and economically the Central Government will have to remove corruption and incompetence from its ranks in order to provide justice and equality and to protect the personal liberties of the Chinese people, particularly of the peasants. To recapitulate, the Central Government cannot defeat the Chinese Communists by the employment of force, but can only win the loyal, enthusiastic, and realistic support of the masses of the people by improving the political and economic situation immediately. The effectiveness and timeliness of these improvements will determine in my opinion whether or not the Central Government will stand or fall before the Communist onslaught.[29]

Since General Marshall had repeatedly warned Chiang of this eventuality, the Chinese president could not have been very surprised. His advisers were suitably insulted, however—all stage play, for they held no intention of putting matters right.

Wedemeyer privately advised Truman to end the fighting by United Nations intervention and work out some sort of international trustee arrangement in Manchuria—as he had recommended to Chiang in 1945. He also recommended ". . . a bold program of military and economic support, lasting at least five years . . . [and] contingent upon Chiang's promise to initiate sweeping political and social reforms."[30]

Scarcely had administration officials in Washington digested Wedemeyer's pessimism than a new crisis exploded in a government already

29. Ibid.
30. Leopold, op. cit.

shaken by Greek and European crises. In October 1947, *Life* magazine published a long and explosive article, "A Report to the American People on China." Its special correspondent was a fifty-six-year-old one-time American ambassador to the Soviet Union, William C. Bullitt.[31]

Bullitt's long article deserves considerable attention, because it reflected the thinking of the China lobby in Washington and because certain of its points scored with such Republican leaders as Senator Vandenberg and John Foster Dulles, who made China a prominent issue in the 1948 presidential campaign.

Bullitt followed a scare opening with a flattering account of Chiang's political acumen and a highly critical précis of Roosevelt's wartime diplomacy. To anyone familiar with the record, Bullitt's bias came as no surprise: A one-time intimate of Roosevelt, he had been dropped from 1940 onward to the extent that, in 1944, he became a major in the Free French army under De Gaulle. After the war, he unsuccessfully tried to reinsinuate himself into government. In 1947, the Republican party and Henry Luce found him a convenient device by which to break the pre-election storm.

They made a good choice. Writing of the Yalta agreements, Bullitt thundered: ". . . No more unnecessary, disgraceful, and potentially disastrous document has ever been signed by a President of the U.S." The clauses relating to Manchuria, the writer told his readers, represented a plot by Stalin to gain eventual control not only of Manchuria but of all China. General Marshall's postwar success in gaining a cease-fire, Bullitt went on, played into Soviet hands by giving Chinese Communists time to replace Soviet forces in Manchuria. Truman's embargo on further arms shipments to Chiang ". . . resulted in disarming our friends while the Soviet Union was arming our enemies." Unless America took prompt action, Chiang would lose Manchuria and ". . . a course of events fatal to China would follow."

Bullitt wanted Truman to release vast quantities of non-essential arms and supply, including aircraft, to Chiang and also to grant credits of $450 million a year for a minimum of three years ". . . to break the vicious circle of Chinese inflation. . . ." He then recommended an eighteen-point reform program (which would have warmed Stilwell's heart). Bullitt, who knew virtually nothing about China, told readers, ". . . A program of this sort would unquestionably be popular throughout China, and with some American assistance it can be carried out." In the past, wrote Bullitt:

. . . Too many Americans, clothed with a little brief authority, when they go to China confuse the might, majesty, power and dominion of the U.S. with their own personalities and talk down to Chinese who, in truth as men,

31. Bullitt, op. cit.

are their superiors. In the pages of history Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek bulks larger than any living American. . . .

In Bullitt's opinion, the only American with sufficient ". . . military knowledge, political skill, and personal magnitude to organize such co-operation" was General MacArthur:

. . . The General would not have to abandon his work in Japan. He could divide his time between Tokyo and Nanking. . . . He could establish rapidly with the Generalissimo the relation of two comrades in a front-line trench. . . .

Bullitt ended his article with a "domino" prediction as frightening as it was inaccurate:

. . . If China falls into the hands of Stalin [!], all Asia, including Japan, sooner or later will fall into his hands. The manpower and resources of Asia will be mobilized against us. The independence of the U.S. will not live a generation longer than the independence of China.

Bullitt's understanding of the guerrilla problem was even more muddled, but it was particularly significant, since he stated that MacArthur's ". . . military, economic, and political proposals might well be those outlined in this report." Bullitt was plainly puzzled by actual fighting, which

. . . in no way resembles warfare of the sort that our troops experienced in Europe in either World War. The Communists use guerrilla tactics, moving swiftly and attacking at night, hiding in villages and resting in the daytime. An observer in a plane may fly low over hundreds of miles of territory in North China and Manchuria through which these guerrillas are scattered and never see a single soldier or the slightest evidence of troop movement. At dusk the Communists assemble, march fast towards their objective, often covering as much as twenty miles, and strike in the night. They are attempting to bring down the government not by destroying its armed forces [!] but by wrecking the economic life of the country. Hence they do not hesitate to burn towns and villages, destroy railroads, and blow up industrial installations, such as power plants, which they cannot carry away.

The government armies attempting to protect cities, towns and villages are for the most part tied down to fixed points. They move more slowly than the Communists and often when they attack they find that the Communists have quietly withdrawn in the night. . . .

In Bullitt's opinion, ". . . to drive out of Manchuria the 350,000 Communists will require the training and equipment in the American manner of ten new divisions." While proposed reforms were eliminating

"all graft" from the Chinese army, ". . . American military men can and should run the service of supply in Manchuria." In northern China,

> . . . where the Communists hold no large cities and are essentially raiders, the problem is one of cornering and capturing guerrillas. For this purpose light-armed, fast-moving troops are needed, equipped with jeeps, half-tracks, light trucks, small arms, machine guns, and 75s [75-mm. pack howitzers]. The estimates of the ablest American and Chinese officers who have studied this problem indicate that twenty divisions of such troops should be able to clean up North China. . . .

Both Bullitt's and Wedemeyer's suggestions for political, economic and military reforms read sensibly enough, except that they were all old hat. Stilwell had started citing them in 1942, his words repeated and embroidered by Hurley, Wedemeyer himself, and Marshall, not to mention their deputies, civil and military, as well as a host of important visiting firemen. All had told Chiang that he must ". . . initiate sweeping political and social [and military] reforms" and had been ceremoniously promised that this would happen.

But it never happened—and, in view of Chiang's severe limitations, possibly it never could have happened. President Truman, who has been severely criticized for inaction during this period, was being more realistic than his critics. American observers were reporting that lack of arms and supply was least of Chiang's problems. He was already receiving substantial financial aid—since Japan's surrender, he had received a good portion of what eventually would total two billion dollars, and this did not include another billion dollars' worth of arms.[32]

Although Truman refused to be stampeded, Chiang continued to demand increased aid; Republican voices such as Dewey's echoed Chiang, and, in December, Congress rebuked the President by voting a specific $338-million appropriation for China as part of the European aid bill.[33] In a new year's address to his country, Chiang promised that the "Communist bandits" would be eliminated within a year.

Neither money nor words provided the answer. Nothing short of dynamite could have blasted Nationalist armies from rotting to pieces in their city-islands. While Congress was voting dollars, Lin Piao, commanding an army of about 320,000, struck out in the "Seventh Offensive," designed to eliminate the few remaining connecting points between Nationalist-held cities. In northern China, Communist guerrilla units commanded by Nieh Jung-chen and P'eng Teh-huai, though outnumbered three to one, ". . . found ample opportunity to cut communications, attack weak detachments, and otherwise punish isolated Nationalist forces."[34] Farther south, Communist guerrillas were well on

32. Acheson, op. cit.
33. Leopold, op. cit.
34. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*

their way to dominating railway lines essential to support of northern China and Manchuria garrisons.

Early in the new year, Lin Piao began the siege of Mukden. In March, Chiang's American military adviser, Major General David Barr, sensed disaster and recommended "progressive withdrawal" of Nationalist forces from Manchuria. Chiang refused to consider this, nor would he concentrate forces by evacuating the important northern garrisons into Mukden.[35] Throughout spring and summer, Communists continued encircling tactics. Nationalist morale continued to deteriorate, with Communists enjoying increasing defections from Nationalist garrisons. In final battles that autumn, entire regiments and divisions laid down arms. Chinchow fell in mid-October, Changchun and Mukden soon after. By early November, Communists controlled all of Manchuria. Chiang had lost some thirty-three divisions—over 320,000 men, in General Barr's words ". . . the finest soldiers the Government had. . . ."[36] Eighty-five per cent of these units were equipped with the best American weapons: Rifles, machine guns, mortars, artillery, radios—all went to Lin Piao's guerrillas.

Mao turned now to two tasks: the conquest of northern China and, simultaneously, a push into the Yangtze Valley. Each battle area favored his tactics. In the North, as in Manchuria, Nationalist city garrisons lent themselves to isolation and attack. Farther south, Chiang insisted on defending along the railway line east and west of Hsuchow. American advisers recommended the more natural line of the Hwai River, to the south. Chiang overruled them to deploy large army groups east and west of the city, itself defended by an enormous garrison that included Chiang's last major artillery and armor units.

Mao's commanders in the center and South had proved as adept as Lin Piao in applying standard Communist tactics. Beginning in late October, General Liu Po-ch'eng applied pressure to the western force while his columns snaked between army groups and garrison to interdict communications between defenders as well as between the battle area and the Yangtze. Simultaneously, General Ch'en Yi's army struck the eastern defenders, the Seventh Army Group.

By early November, the situation was so serious that General Barr recommended a fighting withdrawal of the Hsuchow garrison to the line of the Hwai. A few days later, Seventh Army Group surrendered to Ch'en Yi—". . . almost 90,000 officers and men; 1,000 howitzers, cannon, and mortars; and vast stores of other weapons, ammunition, and assorted matériel."[37] Despite this disaster, the battle of Hwai-Hai, fought by Chiang's last real army and involving over a million troops,

35. USDS-China, *supra.*
36. Ibid.
37. Griffith (CPLA), *supra.*

lasted sixty-five days before final Nationalist defeat. Chiang lost sixty-six divisions surrendered or destroyed.

With Nationalist armies shattered and Communists in control of China north of the Yangtze, the end was clearly in sight. General Barr's final reports put one in mind of Kierkegaard's pessimistic thought: ". . . The individual cannot help his age, he can only express that it is doomed." Barr concluded that only massive U.S. aid would ". . . enable the Nationalist Government to maintain a foothold in southern China against a determined Communist advance. . . . The complete defeat of the Nationalist army . . . is inevitable."[38]

Washington correctly translated "massive U.S. aid" to mean direct intervention, which, for a variety of reasons, President Truman would not consider. Although remnant Nationalist forces held the line of the Yangtze during winter 1948–49, Chiang had almost run out of time. Mao's knowledge of the favorable political situation only added to the tidal crest of victory. In April 1949, when his call for unconditional surrender and the trial of Chiang Kai-shek as a war criminal went unanswered, he ordered Ch'en's and Liu's victorious armies to cross the Yangtze.

By autumn, resistance had virtually vanished. On the first day of October, 1949, Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China. In early December, Chiang and the remnants of government and army slipped away to Formosa.

A number of factors hindered healthy analysis of the China disaster. The emotional and psychological impact of Nationalist China's defeat reverberated throughout the West. Coming on the heels of Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb, in September 1949, it seemed to many good citizens to portend disaster. Convictions of Alger Hiss for perjury and of Klaus Fuchs for atomic espionage, early in 1950, added to general gloom.

Fear began to fill otherwise-rational minds.

Instead of objective study of complex issues raised by the administration's White Paper on China, published in August 1949, influential portions of the American public turned to the deceptively simple but politically powerful thesis that a small group of diplomats and army officers was responsible for "the loss of China"—a thesis so successfully developed by that great American shame Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Minds that refused fear, cooler and calmer minds, which, under normal circumstances, would have examined Chiang's defeat analytically, continued to be burdened with domestic and international crises that culminated in the outbreak of the Korean War, in June 1950.

Thus it was that the fall of the House of Chiang produced a disastrous

38. USDS-China, *supra.*

rubble of conflicting and generally erroneous conclusions in American political and military circles. Although a few observers bravely insisted on the ingenuity of Mao Tse-tung's revolutionary strategy and tactics, almost no one probed beneath the wreckage to discover precisely what had happened in Mao's camp.

And such was the impact of the crash, such the emotional outbursts and almost panic-stricken air, that only a superficial correlation emerged between the civil war in China and guerrilla actions being fought in Greece, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaya—and French Indochina.

Failure to study each of these actions in its own right and to identify common and peculiar characteristics, simply added to the general ignorance that traditionally had surrounded guerrilla war.

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ROBERT B. ASPREY

WAR in the Shadows

THE GUERRILLA IN HISTORY

VOLUME TWO

WAR IN THE SHADOWS

The Guerrilla in History

By Robert B. Asprey

Volume II

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Volume II

PART THREE

Ho . . . Ho . . . Ho Chi Minh

. . . Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin are the common teachers for the world revolution. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has skilfully "Sinicized" the ideology of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, correctly applied it to the practical situation of China, and has led the Chinese Revolution to complete victory.

Owing to geographical, historical, economic, and cultural conditions, the Chinese Revolution exerted a great influence on the Vietnamese revolution, which had to learn and indeed has learned many experiences from it.

HO CHI MINH

Chapter 52

A disrupted world • Soviet political aims • Western weaknesses • Communist-inspired insurrections • The Cominform • American reaction • Allied occupation of Vietnam • Conflict in the South • The French take over • The Chinese in the North • Ho Chi Minh's problems • His isolation • The French arrive in strength • Chinese exit • The French solution • Viet Minh opposition • Guerrilla warfare in the South • Trouble in the North • Outbreak of insurgency

NO WAR IN HISTORY solved so much and yet so little as World War II. No war so suddenly defeated ambitions of either victors or vanquished. No war opened such a Pandora's box, not to release winds but, rather, hurricanes of political, social, and economic change, which hurled existing structures into turmoil, confusion, and battle—what Cyril Falls, a lifelong student of warfare, has aptly called *sequelae*—morbid conditions following upon disease.[1]

In retrospect, the subsequent cold war between East and West is not difficult to understand. In 1945, however, the West held not the U.S.S.R. but Germany and Japan to be the real villains. Despite Stalin's increasing dissemblance and duplicity, still slight enough in view of the manifold problems on hand, at war's end sufficient of the Big Three spirit survived to kindle Western hopes for peace, a peace to be established and maintained by the new world body, the United Nations, supported alike by the Soviet Union and the United States.

1. Cyril Falls, *A Hundred Years of War* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1953).

Fundamental to these hopes was the conceit that Stalin would behave in the Western definition of a civilized manner—the legacy, in part, of President Roosevelt but a legacy buttressed by American monopoly of the atomic bomb. That Stalin could not so behave, that heritage, temperament, and environment precluded such behavior, was generally overlooked. Voltaire once said, ". . . When you speak with me, define your terms." Had Stalin and his treaty makers been so pressed, American statesmen might have discovered a variance in contract law, including pertinent definitions, between East and West. Unfortunately, American statesmen did not so press our stubborn ally. The shock, then, was almost as great as the conceit when, shortly after Axis defeat, the relationship between East and West began deteriorating.

The rot resulted primarily from two major Russian political aims. Stalin wanted to establish a protective insulation of Communist-controlled border areas and states stretching from Finland down the Baltic coast to Germany, then across Europe to the Balkans and east to China. Partly to help free his hand for this task (by keeping the West off balance), partly to pave the way for traditional Russian expansionist ambitions, and partly to exploit the appeal inherent in Marxist-Leninist political destinies, he also wanted to foment the spread of communism in various war-torn countries.

Stalin accomplished his first aim more easily than the second. Unburdened by conscience and in full control of his ravaged country's domestic and foreign policies, he skillfully utilized his own strength in exploiting Western weaknesses. Various allied conferences during the war had conceded Eastern Europe to the Soviet sphere of influence, and Stalin did not hesitate in using preponderant Soviet military presence to reap the harvest carefully sown by Communist guerrilla activity during the war.

A vigorous and unified West might have blunted Stalin's sword in immediate postwar years, but such did not exist. France, Italy, and Holland lay shattered, England exhausted, economically *in extremis,* none able to cope effectively with such severe problem areas as Indonesia and Palestine—areas the result of crumbling colonial empires, areas remote from Communist control yet frictionally convenient to Stalin's Communist cause. Neither President Truman nor other American leaders leaped to accept the challenge of international leadership being inexorably thrust on them, and certainly nothing in Harry Truman's past career had prepared him to meet the complexities of the situation.

Forced politically into hasty demobilization of the armed forces, the American President thenceforth bargained from the unusable strength of the atomic-bomb monopoly and from the awkward peacemaking machinery of the United Nations. When neither served him well, when Stalin virtually ignored the unspoken threat of the atomic bomb to define borders, reparations, elections, and governments in terms foreign to Western understanding, Truman's growls, reluctant at first, lacked

the teeth of either sufficient military presence or positive and determined policy, and he could find no effective voice in a temporarily strangled Europe.

Stalin's second goal, though more nebulous, complemented the first. To foment insurrection in various war-torn countries, the Soviet leader relied on local Communist guerrilla organizations. As we have seen, these included determined resistance fighters and those who scarcely fought at all. No matter the combat record, nearly all these indigenous forces ended the war with an effective and disciplined organization and with at least some arms and equipment—an insurrectionary capability strengthened both by chaotic and often anarchic local conditions and usually by carefully calculated and widely broadcast political appeals that subordinated Communist to nationalist aims.

Some readers will have forgotten the enormous threat posed by these forces in Europe alone. Not once, but several times, from 1946 to 1949, Communist movements threatened to capture the governments of France, Italy, and Austria. Their near success in Greece prompted the Truman Doctrine, of March 1947, the first of a series of drastic political, economic, and military measures that announced American determination to halt Soviet-inspired aggression, and that led ultimately to NATO and a relatively stabilized Europe.

But this healthful accomplishment did not stop Stalin from hanging the final drapes of the Iron Curtain. Nor did it prevent his pursuing the second aim elsewhere. He resembled, in these years, a skillful improvisator playing a political pipe organ. In Europe, he gave all support possible to local parties, and eventually established a restricted Comintern, the Cominform, for the long-range support task. In Greece, he played a waiting game; not only did he refuse to support the insurrection materially, but he did not hesitate to back away when the odds dramatically turned against it. In Manchuria, he offered partial, almost reluctant support to Chinese Communists. He did not support, at least materially, Communist insurrections in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaya, and he was careful with support in Vietnam.

Stalin nonetheless profited enormously from these activities, not least because of their continued demands on Western, and particularly American, resources. The United States was not prepared to cope with subtleties of political warfare. For a long period, she reacted rather than acted, dashing here and there like a delirious fire department confronted by a dozen professional arsonists. Forced to retain strong military forces in Europe while simultaneously reducing over-all military strength, she soon found herself overcommitted in trying to police the rest of the world. In time, this led to a serious weakening of so-called bastion areas such as Korea.

An important psychological element also entered. Desperately seeking friends to stem the Communist tide, the United States began to give military and economic aid to almost any declared anti-Communist gov-

ernment, some of which were decidedly reactionary if not totalitarian. Compounding this political anomaly, the U.S.A. was becoming increasingly tied to her European allies and, as one result, was slowly being forced to condone what amounted to colonial regimes in Southeast Asia. Soviet Communists naturally made capital propaganda from this, but that was to be expected. Far more serious: liberal and influential thinkers around the world began to contrast American foreign policy with her traditionally expressed libertarian ideals. In the U.S.A. itself, a divisive political movement began that would grow to serious rupture and, as a by-product, furnish excellent propaganda for Communist use.

Had basic assumptions of American foreign policy been correct, this would have provided no more than a temporary embarrassment easily absorbed by a country beginning to learn the truth of Admiral Mahan's somewhat cynical dictum: ". . . Defeat cries aloud for explanation; whereas success, like charity, covers a multitude of sins."

But fundamental to American foreign policy was the assumption of a Kuomintang-ruled China. When Chiang Kai-shek's government fell, in late 1949, American policy makers envisaged Southeast Asia as lying naked to the threat of Communist expansion. In seeking to clothe the area properly, the U. S. Government unfortunately chose only inferior materials from which to fashion a series of particularly ill-fitting and inappropriate suits.

Under terms of the Potsdam conference as confirmed at Yalta, Britain and China shared responsibility for occupying Vietnam: British forces moving in south and Chinese forces north of 16th parallel.

In the South, in Saigon, the British immediately collided with Tran Van Giau's hastily established Viet Minh regime, the Provisional Executive Committee of the South. Cunningly identifying itself with the allied cause, Giau's committee had assumed leadership of a tenuous local nationalist movement, the United National Front. One of Ho's more militant lieutenants, Giau already had partially alienated such important local groups as the Trotskyists and the two large and powerful religious sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, an error repaired only in part by the time the first British troops arrived.[2]

Giau now met total rebuff from the British commander, Major General Douglas Gracey. To insure control of the area, Gracey fleshed out his small force not only by rearming some five thousand former French

2. George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam—An Analysis in Depth of America's Involvement in Vietnam* (New York: The Dial Press, 1967); see also Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); David Schoenbrun, *Vietnam* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967) 2 vols.; Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina 1940–1955* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966).

prisoners of war, but by retaining the better part of seventy thousand Japanese soldiers under arms.[3]

Gracey answered civil disobedience by severe press censorship, martial law, and a strict curfew.[4] In late September, he widely exceeded his directive by allowing the local French commander, Colonel Jean Cédile, to eject Tran Van Giau's government from Saigon and to replace the republic's flag, a gold star on a red field, with the old and loathed tricolor.[5]

Tran Van Giau unwisely retaliated with mass terror methods, which resulted in large numbers of civil deaths, including those of some of his nationalist opponents, and widened the breach both between indigenous power groups and between those groups and the occupying powers. In late September, shooting started in the city and spread to the country. Gracey managed to bring both sides to the conference table only to learn what he already knew: that the French had no intention of yielding to the Viet Minh demand for independence. The talks soon broke down in favor of renewed fighting. In mid-October, French reinforcements arrived to join British and Japanese in clearing Saigon and environs of Viet Minh guerrilla resistance.

By late December, about fifty thousand French troops, commanded by General Leclerc, occupied the South, a good part of them Free French units (including twelve thousand men of the Foreign Legion) from Europe. Well organized, trained, and equipped, many of them combat veterans, their artillery shone and their armor gleamed; their tanks and trucks covered the countryside as their fighters and bombers (along with RAF planes) filled the skies. Nearly everyone in Saigon agreed that the fast-moving combat columns would quickly pacify the countryside to extend French control throughout Indochina, just as in the old days. Leclerc himself spoke of ". . . a simple 'mopping-up operation'

3. Hammer, op. cit.; see also Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today* (New York: Random House, 1961). Upon hearing of this action, General Douglas MacArthur allegedly exploded, ". . . If there is anything that makes my blood boil it is to see our Allies in Indochina and Java deploying Japanese troops to reconquer the little people we promised to liberate. It is the most ignoble kind of betrayal."

4. Hammer, op. cit.

5. Ibid.: ". . . The British commander [Gracey] was confronted with a political problem for which he had neither the background nor the advisers to deal with. He had been sent to Indochina on a military assignment and his instructions were strict: 'Sole mission: disarm the Japanese. Do not get involved in keeping order' "; see also Buttinger, op. cit.: "In a speech in 1953 . . . Gracey described how he treated the Vietnamese leaders who came to greet him as the Commander of the Allied troops. 'They came to see me,' he reported, 'and said "welcome" and all that sort of thing. It was an unpleasant situation and I promptly kicked them out' "; see also Hammer, op. cit.: Gracey's superior in Ceylon, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, became increasingly concerned with Gracey's actions and only with difficulty did General Leclerc, the French commander-designate in Indochina, persuade him to leave Gracey in authority.

which would take more than four weeks."[6] The British, beset with empire commitments, left at year's end.

Developments in the North meanwhile moved at a slower tempo. Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang had no intention of rejecting Ho's government in Hanoi as long as the Viet Minh did not interfere with the eating, raping, and looting habits of 180,000 Chinese soldiers worming their way down from Yünnan.[7] Chiang not only recognized Ho's *de facto* government, but his local commander refused to arm the thirty-five hundred French troops in Hanoi. Instead, he kept them ". . . in semi-internment," nor did he permit a thousand or so French guerrillas to re-enter Vietnam from China. Although he guaranteed ". . . law and order," he left ". . . most of the policing and all administration . . . in the hands of the Viet-Minh government."[8]

This was calculated policy on Chiang's part. China had suffered long decades of humiliation by the West, and the French, along with other Western powers, repeatedly had exacted profitable concessions at what amounted to gun point. Although Chiang knew that his presence in Vietnam was only temporary, he intended that the French would pay heavily for his departure (which is what happened). Meanwhile, he happily let the Viet Minh suffer the day's problems.

The Viet Minh faced plenty of problems. The Japanese surrender had left the north country in abysmal condition. Insatiable Japanese demands on the rice crop already had brought numerous deaths from starvation—locals said nearly 2 million deaths the previous year.[9] Widespread floods of the Red River, followed by severe drought, had ruined most of the current rice crop in Tonkin, and the bulk of what survived went to the voracious Chinese. Hundreds of thousands of people were starving; disease swept the land; the 1945–46 death toll would reach perhaps a million; millions more suffered helplessly, and the country looked to the Viet Minh for relief.

Having abolished ". . . the hated opium, alcohol, and salt monopolies," as well as ". . . the iniquitous head tax and the land taxes of the smaller owners," the new government also drastically reduced ". . . all the other land taxes, as well as the interest rates on loans."[10] As one result, the new government was broke. It was also decidedly factional, its Communist element a minority that survived mainly because of Ho's

6. Ibid.

7. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit., who points out that some of the Chinese troops were traveling north from Haiphong; Buttinger suggests 50,000 Chinese occupation troops.

8. Harold Isaacs, "Independence for Vietnam?" In Marvin E. Gettleman (ed.), *Viet-Nam—History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis* (New York: Fawcett, 1965); see also Buttinger, op. cit.

9. Isaacs, op. cit.; see also Shaplen, op. cit., who reported one million deaths; Hammer, op. cit.: French authorities estimated 600,000 deaths.

10. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

charisma, his appeal to non-aligned nationalists, and the disciplined organization of the Communist Party, as opposed to ineffectual leadership, organization, and traditional enmities of varied nationalist elements. Where possible, the Viet Minh brought these elements into its organization, one of the main instruments in the process being selective terrorism:

> . . . Against people whose interests or political connections made them incorrigible enemies of the Vietminh, the Communists practised a policy of physical extermination from the very beginning of the revolution.[11]

Despite its chaotic and semi-bankrupt nature, the new government, without question, appealed to large numbers of peasants, not alone because of tax reforms but also because of a crash program against illiteracy: ". . . The measures, carried out enthusiastically by the educated of the country, produced greater results in one year than the French had been able, or rather had cared, to produce in more than sixty years.[12] The government similarly mobilized the people to attack flood and famine: ". . . in the spring of 1946, the people, although still undernourished, no longer died of starvation.[13] Nonetheless, by the end of 1945, rival parties, the VNQDD (*Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang*—The Vietnamese Nationalist Party) and the Dong Minh Hoi (Revolutionary League), controlled important provinces bordering the Chinese frontier, while elsewhere peasants found themselves subject to Viet Minh-imposed "voluntary" contributions and "public" subscriptions which ". . . turned out to be at least as heavy as the tax load imposed by the colonial regime."[14]

Outside Vietnam, the Viet Minh Government had almost no friends and a great many enemies. Contrary to what many persons in the West have assumed, the Kremlin at this time showed as much interest in helping Ho Chi Minh as it did the Republican Party in the United States. Nor could Mao Tse-tung, isolated in China's northwestern provinces, come to Ho's relief. The French Communist Party and the Socialists paid grudging lip service to the movement, but offered no material support. Ironically, Ho's greatest support came from the American command in Kunming, which refused to help De Gaulle's able representative, Major Jean Sainteny, in a grotesque attempt to replant the French flag in Hanoi, and from the small American military command that accompanied Chinese troops to Hanoi and continued OSS policy of supplying arms and equipment to the Viet Minh, a policy approved by Washington.

But this honeymoon would be short-lived. The French returned to Saigon with at least tacit approval of Washington, and Ho could not have

11. Buttinger, op. cit.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.; see also Hammer, op. cit.
14. Hammer, op. cit.

been pleased when Washington announced the sale of $160 million worth of surplus arms and equipment to the French Government.[15]

A very lonely Ho was also Communist Ho was therefore realist Ho. Having taken two steps forward, he took one step backward. In November, he dissolved the Indochina Communist Party, thus emphasizing the Viet Minh's nationalist character. He also began sending diplomatic flowers to the new French high commissioner, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, a personal friend of De Gaulle—a part-time Carmelite monk who was so reactionary that a member of his staff described him as having ". . . the most brilliant mind of the twelfth century."[16] Ensuing negotiations can best be described as imperative diplomacy: Each side loathed the other, yet the state of confusion demanded some solution.

The Chinese presence posed the first problem. D'Argenlieu and his new deputy, Major Jean Sainteny, a hero of the French resistance and later De Gaulle's head of mission in Kunming, rid Vietnam of the Chinese incubus by renouncing French "special rights" in China as well as giving Chiang special railway and port rights in Tonkin.

With China out of the way, Sainteny hammered out an agreement with Ho Chi Minh, signed in early March 1946. Wanting to split Vietnam, France recognized the DRV as ". . . a free state, having its own government, parliament, army, and treasury, belonging to the Indo-Chinese Federation and to the French Union."[17] In return, Ho allowed fifteen thousand French troops to replace the Chinese garrison. The French were to train and equip the Viet Minh army, which would replace French occupation troops at a rate of three thousand per year for five years. French negotiators also agreed to hold a referendum to determine whether Cochin China ". . . should be reunified with Annam and Tonkin."[18] In mid-March, the first French troops arrived in Hanoi to commence what might have proved a workable solution to the Vietnam problem.

But a viable contract depends a great deal on the spirit of contracting parties. D'Argenlieu had been in Paris during the negotiations:

> . . . after his return from Paris, d'Argenlieu openly criticized the moderate policy of Sainteny and Leclerc by expressing his amazement over the agreement of March 6. "Yes," he said, "that is the word, my amazement that France has such a fine expeditionary corps in Indochina and yet its leaders prefer to negotiate rather than to fight."[19]

Ho Chi Minh also had difficulty in persuading what he called "extremists" to accept the arrangement, which, he argued, was a necessary step

15. Shaplen, op. cit.
16. Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams—A Political and Military Analysis* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).
17. Lancaster, op. cit.; Hammer, op. cit.
18. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.; see also Lancaster, op. cit.; Buttinger, op. cit.
19. Buttinger, op. cit.

toward full independence. As a realist willing to compromise, Ho regarded the accords as an interim agreement, a temporary truce to be broken when he was strong enough to enforce a demand for unity and independence of all Vietnam. But Ho faced serious party opposition: Bellicose voices demanded immediate action, just as, in the South, D'Argenlieu was demanding French control of Indochina.[20]

D'Argenlieu was already feeling quite secure in Saigon. In late February 1946, General Leclerc proclaimed ". . . the total reestablishment of peace and order" throughout Cochin China and southern Annam.[21] He did not add that, by early March, French losses amounted to twelve hundred killed and thirty-five hundred wounded,[22] which demonstrated significant Viet Minh opposition despite the factious alliance of the Viet Minh with the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects. But if Leclerc exaggerated, he could at least point to French columns busily "pacifying" the countryside and to a force pushing into Laos. Saigon also had quieted: Although metal grill cages protected the better outdoor restaurants from grenade-throwing terrorists—the American correspondent Robert Shaplen noted that, in mid-1946, murders averaged fifteen per night! —the Viet Minh seemed increasingly subdued, the colony well on its way to prewar languor. Probably for this reason, the French delegation at the Dalat conference in mid-April proved particularly truculent regarding Vietnamese autonomy.

Scarcely had Ho and other Viet Minh political leaders, Communist and nationalist, sailed for France to work out a final agreement with the home government, when D'Argenlieu, under pressure from conservative colonialists and without authority from Paris, recognized the free state of Cochin China and its puppet president, Nguyen Van Tinh (who later committed suicide and was replaced with another French choice, Le Van Hoach). This marked the beginning of a major rift. Donald Lancaster, a British expert on Vietnam, later wrote:

> . . . in spite of some local hostility towards the Tongkinese the population, who were conscious of their ethnic identity with the inhabitants of North and Central Vietnam, for the most part refused to support a movement considered to represent a French maneuver designed to split the nation in its struggle for independence.[23]

At the same time, D'Argenlieu ordered the army to occupy the Moi Plateaux, in the southern Annam central highlands, a provocative act that drew immediate protests from Hanoi.[24]

D'Argenlieu's unilateral act, reminiscent of the freewheeling Gallieni-

20. Ibid.; see also Hammer, op. cit. Each source offers a detailed analysis of the political situation.
21. Lancaster, op. cit.
22. Hammer, op. cit.
23. Lancaster, op. cit.
24. Ibid.; see also Hammer, op. cit.

Lyautey era of colonialism, contradicted the earlier agreement with the Viet Minh and, taken with the French attitude displayed at Dalat, helped torpedo the Paris talks. Since France had neither a government nor a constitution at this time, these probably would not have resulted in meaningful agreement on basic issues, but they could have laid the groundwork for a later treaty.

But D'Argenlieu's action, which he compounded in August by calling a federation conference without inviting the Viet Minh, led to a more serious result. Ho's control of the Viet Minh was by no means assured at this time. The Hanoi government, in some respects, resembled more a coalition than a single-party Communist government, a fact acknowledged by Ho when, at the end of May, he created the Communist-dominated Lien Viet Front. This did not fool all nationalist elements, and such parties as the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi continued to control important northern provinces. After Ho's departure for France, pro-Chinese elements of the Vietnam Nationalist Party and the Vietnam Revolutionary League began calling for direct action against the French with such vigor that French forces temporarily allied with Viet Minh forces to reclaim control of the Tonkin provinces and to chase dissident leaders into exile in China. In Ho's absence, extremist Viet Minh leaders, particularly the Minister of Interior, Vo Nguyen Giap, opened war on other, non-Communist nationalists and on pro-French Vietnamese. The net result was a greatly strengthened and unified Viet Minh—the core of the larger Lien Viet, or Popular National, Front.[25]

Annoyed by French duplicity and possibly to dampen further criticism from Communist extremists, Ho became increasingly antagonistic in negotiations with the French. Although, according to Jean Sainteny and other observers, he seemed genuinely upset by continuing failure of negotiations, he nonetheless remained a hard-core revolutionary who, together with thirty of his comrades, had shared two hundred and twenty-two years of imprisonment and exile, ". . . not to mention the sentences to death in absentia and the years of imprisonment evaded by those who escaped. . . ." Ho saw only a growth period ahead:

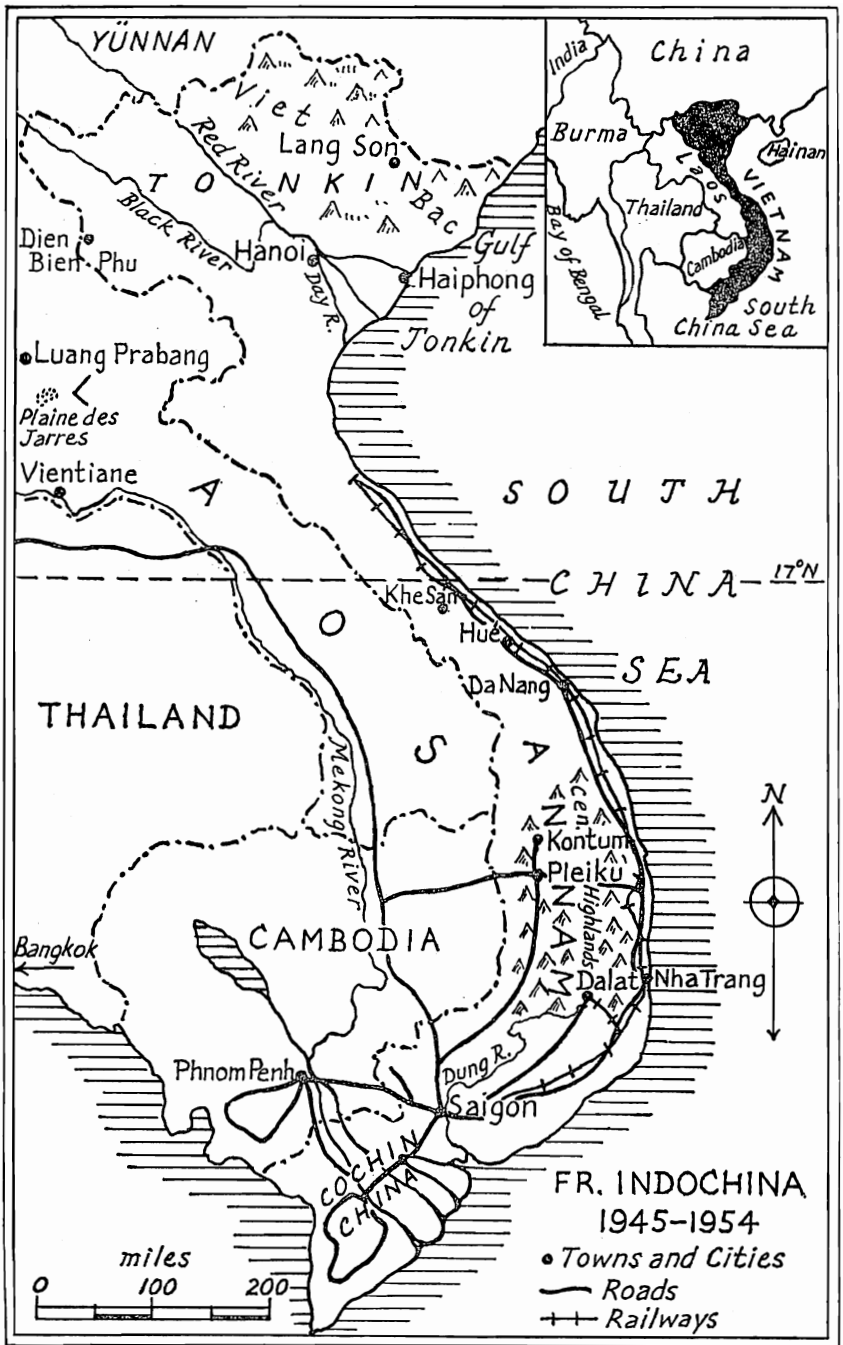
. . . Without the cold and desolation of winter
There could not be the warmth and splendour of spring.
Calamity has tempered and hardened me,
And turned my mind into steel.

A setback or two was acceptable:

. . . So life, you see, is never a very smooth business,
and now the present bristles with difficulties.

So now, at this crucial period, Ho Chi Minh realistically observed to Sainteny, ". . . If we have to fight, we will fight. You will kill ten of our

25. Lancaster, op. cit.; see also Ellen J. Hammer, "Genesis of the First Indochina War: 1946–1950." In Gettleman, *supra*.


YÜNNAN
Viet
Lang Son
TONKIN
Bac
Red River
Black River
Dien Bien Phu
Hanoi
Day R.
Gulf of Tonkin
Haiphong
Luang Prabang
Plaine des Jarres
Vientiane
LAOS
SOUTH CHINA SEA
17°N
Khe Sanh
Hué
Da Nang
THAILAND
Mekong River
Cen. Highlands
Kontum
Pleiku
ANNAM
CAMBODIA
Bangkok
Dalat
Nha Trang
Phnom Penh
Dung R.
Saigon
COCHIN CHINA
N
India
China
Burma
Hainan
Laos
VIETNAM
Thailand
Cambodia
Bay of Bengal
South China Sea
FR. INDOCHINA
1945–1954
Towns and Cities
Roads
Railways
miles
0
100
200
M.E.P.

men and we will kill one of yours, and in the end it will be you who will tire of it."[26] Shooting incidents already had occurred when Ho was in France; upon his return, they began to multiply.

The French, moreover, were consistently underreading the southern situation. Despite D'Argenlieu's and Leclerc's early optimism, a nasty guerrilla war continued. If the French controlled towns, Viet Minh controlled villages and countryside, particularly at night. A writer and historian who accompanied Leclerc's early expeditions, Philippe Devillers, pinpointed the main tactical result:

> . . . If we departed, believing a region pacified, they [Viet Minh guerrillas] would arrive on our heels and the terror would start again. There was only one possible defense: to multiply the posts, to fortify them, to arm the villagers, and to train them for a coordinated and enlightened self-defense through a thorough job of information and policing. But this required men and weapons. What was needed was not the 35,000 men (of which Leclerc then disposed) but 100,000, and Cochin-China was not the only problem.[27]

Far more than additional troops were needed: Leclerc and his successors in time fielded an expeditionary corps exceeding 150,000 men. The great lack was a political policy to give the Vietnamese people reason to accept the Saigon government and deny Hanoi's attempt to establish a Communist regime.

Leclerc and his successor, Étienne Valluy, were fighting against an extremely capable guerrilla leader, Nguyen Binh, ". . . a man of apparently unlimited energy, bold decisions and great organizational talents"[28]—and a man who knew how to exploit French political weaknesses. A master of ambush, Nguyen Binh soon had his frustrated enemy indulging in mass terror methods including torture of suspects:

> . . . The victims, often as not, were innocent people, frequently delivered into French hands by false denunciations. These tortures, and collective punishments such as the pillaging and burning of villages from which guerrillas had fired and disappeared, turned thousands of lukewarm nationalists and even people loyal to the French into their bitter enemies. Indeed, Nguyen Binh was able to excel as organizer and military leader chiefly because the French methods of fighting the guerrillas made many more Vietminh fighters than they were able to kill.[29]

Meanwhile, the breach between North and South widened. The DRV, at its second national assembly, in October, reasserted claim to Tonkin,

26. Shaplen, op. cit.; Ho wrote these lines when in a Chinese prison; see Ho Chi Minh, *Prison Diary* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962). Tr. Aileen Palmer; see also Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Articles and Speeches 1920–1967* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969). Ed. Jack Woddis.
27. Buttinger, op. cit.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.; Nguyen Binh was killed in Cambodia in 1951.

Annam, and Cochin China—that is, to all of Vietnam—and its new constitution significantly did not mention membership in either the Indochina Federation or the French Union.[30] Also significantly, Ho's new cabinet contained five instead of the former two Communist seats.[31] Political assassinations continued as the Viet Minh tightened its internal organization: ". . . To be a young and vigorous revolutionary with an independent political mind was more dangerous in 1946 than being a 'reactionary' had been in August, 1945. . . ."[32]

Just when either side decided to seek a military solution to the impasse is problematical. Such was the rampant mistrust and hatred that a war probably was never far removed from either French or Vietnamese minds. In his pioneering work *Street Without Joy,* Bernard Fall wrote of this period:

> . . . The French forces sent to Indochina were too strong for France to resist the temptation of using them; yet not strong enough to keep the Viet-Minh from trying to solve the whole political problem by throwing the French into the sea.
>
> The outbreak of the Indochina war can be traced back to that single, tragic erroneous estimate. . . .[33]

That momentous autumn saw military forces of both sides acting with an unhealthy arrogance that heightened tension everywhere. The explosion did not instantly occur. It began with a skirmish between French soldiers and Viet Minh militia in Haiphong. It continued with stupid and isolated attacks by the Viet Minh that killed twenty-three French soldiers in Haiphong and six more in Lang Son. French military authorities now decided to teach the Viet Minh a "hard lesson." French raids in Haiphong sent a civilian mob streaming from the town toward the French air base at Cat Bi. The captain of a French cruiser mistakenly believed that this mob intended to attack the air base. He opened fire and killed about six thousand unarmed civilians.[34]

Although the tragedy brought an uneasy truce, Ho, prompted by Giap and other militants, not to mention the belligerent French attitude, decided that the time had come for war. Faced with a French demand to surrender their forces in Hanoi, on December 19 the Viet Minh attacked French garrisons in Hanoi and elsewhere in Vietnam. The Indochina war had begun.[35]

30. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina 1940–1955, supra.*
31. Buttinger, op. cit.
32. Ibid.
33. Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1961).
34. Schoenbrun, op. cit.: offers 8,000 as the French figure, with unofficial estimates running as high as 40,000; see also Buttinger, op. cit.; Lancaster, op. cit.
35. Buttinger, op. cit., argues convincingly that the war began in September 1945.

Chapter 53

Viet Minh strength • French counterinsurgency tactics • French errors • Operation Léa • The political problem • General Revers's secret report • Vietnamese nationalism • Bao Dai's provisional government • The American position • Indochina's international importance • Truman's confusion • The French attitude • The Élysée Agreements • Acheson's dilemma (I) • The lines form

IN DECEMBER 1946, the Viet Minh army numbered about sixty thousand, of whom forty thousand possessed rifles.[1] Paramilitary and militia formations, such as the youth-oriented Tu Ve, numbered perhaps another forty thousand.[2] Although this force had received some training from Japanese and Chinese instructors, it was not an orthodox army capable of launching and sustaining co-ordinated offensives against units equipped with artillery and armor and supported by aircraft. Within a few weeks, French units had beaten off the various attacks and forced Viet Minh units to disperse. Ho and the main body almost immediately went into hiding in their old stamping grounds, the ideally defensive Viet Bac region, in upper Tonkin.

The French high command did not seem unduly disturbed by Viet

1. George K. Tanham, *Communist Revolutionary Warfare—From the Vietminh to the Viet Cong* (rev. ed.) (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).
2. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966).

Minh attacks. More likely, they were relieved that the political game was over: The military could now clarify the situation in the best colonial tradition.[3] This meant occupying and defending important cities and towns and protecting lines of communication by a series of strong points. Local commanders began the arduous task of dividing assigned areas into small operational squares (the *quadrillage*) and trying to clear each of insurgents (the *ratissage*). To do this, unit commanders were to establish small operational bases in the disputed areas and commence *tourbillon,* or whirlwind-type, tactics essential to what Colonel McCuen has called "the territorial offense":

> . . . that is, the detachments should keep constantly on the move within their assigned zones, attacking, ambushing, patrolling, searching, establishing an intelligence system, and, perhaps most important, contacting and assisting the people. . . .[4]

This was basically Marshal Lyautey's famous *tache-d'huile,* or oil-spot, technique. Civil forces followed the military to clean out the insurgent apparatus and establish or re-establish civil government. Once military and civil forces had fashioned a secure strategic base, the military again moved out to repeat the process.

As we have pointed out (Chapter 17, Volume I), the tache d'huile is essentially a qualitative approach to the pacification problem. It was necessitated by limited forces operating in vast areas inhabited and defended by heterogeneous tribes. Not least of the reasons for its success were the social, political, and economic attractions offered by the pacified areas to primitive and insurgent tribesmen. In this sense, the tache d'huile was expansion by osmosis. It did not always work, but most of the time it did. At all times, it called for extreme patience and forbearance on the part of colonizers. On occasion, strong and homogenous tribes occupying naturally defensive terrain spelled a halt to the tache-d'huile process. Lyautey generally preferred to leave these "asleep" areas alone. If an enemy became too annoying and if his own strength justified it, he permitted raids in strength—the traditional *bouclage,* or "sealing-off," operation, which attempted to surround and destroy the enemy force. But he infinitely preferred to convert neighboring areas to his support so as to isolate the difficult areas, which then ". . . will fall into our hands by themselves. . . ."

3. Lancaster, op. cit.: Even the pacific Minister for French Overseas Territories, M. Moutet, agreed: ". . . Before a resumption of negotiations can be envisaged, a military decision is necessary. I regret the necessity, but you cannot commit with impunity acts of madness, such as those committed by the Viet Minh"; but see also Hammer (*Struggle*), *supra:* General Leclerc, who left Indochina in spring of 1946 and returned later that year as an official observer, warned his government against trying to seek a military solution to what he believed had become essentially a political problem.

4. McCuen, op. cit.

In 1946 and 1947, General Valluy, from a purely military standpoint, was on the right track in his use of the tache-d'huile technique. But he and his staff erred on several important points. First, they underrated both political and military strength of the Viet Minh, which meant that they moved too fast. Prompted by the colonial government and *colons,* they tried to do too much too soon. Neither military forces nor civil administration that followed won control of target areas. Instead, the French flag flew over main cities and towns, and roads remained open at least in daylight—but Viet Minh continued to control the countryside.

Considering the lack of political appeal, the limited numbers of French soldiers, heterogeneous French forces with concomitant internal conflicts and resentments, and the political organization of the Viet Minh, Valluy would have had his hands full in consolidating a strategic base in Cochin China alone. The situation called for a much slower and more methodical approach than ever Lyautey faced. Yet Valluy not only attempted to develop strategic bases in Cochin China, Annam, and Tonkin, but, in the fall of 1947, he decided on an all-out attack—the *bouclage*—against Ho and the main body of insurgents holed up in the naturally defensive Viet Bac region northwest of Hanoi.

Operation Léa began in October 1947. Involving fifteen thousand troops, or over a third of the total French force, it attempted to "seal off" an immense triangle of jungle and mountains in Tonkin.[5] French commanders spoke excitedly of "encirclement"—just as German commanders had spoken in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in World War II. Operation Léa fared no better than any of the German offensives designed to capture Tito: close, but no cigar. Although the French claimed eight thousand enemy dead and the capture of thousands of arms and tons of ammunition and equipment, the effort failed to capture Ho and his lieutenants or even to disperse for very long the Viet Minh command. By year's end, the French main force had returned to the lowlands, having established a string of vulnerable border outposts and forts more appropriate to Gallieni's 1884–85 strategy against insurgents and pirates than to a 1947 campaign against Viet Minh guerrillas.[6]

This combination of area pacification and sporadic attacks continued throughout 1948 and into 1949. Without a political impetus, it was doomed to fail. The French answer to the political problem—the dusting off of Emperor Bao Dai—would have become a meaningful weapon only if Paris had been serious about granting Vietnam independence and only if Bao Dai's followers had been capable of legitimate government. As it was, the political and military solutions formed a losing combination. The home government, faced with financial crises and veering dangerously toward Communist control, refused more than lukewarm support to the military campaign. Nonetheless, parties of the left did not join in

5. Fall, op. cit.
6. Ibid.; see also Buttinger, op. cit. (Vol. 2).

seeking a political solution to the Indochina problem, and influence of right and center parties remained strong: over half of the French military budget was being spent in Indochina.[7] Although the expeditionary force, which numbered around 150,000 including some Vietnamese troops, claimed to control much of Cochin China and the Tonkin Delta area, this control often proved illusory.

Despite optimistic reports from Saigon, the French Government grew increasingly worried about Chinese Communist victories and their effect on Indochina. In May 1949, the government sent out General Revers, Chief of the General Staff:

> . . . In a secret report [soon obtained by the Viet Minh], he recommended the evacuation of the isolated garrisons along the Chinese border, which, lying in the midst of Vietminh country and being difficult to supply, were a drain on French resources and could probably not withstand a serious attack. General Revers, one of the first prominent Frenchmen to urge the rapid build-up of the Vietnamese Army, also insisted that before another offensive against the Viet Bac [Ho's stronghold] could be undertaken, the [Red River] delta had first to be completely pacified and its defense turned over to the Vietnamese Army. Not only did he recognize that without a strong Vietnamese Army to support the French, victory over the Vietminh would be difficult to achieve, but he also knew something about the political conditions that would make such an army effective. In this war, he said, "diplomacy" must have precedence over military considerations.[8]

French civil and military officials refused to admit the political elements at work. Yet the French army was facing a political movement undreamed of either by Gallieni or Lyautey, a nationalist movement that helped Ho to insinuate agents and cells throughout so-called controlled or pacified areas. This movement continued to grow while French strength and influence stood still and even declined. As Bernard Fall later wrote, only too few of the French

> . . . recognized the fact that the Viet-Minh enjoyed exactly the same advantages with regard to the French as the French had enjoyed with regard to the Wehrmacht. By the time that recognition dawned and corrective measures were attempted, the situation had deteriorated beyond salvaging.[9]

The French high command failed to understand new and revolutionary political forces at work. No isolated failure this—as will shortly be

7. Buttinger, op. cit., offers a penetrating analysis of the relationship between the home parties and the colonial party.

8. Ibid.: ". . . His [Revers's] recommendations shared the fate of most later ones—being misunderstood or disregarded. In any case, they had no influence on either the military or political conduct of the war . . ."; see also Lancaster, op. cit., for a description of the ensuing government scandal.

9. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra*.

seen, the Dutch similarly erred in Indonesia, the British in Malaya, the Americans in Greece, the Soviets in Yugoslavia.

But nonetheless costly.

Had the French respected the Indochinese political climate of 1947, they possibly could have avoided a lengthy and ruinous war. The average Vietnamese peasant did not care about communism. He wanted *doc-lap*—a national independence—which he supposed would bring him and his family a better life (it could not bring a worse one). Japanese conquest and occupation of Southeast Asia had shattered the myth of white supremacy. The peasant may have known little about political forms and parties or even what the future was to hold under Vietnamese rule—but he wanted that rule, or, rather, he wanted an end to French rule. As Robert Shaplen noted in his masterful book *The Lost Revolution,*

> . . . a revolutionary condition existed in Indo-China all along, one that should have been regarded from the start by the Western nations for what it was, a truly Asian revolution, representing the legitimate hopes of people throughout the region to be free of any domination, either that of their former colonial masters, of old or new native tyrants or satraps, or that of the Communists. Unfortunately, while the Communists were quick to take advantage of the revolutionary opportunities in Indo-China, the Western nations, especially France, did not face up to the realities of the situation.[10]

In March and April 1947, the French replied with studied coolness and but slight encouragement to Ho Chi Minh's expressed desire for a cease-fire and a political settlement. Nor did French policy encourage overtures by sophisticated Vietnamese who remained aware of the Communist threat to Vietnam's future. In May 1947, a group of moderate nationalists in Saigon established a National Union Front in support of the former emperor, Bao Dai, and attempted to come to political terms with the French. Such an arrangement would have spelled eventual Vietnam independence, and the French refused to consider it.

In September 1947, the new French high commissioner, Émile Bollaert, a veteran Radical Socialist who favored an independence policy more generous than his country would permit, was able to offer only ". . . liberty within the French Union," without a satisfactory definition of his terms.[11] In 1948, the French rejected a proposal by the nationalist Ngo Dinh Diem for dominion status of the country; instead, a Provisional Central Government of Vietnam emerged along with the concept ". . . of associated statehood within the French Union for each of the three states of Indo-China."[12]

By the time Bao Dai agreed to lead a Vietnamese Government—June 1949—most important nationalist leaders either had gone into exile

10. Shaplen, op. cit.
11. Hammer, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.
12. Hammer, op. cit.

or joined Ho's camp in the North; others, such as Diem, who headed the powerful Catholic League, refused to serve on grounds that France had no intention of ever granting Vietnamese independence. On the other hand, whole hosts of nationalists, the *attentistes,* were sitting on the fence, refusing to commit themselves until one government or the other showed itself the probable victor. Continued French refusal to offer substantive terms to Bao Dai's provisional government angered Diem, who refused to serve the emperor as prime minister.

The important point to realize is that the *basic* French mistake was *political.* As one expert on Vietnam, Dr. George Tanham, wrote in his pioneering work *Communist Revolutionary Warfare:*

> . . . To have underrated the force of nationalist feelings and to have disregarded all opportunities for genuine compromise may be called the basic French mistakes in Indo-China. Failing to realize in time the crucial importance of popular support in this type of war, they remained oblivious to the fact that their disregard of popular will helped their enemy to consolidate forces and led thus to the inevitable success of the Viet-Minh.[13]

Dr. Tanham did not comment on American complicity in the French failure, an important omission in view of subsequent events.

The reader will perhaps recall (see Chapter 45, Volume I) that President Roosevelt held positive feelings about the future of Indochina. At the time of his death, in April 1945, he was thinking in terms of an interim trusteeship leading to independence, a notion tentatively approved by Chiang Kai-shek and Stalin, but one that had drawn Churchill's disapproval at Yalta.

Roosevelt died without resolving the issue. At the Potsdam conference, in July 1945, the Big Three briefly revived it and agreed to an interim arrangement of British-Chinese military occupation. After Japan's surrender, this eventually gave way to the French return, which was scarcely surprising within the day's political context. And within that context, it is also difficult to see how the United States, beset with a host of other problems, could have prevented the French presence.

It was not even much of an issue.

The sad truth was the minimal importance of an artificial political entity called French Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam) in world affairs. Geographically, economically, and politically, the area was a cipher. This unpleasant fact was somewhat camouflaged by Japan's initial use of the country as a staging area—a strategic convenience in the days of short-range aircraft, but even then not a strategic necessity. Substantial French-Vietnamese resistance might have further camouflaged the fact, but as was the case with Lettow-Vorbeck's resistance in German East Africa in World War I, this would have provided more

13. Tanham, op. cit.

psychological than material value. It would not have altered war's course. Tactically and strategically, Indochina was less than a sideshow; it was a military neutrino—a whirling nothing. American interest in the area was as negative as American knowledge of the area. A senior Vietnamese diplomat recently told the writer the following: When General George C. Marshall was in Chungking in 1946, he spent an evening with a group of young Vietnamese nationalists and at one point remarked, ". . . Viet-Nam must be a very interesting country. Tell me, do you have your own language?"

In the hurly-burly of events accompanying the end of the war, Indochina grew from a nothing area to a nuisance area, a threat to allied and particularly American-French relationships. Truman apparently did not share Roosevelt's desire to exclude France from the area. In a meeting with De Gaulle in August 1945, he decorated the French leader, presented him with a new DC-4 airplane, and emphasized, ". . . my government is not opposed to the return of the French Army and French authority in Indochina."[14]

By not attempting to prevent the French return, indeed by seeming to support a renewed French presence, the American President found himself dangerously at odds with his purported belief in the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Here was a real dilemma—the frequent result when political idealism collides with political reality. Dexterous diplomacy probably could have resolved it, but unfortunately a number of factors inhibited the practice of dexterous diplomacy in this crucial period.

The first was turbulence within the Department of State itself, an orchestra of feuds and cabals cacophonously conducted first by old Cordell Hull, then by globe-trotting James Byrnes. Small at war's beginning and limited in imaginative policy by the isolation years, the department had swelled inexorably and often with as much purpose as a blowfish out of water. Concurrently, the American military had frequently pre-empted the State Department's traditional authority in the conduct of foreign affairs—an ugly habit continued into postwar years. Postwar confusion, which often gave rise to divided counsels, helped prevent the department from reasserting its authority, a state of affairs well described in two important books, George Kennan's *Memoirs* and Dean Acheson's *Present at the Creation.*[15] Finally, heavy demands on existing talent, both individual and organizational, meant stringent rationing, which resulted in slim diplomatic pickings for Indochina as well as many other areas.

International turbulence played a major role. From the moment Presi-

14. Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs* (Vol. 3—*Documents*) (London: Collins, 1955). Tr. R. Howar.

15. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950* (London: Hutchinson, 1968) Vol. 1; Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1969); see also W. W. Rostow, *The United States in the World Arena* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

dent Truman assumed office, in spring of 1945, he faced far more urgent challenges that, shortly after war's end, began turning to crises. As these grew in importance and complexity, Vietnam remained a low-priority area. By the time Ho Chi Minh attacked French garrisons, in December 1946, Stalin already had made clear his intentions to go about as far as he could in Europe and the Middle East. Here the United States and the West attempted to stop him. The Truman Doctrine, announced in March 1947, flashed the first red light. George Kennan's realistic statement of need for new principles of selected containment—the famous X article published in the July 1947 *Foreign Affairs*—called for the political containment of Soviet power: ". . . a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." The U.S.A. and her allies were to establish red lights where necessary—". . . the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points."[16] Although Kennan was thinking primarily in political terms, the principles when applied necessarily involved military action, and, during the next three years, the deterrents differed considerably: the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Crumbs from this table, both of effort and of money, fell to the other side of the world, to China and the Philippines and Indochina; although they sometimes were big crumbs, relatively speaking they were still crumbs.

These two factors helped to explain a third: the Franco-American relationship in Indochina itself. No question existed in the mind of the French Government—when there was one—as to the legality of the French presence. Although De Gaulle had attempted to appease Roosevelt at the Brazzaville conference on the subject of eventual self-government for Indochina, his confreres scarcely shared his sentiments:

> . . . The preamble of the political recommendations laid down that "the aims of the work of civilization which France is accomplishing in her possessions exclude any idea of autonomy and any possibility of development outside the French Empire bloc. The attainment of 'self-government' in the colonies, even in the most distant future, must be excluded."[17]

Although the French Provisional Government, in March 1945, reexamined the question and seemed to offer Indochina a liberal postwar rule, the French relinquished but slight control. Hers was the legal government in Indochina, and she was in no mind to yield her hold in

16. "X" (George F. Kennan), "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1947: This penetrating article was variously interpreted, as the author makes clear in his *Memoirs, supra;* see also Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War—A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947); see also Richard Leopold, *The Growth of American Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

17. Lancaster, op. cit.

order to conform to the quaint American notion of self-determination and eventual independence. Since her conquest of Indochina, she had practiced a policy of "association," whereby she would continue to rule the area as a colony, a policy opposed to that of "assimilation," which ultimately could have yielded Vietnamese independence.[18]

Nor did the United States see fit to force the issue. As a traditional ally of France, she had felt a genuine sympathy for France's defeat in World War II and for the horrors of German occupation and loathsome Vichy government. The U.S.A. also realized that the French return to Indochina was in part a matter of *amour propre* and that to have contested it would have led to an ugly quarrel with a power whose co-operation was essential to a stable Europe.[19] Moreover, the French seemed to be working out a viable federation agreement with the Viet Minh. By the time this effort failed and shooting started in earnest, the international situation had changed to such a degree that the French presence, far from proving embarrassing, was beginning to appeal to a United States hard-pressed to provide economic and particularly military resources necessary to fight a world-wide cold war.

Later critics have suggested that French, and by implication American, diplomacy erred in not attempting to convert Ho Chi Minh into an Asiatic Tito. A considerable number of facts have been adduced to support the possibility. But several conditions would have had to exist for even a trial run. The first was an imaginative French high commissioner working with a viable home government within the framework of a liberal colonial policy. France possessed none of these. That the idea did not occur to American officials is not surprising. In Western eyes, this was the day of monolithic communism, this the day when some outstanding intellects, driven by fatigue and fear into near panic, envisaged communism as a poisonous black cloud of no molecular structure quite capable of covering the sun of civilization. Although Tito's defection and subsequent expulsion from Cominform, in June 1948, suggested a cloud of factious elements, the worsening China situation tended to obscure this significant development. In 1948, the West was too far gone in worry for immediate reappraisal that could have led to a qualitative rather than quantitative policy in combating the threat by exploiting its essential weakness.

Pride also entered: the French had lost one war before it really started; they were not going to lose another, and certainly not to a bunch

18. Dennis J. Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); see also De Gaulle (Vol. 3—*Documents*), *supra*, for the complete French declaration made at the March 1945 conference.

19. Unfortunately, overburdened and, in some cases, frightened American policy makers failed to realize that France needed American aid more than the United States needed French co-operation. France would not have jeopardized her own future position in Europe for the sake of her Indochina holding, particularly since popular French sentiment did not support a costly colonial policy.

of peasants some of whom were not even armed. Fear formed still another factor. As Kahin and Lewis have written,

> . . . the French saw Vietnam in terms of their empire as a whole, particularly with relation to their North African territories. They were apprehensive that if the Vietnamese were successful in wresting their independence from France, the already-restive nationalists in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia would be inspired to follow their example.[20]

Finally, and very important: In these formative and crucial years, the French army believed, as did American observers, that it was well on the way to defeating the Viet Minh. Few Frenchmen agreed with General Leclerc, who warned, ". . . in 1947 France will no longer put down by force a grouping of 24 million inhabitants which is assuming unity and in which there exists a xenophobic and perhaps a national ideal. . . . The major problem from now on is political."[21] In May 1947, the French Minister of War, M. Paul Coste-Floret, pointed to French control of ". . . most of the important cities and towns of northern and central Viet-Nam . . . [and] of virtually all strategic highways and waterways and of the area along the Chinese border." He concluded: ". . . There is no military problem any longer in Indo-China. The success of French arms is complete."[22]

Even after the failure of Operation Léa, in late 1947, and increasing evidence that the Viet Minh controlled a large part of the countryside, the French administration in Indochina and particularly the French military command (with some worthy exceptions) refused to reverse Coste-Floret's comforting conclusion.

Perhaps French commanders would have admitted some concern had the Viet Minh fielded its own army. Lacking direct confrontation, Valluy and his successors spoke in terms of "mopping-up" operations. They failed to realize either that the Viet Minh were building a regular army behind a screen of guerrilla operations, or that the Viet Minh were simultaneously mobilizing large parts of the population to fight a war beyond limits of their comprehension.

Continuing military stalemate and some setbacks in 1948 prompted President Vincent Auriol's government in Paris to re-examine the political question. Coupled with the deteriorating position of the Nationalist Chinese, this led to the Élysée Agreements, of March 1949, which formally created the Bao Dai government and made Vietnam an "associated state," along with Cambodia and Laos, in the French Union. The

20. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

21. Buttinger, op. cit.: General Leclerc refused the post of commander-in-chief and high commissioner primarily for this reason but, shades of William Tecumseh Sherman (see Chapter 11, Volume I), also because the government would not give him 500,000 troops to fight the Vietnam war.

22. Shaplen, op. cit.; see also Frank Trager, *Why Viet Nam?* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); Buttinger, op. cit.

agreements also authorized for Vietnam ". . . its own army for internal security," a role ". . . in foreign and defense policies, and a [national] bank of issue."[23]

Had France been sincere, the agreements might have led to satisfactory political compromise with the Viet Minh. Unfortunately France relinquished precious little control over Vietnamese affairs with the agreements, which the National Assembly did not even ratify until February 1950. The net result of deed versus intent was a political sugar castle bound to deteriorate in fortune's rain. Kahin and Lewis have spelled out the unhappy result:

> . . . So many of the substantive attributes of power were reserved to France that even on paper the new State of Vietnam was effectively and directly under French dominion. And, in fact, most of the very modest concessions granted under the agreements were never actually transferred to Bao Dai's "government," which continued to lack the attributes of independence necessary to attract nationalist support. Bao Dai emerged from the long process of negotiations with no increase in political prestige among the nationalist elements in Vietnam. Obviously dependent on France, his regime remained an unconvincing façade for a continuing French military and civil control that allowed few significant roles for Vietnamese. The only conclusion Vietnamese patriots could reach was that France, with Bao Dai as its agent, continued to run that part of the country not under the Vietminh. The effective range of political alternatives for these patriots remained quite as narrow as before—the Vietminh or the French—and this polarization grew more pronounced as the French now regularly labeled all those who resisted them or opposed Bao Dai as "communist." For more and more Vietnamese that word came to connote something good—a badge of honor, representing patriotic nationalism and courageous opposition to French rule. Thus did French intransigence in Vietnam further strengthen the ties between nationalism and communism there—a circumstance unique in southeast Asia.[24]

The Élysée Agreements also provoked international moves that widened the breach between East and West and made a political settlement even more remote. During negotiations, the Soviet Union and Communist China recognized Ho Chi Minh's DRV. A week after signing, Britain, the United States, and twenty-eight other governments recognized the three Associated States, but whereas Britain urged France to give greater independence to the new countries, the United States adopted a much more moderate attitude.

Privately, the Department of State feared a Viet Minh victory, as Secretary of State Acheson later wrote, ". . . unless France swiftly transferred authority to the Associated States and organized, trained, and equipped, with our aid, substantial indigenous forces to take over the

23. Acheson, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.; Lancaster, op. cit.
24. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

main burden of the fight."[25] Unfortunately, neither Mr. Acheson nor his officials sufficiently stressed this opinion to the French Government, an omission only recently explained by the former secretary himself:

> . . . Both during this period and after it our conduct was criticized as being a muddled hodgepodge, directed neither toward edging the French out of an effort to re-establish their colonial role, which was beyond their power, nor helping them hard enough to accomplish it or, even better, to defeat Ho and gracefully withdraw. The description is accurate enough. The criticism, however, fails to recognize the limits on the extent to which one may successfully coerce an ally. Withholding help and exhorting the ally or its opponent can be effective only when the ally can do nothing without help, as was the case in Indonesia. Furthermore, the result of withholding help to France would, at most, have removed the colonial power. It could not have made the resulting situation a beneficial one either for Indochina or for southeast Asia, or in the more important effort of furthering the stability and defense of Europe. So while we may have tried to muddle through and were certainly not successful, I could not think then or later of a better course. . . .[26]

The principal difficulty had appeared earlier: the conflict between American policy in Europe and the situation in Indochina. The problem already had become acute in American intervention in the Dutch-Indonesian wars. In January 1949, Walter Lippmann had astutely spelled it out in the New York *Herald Tribune:*

> . . . Our friends in Western Europe should try to understand why we cannot and must not be maneuvered, why we dare not drift, into general opposition to the independence movements in Asia. They should tell their propagandists to stop smearing these movements. They should try to realize how disastrous it would be to them, and to the cause of Western civilization, if ever it could be said that the Western Union for the defense of freedom in Europe was in Asia a syndicate for the preservation of decadent empires.[27]

Unfortunately, the Western Union was leaning toward precisely that. The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in April 1949, had made France the most important member of new Europe. The Truman administration believed that the treaty, if it was to serve Western, including American, strategic interests, had to expand into some kind of political-military organization, a growth dependent in part on French co-operation.

Other events meanwhile were adding to the importance of the Western alliance. Fighting continued in Greece; in 1948, Communist rebels had tripped off emergencies in nearby Malaya, Burma, and Indonesia; the Hukbalahap insurgency in the Philippines was gaining ground. In

25. Acheson, op. cit.
26. Ibid.
27. George M. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952).

1949, Ho Chi Minh put the DRV squarely in the world Communist movement, removing any moderate government officials and replacing them with hard-line Communists. In September of that year, explosion of an atomic weapon by the Soviets ended the security engendered by American monopoly of the weapon. Fears raised by this development gained fantasies from Chiang Kai-shek's fall and subsequent flight to Formosa.

As one result, the French effort in Indochina changed form still further in American administration minds. No longer did it seem such an embarrassing little colonial war. In late 1949 and early 1950, the United States, encouraged by France, began to paint the war in ideological colors: it started to become part of the free world's effort against communism. The U.S.A. now promised limited military and economic aid. Although she insisted on supplying economic aid directly to the three states—Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—she perforce supplied military aid to the French overseers, Vietnam not having an army worthy of the name. The outbreak of the Korean war, in June 1950, hastened the process of the American Government's mental conversion. On June 27, 1950, President Truman informed a group of legislators of steps he had taken to counter the new aggression. He added:

> . . . I have similarly directed acceleration in the furnishing of military assistance to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indo-China and the dispatch of a military mission to provide close working relations with those forces.[28]

The United States was now hooked to help France fight a war the exact nature of which neither country had yet identified.

28. Harry S Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955); see also Acheson, op. cit.

Chapter 54

Change in Viet Minh tactics • Vo Nguyen Giap • Mao Tse-tung's influence • Communist tactics in the South • Viet Minh military organization • The political base • Special Viet Minh units • Guerrilla tactics • French countertactics • Terror tactics • Enter Communist China • Viet Minh expansion

HO CHI MINH and his military leader, Vo Nguyen Giap, had, themselves, seriously erred by attacking French garrisons in December 1946. Forced into precipitate retreat, they narrowly avoided capture in 1947. This was the perigee of their fortunes, and they owed much of their salvation to a realistic appreciation and acceptance of their peculiar situation.

The two leaders were familiar with Mao Tse-tung's theory of protracted warfare, but apparently had hoped to avoid the guerrilla phase of fighting called for by Mao. Even before the Japanese surrender, they had taken steps to convert their guerrilla force into a regular army, and they seem to have expected a favorable outcome from the December attacks.

In the event, they soon found themselves on the defensive, struggling to preserve the main body of troops while keeping alive the flame of revolution in the South. In their simple mountain hide-out northwest of Hanoi, they vaguely resembled Mao and his lieutenants hiding in the

Chingkang Mountains in 1927. And like Mao and his lieutenants, they spent the time in considerable soul-searching, which brought a conversion to Mao-style warfare—partly through the influence of the party's secretary-general, Truong Chinh, who in 1947 published a Vietnamese version of Mao's theory of protracted warfare, *The Resistance Will Win.*[1] To what extent Ho Chi Minh favored this and to what extent his hand was forced by more-militant Communists, Giap included, has never been satisfactorily determined by Western observers.

Vo Nguyen Giap took the lead in military thinking at this time. Giap was thirty-five years old, a socialist turned Communist, veteran of French jails, history teacher turned soldier. In 1950, he published a book, *La guerre de la libération et l'armée populaire* (*The War of Liberation and the People's Army*), which, seventeen years later, Dr. Tanham still considered ". . . one of the fullest expressions of Viet-Minh doctrine."[2]

After admitting the 1946 errors, Giap argued in favor of a three-phase, Mao-style war. The first phase called for a strategic defense, a passive resistance to wear the enemy down while both regular and irregular Viet Minh units reorganized and built up strength. Giap wrote that this phase ended in 1947 in favor of the second phase, active resistance and preparation for the counteroffensive. The second phase, still underway in 1950, called for extensive guerrilla attacks as well as a continued propaganda-subversion effort. The final phase, Giap wrote, would consist of a general counteroffensive designed to defeat the French army.

Some Western authorities have argued that the Viet Minh entered the second phase considerably later than 1947. This is possible—Giap might have offered the 1947 date to try to lessen the Viet Minh debt to China, which did not start sending arms and supply until 1950. In view of the fluid situation, the exact date does not much matter. The war in the South proceeded at a slower pace and in a different fashion from that up North, and even in the North the final phase of what Mao Tse-tung called "mobile," or orthodox, warfare was to be carried out with massive injections of guerrilla tactics.

As we have noted, Tran Van Giau's Committee of the South was waging guerrilla warfare by late 1945. Although Communist-inspired, this was frequently a nationalist effort. A veteran of the old nationalist

1. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Tanham, op. cit.; Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra;* Melvin Gurtov, *The First Vietnam Crisis—Chinese Communist Strategy and United States Involvement 1953–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

2. Tanham, op. cit.; see also Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra,* for a different viewpoint; Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967). Although written primarily for internal consumption and thus heavily propagandistic, General Giap's work nonetheless provides a wealth of information on Viet Minh organization, strategy, and tactics.

party, the VNQDD, and a dangerous terrorist, explained his motivation to Robert Shaplen:

. . . You see, this is not just a matter of a sudden conspiracy. We are like a spring that has been sat upon for nearly a hundred years and now has been released. Acts of "terrorism" for us have become a part of war, although we do not approve of throwing grenades so that innocent people are hurt or killed. Nevertheless, the people of Indo-china, despite mistakes we may make, support us because they will not accept the return of the French. This is true of the young people and the old ones. Children of ten and twelve are even trusted by us as liaison agents. Women help in our Red Cross and troop kitchens. Men who are too old to fight, or too ill, can often help by spying, or just by raising rice on their farms.[3]

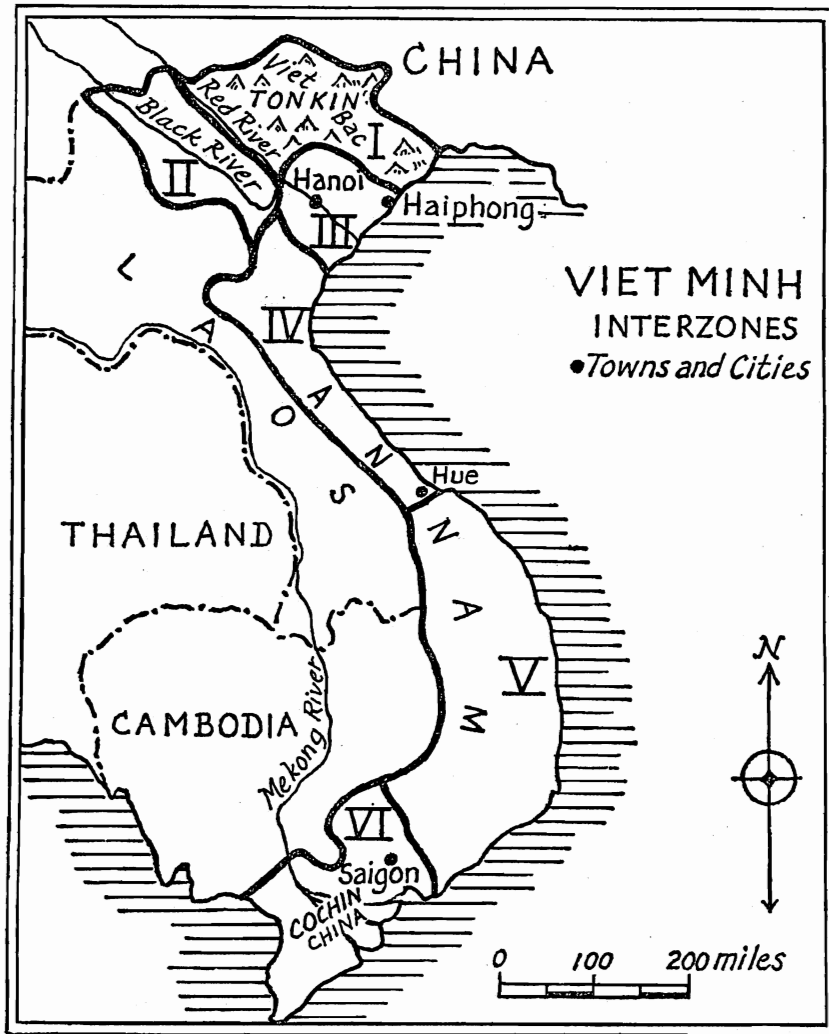
Ho Chi Minh and his comrades had rightly recognized the necessity of harnessing this inspired nationalist attitude to the Communist effort, not alienating it as Tran Van Giau was doing. Shaplen later wrote:

. . . At the time of the Dalat Conference [April 1946], the Vietminh government in Hanoi sent a top organizer named Nguyên Binh to Cochin China to coordinate the resistance movement in the south, and he succeeded, in a matter of months, in establishing general unity, although some discordant elements remained. At this time, according to estimates I was given in Saigon, the guerrillas in Cochin China had about twenty thousand weapons of various kinds, mostly old French rifles and some Japanese guns. They operated in groups of ten or twelve men, and had already created small suicide squads, called *can tu,* which usually carried grenades and concentrated on hit-and-run tactics against French detachments or outposts. By the summer of 1946, the guerrillas were using terrorists in Saigon fairly regularly, and most of the cafes and restaurants . . . had put up some kind of protection. . . .[4]

While this effort continued, Ho and his associates concentrated on building a political-military organization throughout Vietnam with offshoots, in due course, in Cambodia and Laos. Although this was the main work of the formative years, it was not a phased effort but, rather, organic and continuing. It resulted in an organization of which some understanding is necessary if the reader is to appreciate fully the subsequent fighting and final French defeat, not to mention subsequent American political and military failures.

Basically, the Viet Minh depended on an organization similar to that forged by Chinese Communists, but one that, because of what Ho called ". . . geographic, historical, economic, and cultural conditions," differed in growth and activity.[5]

3. Shaplen, op. cit.
4. Ibid.
5. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution. Selected Writings 1920–1966* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967). Ed. Bernard Fall.



The military machine consisted of three groups: regular army, regional forces, and popular troops. The Viet Minh recruited, organized, and trained regional and popular forces on a territorial basis. The high command divided the country into six interzones, each containing zones, provinces, districts, intervillages, and villages.[6] Where possible, zones,

6. Lancaster, op. cit.: The Viet-Minh relied mostly on radios for communications between interzones, but this often resulted in serious misunderstandings, particularly between North and South; see also Giap, op. cit.

provinces, and districts each raised and maintained provincial forces, while intervillages and villages raised and maintained popular forces. Impetus, however, stemmed from bottom upward, and this is the essential point: neither the regular army nor provincial forces could have existed for long without multifaceted support provided by villages and popular troops.[7]

Accordingly, the Viet Minh made every effort to win control of peasant hamlets and villages. From their mountain sanctuary northwest of Hanoi, Ho and Giap dispatched a steady stream of agitation-propaganda teams. These trained teams either contacted resident Communist cells working covertly or overtly to "develop" popular Viet Minh "bases" or they set about recruiting such cells.

What was their siren song?

The reader perhaps will be surprised to learn that it was not the virtues of communism. The pitch, as signaled by Ho in late December 1946, carefully avoids the word:

> . . . Compatriots! Rise up!
>
> Men and women, old and young, regardless of creeds, political parties, or nationalities, all the Vietnamese must stand up to fight the French colonialists to save the Fatherland. Those who have rifles will use their rifles; those who have swords will use their swords; those who have no swords will use spades, hoes, or sticks. Everyone must endeavor to oppose the colonialists and save his country.[8]

Revolutionary teams concentrated on the single issue of *doc-lap,* of independence, a magic word made into a vocal harp on which these agents skillfully played appealing variations on a theme.

These teams formed the Communist version of Lyautey's civil-military task forces, but instead of spreading brightly colored wares in the village market place, they spread words of hope and dignity in men's minds.

The Viet Minh agents cared.

They cared about high rents paid by peasants, usurious interest on loans, the lack of food that plagued the land, epidemics, illiteracy, lack of schools, teachers, hospitals, doctors. They condemned greedy landlords and rapacious tax collectors and corrupt officials who kept men indebted for life, debts that passed as legacy to survivors.

They discussed all these things and more, and they told the people that *doc-lap,* by returning the land to the people, would erase such injustices and allow everyone a happy and full life for the first time in anyone's memory.

How was *doc-lap* to be achieved?

As Uncle Ho said: by the people.

By peasant and worker, by people gathered listening to the song of

7. Tanham, op. cit.

8. Ho Chi Minh, op. cit.; see also *Mao Tse-tung, Basic Tactics* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966). Tr. with Introduction by Stuart R. Schram.

Viet Minh agents. The Viet Minh was the people's party; it was recruiting to fight the people's war.

Everyone had a task in the Viet Minh, young and old, able and infirm, men and women, boys and girls.

The Viet Minh needed men to fight as part-time guerrillas, to fight as village militia, to fight in regional forces, to fight in the regular army.

The Viet Minh needed support of all the people. As Uncle Ho said: The people would furnish food to the guerrillas, they would shelter them and care for them when wounded, give them information and money, act as messengers. They would spread the word to other people. Some would carry supplies for the regular army. Others would spy. All would lie. Some would kill. Each in his own way would fight. Some would fall; many would die. That was the price of *doc-lap*.

Where people responded, an organization emerged. The "popular forces" of a village or a complex of villages consisted of the Dan Quan,

> . . . which theoretically included almost everyone . . . [and was] essentially a labor force with a tinge of military training. Though occasionally they performed sabotage, their main responsibility was to collect intelligence, serve as guards, make road repairs, build bases, fortify the villages, and—very important—act as porters. They wore no uniforms and had virtually no weapons, except for some sabotage materials.[9]

A smaller group, the Dan Quan Du Kich, "farmers by day—guerrillas by night,"

> . . . had some arms and undertook guerrilla actions on a small scale. They received rudimentary military training and were expected eventually to become line soldiers. Though generally forbidden to assemble in large groups, they were called together in emergencies when it was essential to prevent French clearing operations or to intensify guerrilla activity.[10]

Members of Dan Quan and Du Kich carried on with normal civilian activities except in emergency cases. Controlled by a village committee, they spread the revolutionary word and furnished young fighters for provincial forces.

Provincial forces existed at district level, usually in company strength, and at province and zone levels, usually in battalion and, later, regimental strength. Though full-time soldiers, these troops wore a variety of uniforms and lacked heavy weapons and sophisticated equipment. This in no way diminished operational responsibilities:

> . . . One of the primary duties of the regional forces was to protect an area and its population. They were the troops that met the French clearing operations, launched small attacks, and generally harassed the enemy; in

9. Tanham, op. cit.
10. Ibid.

short, they were the "mature guerrillas," who kept the enemy off balance and ambushed his reinforcements.

Their responsibilities extended both upward and downward in the total military organization. On the one hand, they trained and assisted the popular troops. On the other they were what might be called the guardians of the regular army. Not only did they constitute a reserve and supply reinforcements to the regular forces when needed, but they prevented interference in the army's training and planning, prepared the battlefield for impending operations, protected the regular forces in retreat and advance, and took over some of their defensive missions.[11]

Throughout this period, Ho and Giap carefully husbanded regular army units. Men who graduated from regional forces into the regular army received fairly systematic training in more or less orthodox military subjects including use of such heavy weapons as machine guns, mortars, bazookas, recoilless rifles. For a couple of years, the regular army consisted of battalions; in time, these battalions grew to regimental strength, and in 1950, to division strength (far inferior numerically to orthodox Western divisions).

The Viet Minh military organization was never far removed from political influence and control both inside and outside the army. Political officers from company level upward dealt with ". . . proper ideological indoctrination of the soldiers and the integration of military actions with political objectives."[12] Since the Communist aspect was still covert, a shadow party political organization also existed, operating through unit cells.

The system stressed the soldier's political training as much as if not more than his military training. As in China, he learned to depend on the people. One of the ten points of his oath was ". . . to respect and help the civilian population."

As Mao had done in China in the early stages of revolution, Ho also set the regular army to the recruiting task. In the work earlier cited, Giap wrote:

> . . . Since popular "bases" were indispensable to the development of the guerrilla war, we dispersed the companies of each battalion and we permitted them the necessary liberty of action so that they could infiltrate different regions and cement their friendly relations with the local populace. Since the companies were relatively weak, they had no difficulty in understanding the necessity for firm popular bases. Thanks to their intimate acquaintance with the different regions, they easily won the support of the local population. Their close connection with popular bases gave a strong impetus to the armed conflict. When the guerrilla units acquired enough experience, when the local

11. Ibid.; see also Lancaster, op. cit.
12. Tanham, op. cit.; see also Giap, op. cit.

militia became powerful enough, the dispersed elements of the companies in the different localities gradually regrouped themselves.[13]

A reasonable idea of the activities of these soldiers can be gained from rules that Ho Chi Minh circulated to both soldiers and bureaucrats in April 1948. In working with people, Viet Minh agents were to follow certain "forbiddances" and certain "permissibles":

SIX FORBIDDANCES TO THE BUREAUCRATS AND SOLDIERS:

1. Not to do what is likely to damage the land and crops or spoil the houses and belongings of the people.
2. Not to insist on buying or borrowing what the people are not willing to sell or lend.
3. Not to bring living hens into the mountain people's houses.
4. Never to break your word.
5. Not to give offense to people's faith and customs (such as to lie down before the altar, to raise the feet over the hearth, to play music in the house, etc.).
6. Not to do or speak what is likely to make people believe that we hold them in contempt.

SIX PERMISSIBLES:

1. To help the people in their daily work (harvesting, fetching firewood, carrying water, sewing, etc.).
2. Whenever possible, to buy commodities for those who live far from markets (knives, salt, needles, thread, pen, paper, etc.).
3. In spare time, to tell amusing, simple, and short stories useful to the Resistance, but not betraying secrets.
4. To teach the population the national script and elementary hygiene.
5. To study the customs of each region so as to be acquainted with them in order to create an atmosphere of sympathy first, then gradually to explain to the people to abate their superstitions.
6. To show to the people that you are correct, diligent, and disciplined.[14]

Viet Minh leadership devoted equal care to political organization of the people. Each zone, province, district, and village fell under a separate committee command usually called the Committee of Resistance. At interzone or zone level, this committee ". . . dealt not only with the political, economic, and military aspects of the war but also with local problems of health and culture." Subordinate committees were less elaborate, those at the village level being responsible for ". . . the defense of the village and the day-to-day activities of the guerrillas." Where

13. Tanham, op. cit.
14. Ho Chi Minh (*Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*), *supra.*

covert cells existed, as was usual in French-occupied areas, the Viet Minh tried to establish shadow, or "parallel," governments.[15]

This system of what the French called *hiérarchies parallèles* was the key to Viet Minh control at each level of government. Based on Lenin's and Mao's teachings, it operated in two ways, either by utilizing ". . . existing administrative structures through the infiltration of subversive individuals, or the creation of altogether new clandestine structures designed to take over full administrative responsibilities when political and military conditions are ripe."[16]

The Viet Minh accomplished none of this organization overnight. Singers of the *doc-lap* song found a greatly varied reception. They were far more popular in the North, in the Red River Delta, than elsewhere. Mountain tribes surrounding their northern sanctuaries did not trust them (or anything else that was Vietnamese) and were pacified only with greatest difficulty. Various opposition nationalist groups, many in the South, wanted nothing to do with the Communist-dominated Viet Minh, even though rejecting French rule.

The Viet Minh countered a certain amount of this opposition by playing on the people's desire for independence. Once it controlled villages, it extended control by weaving the population together through the activities of Lien Viet, which, according to a French army report,

> . . . included youth groups, groups for mothers, farmers, workers, "resistant" Catholics, war veterans, etc. It could just as well have included associations of flute players or bicycle racers; the important point was that no one escaped regimentation and that the [normal] territorial hierarchy was thus complemented by another which watched the former and was in turn watched by it—both of them being watched in turn from the outside and inside by the security services and the Party. The individual caught in the fine mesh of such a net has no chance whatever of preserving his independence.[17]

In addition to party representatives, who occupied key administrative positions at all administrative levels, the Viet Minh enforced discipline and extended control of the population by a civilian secret police force, the Cong An; a special military intelligence force, the Trinh Sat; and a special terrorist organization, the Dich-Van; which we will shortly examine more closely.

In these formative years, the Viet Minh suffered a considerable number of internal problems. From time to time, Ho complained of bureaucratic fumbling that resulted in waste and corruption. The armed forces lacked trained officers and specialists. Severe supply shortages also existed. Although weapons and other supplies arrived from Nationalist

15. Tanham, op. cit.
16. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra.*
17. Ibid.

China, Thailand, and the Philippines, these sources eventually dried up, to leave the Viet Minh mainly dependent on captured weapons or on "cottage production." This varied from factories employing as many as five hundred people and situated in sanctuary areas, to mobile shops of from ten to fifteen workers:

> . . . Despite the shortage of precision tools, power, and raw materials, the Viet-Minh managed to produce fairly large quantities of materials. In the first six months of 1948, for instance, the Viets reported that shops in one intersector produced 38,000 grenades, 30,000 rifle cartridges, 8,000 cartridges for light machine guns, 60 rounds for a bazooka, and 100 mines. Another sector produced 61 light machine guns, 4 submachine guns, 20 automatic pistols, and 7,000 cartridges in the entire year 1948.[18]

Despite difficulties, the Viet Minh continued to grow in size and effectiveness. Although poverty of organization and strength confined operations to the guerrilla level—to raids on French outposts, ambush of patrols and convoys, and interdiction of roads—by 1948, these operations were displaying characteristics that made them increasingly difficult to counter.

Viet Minh raids were not slapdash affairs but generally well-thought-out and carefully planned operations in which mobility and surprise dovetailed to produce satisfactory results. They served both a political and a military purpose. Politically, they demonstrated that the Viet Minh intended to "liberate" an area from French control and thus added muscle to Viet Minh propaganda and helped to strengthen further the covert Viet Minh presence in that area. Militarily, they provided weapons and ammunition and also helped units to perfect infiltration and assault tactics. Finally, they exercised a demoralizing influence on the French.

Usually made at night, attacks were rarely prolonged. If successful, intruders gathered up weapons, perhaps a prisoner or two, and whatever ammunition and equipment they could carry. If a raid failed, attackers generally broke off action and fled, either to designated rendezvous areas or, if cut off, to friendly villages, where they merged with the population.

A successful raid depended in large part on accurate intelligence. Guerrilla teams not only wanted to strike the weakest outposts but the weakest part of a weak outpost. Here is where careful preparation of the population was paying off: French outposts were under almost constant scrutiny both from inside by various Vietnamese lackeys and from outside by peasants. Moreover, a friendly population supported Viet Minh agents and even combat teams who infiltrated into a target area to carry on the agitation-propaganda effort, organize the people, collect intelligence, and participate in attacks when necessary.

18. Tanham, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.; Hammer, op. cit.: Forest "factories" also manufactured paper, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, and textiles.

A sympathetic population also greatly aided Viet Minh construction and security of defensive areas. In the North, these usually consisted of fortified villages. Guerrillas and villagers devoted thousands of man-hours to preparing underground labyrinths cunningly camouflaged and often stocked with food and water in case of prolonged occupation. A security network of innocent-looking peasants guarded these strongholds against surprise, thus allowing guerrilla inhabitants the option of escape or ambush of an intruding French force. If outnumbered, or if other factors were unfavorable, the Viet Minh did not hesitate to abandon the village.

On the few occasions the French surprised the Viet Minh, the latter usually managed to break off action and escape. A case cited by Dr. Tanham, a surprise infantry and paratroop raid on Viet Minh headquarters in Cochin China in autumn of 1948, failed for the same reasons that the final German surprise raid failed on Tito's headquarters in World War II (see Chapter 36, Volume I): a guerrilla rear guard held off the attacking force long enough for the main body to escape, in this case to secret camouflaged positions, subterranean caves and riverbanks, or by melting into surrounding peasant areas.[19]

Obviously, the people's support, active or passive, was essential to continued success of Viet Minh operations or even to Viet Minh existence. This is why the Viet Minh devoted perhaps more effort to the agitation-propaganda-recruiting side of the war than to fighting the French.

Inept French tactics, for example clearing operations that destroyed huts, damaged crops, and maltreated peasants, greatly aided the Viet Minh in their effort to win the people's co-operation. Where French made progress in the pacification program, notably in the South, the Viet Minh used more-militant tactics to destroy the French influence. This was the task of the special terrorist organization, the Dich-Van, whose members did not hesitate to murder officials who co-operated with the French. In Viet Minh eyes, this was not wanton slaughter. Except in isolated and undisciplined cases, such murders served specific political goals: If the official was corrupt, his murder constituted a popular act; in any case, it served as a bloody warning that the French, despite martial trappings, did *not* control the area and that anyone impeding the fight for Vietnamese independence by trafficking with the French could and would be summarily dealt with.

We see here in these years the gradual appearance of all ingredients of an insurgency situation. Had the battle remained an internal affair confined to limited French and Viet Minh forces, it could perhaps have been resolved by political means—by some sort of standoff agreement similar to that reached in March 1946—before it broadened. Despite the intensity of the Viet Minh effort, their strength would probably not

19. Ibid.

have increased to the point where they could have undertaken the final, or mobile, phase of the war, anyway for many, many years.

But Communist China's victory, in 1949, greatly altered matters. The Viet Minh could now hope to enter the third phase of warfare. In late 1949, Ho Chi Minh's government proclaimed a national mobilization and began conscripting males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. This guarantee of almost limitless porters, the promise of military aid from China and of sanctuary in case of defeat, and the peculiar vulnerability of French outposts in the North allowed Giap to become more tactically daring than his meager resources warranted. In anticipation of bigger things, in late 1949 he began attacking French outposts in the Black River Valley, northwest of Hanoi.

Chapter 55

Viet Minh offensives • French disasters • La sale guerre • *General de Lattre de Tassigny • Giap's mistakes • Change in Communist tactics • French strategy and tactics • De Lattre's "crusade" • American intervention • American-French conflict • George Kennan's warning to Acheson • Acheson's dilemma (II) • Gullion and Blum dissent • Senator John Kennedy's position*

THE COMBINATION of superb intelligence gained from peasants, meticulous planning, mobility, and surprise, which characterized the Viet Minh's early guerrilla raids, was carried over to Giap's first major offensive. Operation Le-Loi concentrated on destroying a series of small French outposts located in the Black River Valley. By January 1950, fifteen Viet Minh battalions had overrun these small forts to drive a wedge between the Thai Highlands and the Red River Delta.

Giap's success here, taken with the arrival of Chinese Communist forces on the border, caused him to undertake the more ambitious operation of clearing the northern border area. In February 1950, Giap declared that the second phase of the war, guerrilla warfare, was over and that the third phase, mobile warfare, was to begin.[1] Giap now opened Operation Le Hong Phong I.[2] Five Viet Minh regiments struck

1. Lancaster, op. cit.; see also Giap, op. cit.
2. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra:* The Viet Minh code name always carried a psychological connotation; in this case, the operation was named after the first secretary-general of the Indochinese Communist Party.

throughout the region and, after some sharp fighting, occupied major towns to leave French forces in northeastern Tonkin compressed into a string of forts stretching some one hundred and sixty miles along a single-lane highway, Route Coloniale 4, from Cao Bang to the Gulf of Tonkin. These were the forts that, in 1949, the French chief of staff, General Revers, had wanted evacuated.

Giap next turned his attention to these forts. Using fresh troops trained and equipped in China and supported by American artillery pieces that Communist Chinese had captured from the Nationalists, he attacked and briefly held the fort of Dong Khe. Throughout the summer, Viet Minh guerrillas interdicted the long and vulnerable French supply line. Giap meanwhile brought battle-tested regiments through China to the east, where they joined with ". . . ten newly formed Viet-Minh battalions, reinforced by a complete artillery regiment."[3] In September, he opened Operation Le Hong Phong II by again attacking and capturing Dong Khe, which effectively cut communications between Cao Bang, a key garrison eighty-five miles distant from the southern forts.

The French command in Hanoi reacted in two ways: It ordered the Cao Bang commander ". . . to blow up all his heavy equipment and all his motor transport and to march out of Cao-Bang"; simultaneously, it started a relief force of thirty-five hundred men marching north, where it would take Dong Khe and join the retreating Cao Bang garrison.[4]

This plan probably would have salvaged most of the troops, but the Cao Bang commander sabotaged it by refusing to abandon his artillery and transport. He thus tied his retreat to the jungle-flanked windings and flimsy bridges of Route Coloniale 4. He immediately struck a series of Viet Minh ambushes so fiercely executed that, according to Fall, ". . . after one day of arduous work, the force had covered *nine* miles."[5] Not until Giap's guerrillas chewed columns to shreds did he abandon transport and guns, but, by then, the relief force marching from the south was under heavy attack.

Remnants of the two forces met outside Dong Khe, where, despite reinforcement by three battalions of paratroopers, they were virtually annihilated. General Carpentier now evacuated the southernmost fort of Lang Son, leaving most of its thirteen hundred tons of supply to the Viet Minh. By the end of October 1950, ". . . almost the whole northern half of North Viet-Nam had become a Viet-Minh redoubt. . . ." Fall summed up the disaster:

> . . . When the smoke cleared, the French had suffered their greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm had died in Quebec. They had lost 6,000 troops, 13 artillery pieces and 125 mortars, 450 trucks and three armored platoons, 940 machine guns, 1200 submachine guns and more than 8,000 rifles. Their

3. Ibid.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.
4. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra*.
5. Ibid.

abandoned stocks alone sufficed for the equipment of a whole additional Viet-Minh division.[6]

With the French troops falling back to the Red River Delta, where panic-stricken civilians greeted them with demoralizing rumors, it looked as if the Viet Minh would soon claim all of northern Vietnam. The disaster coincided with General MacArthur's serious reverse in Korea occasioned by Chinese entry into the war. French morale at home plunged. French Communists assumed a new militancy and started ". . . a campaign of strikes and demonstrations aimed at obstructing the transport of soldiers and war material to Indochina."[7] Such was the reaction to

6. Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra;* see also Giap, op. cit.
7. Hammer (*Struggle for Indochina*), *supra.*

what Communists termed *la sale guerre*—the dirty war—that important non-Communist voices began calling for French withdrawal.

One of them belonged to Pierre Mendès-France, a former Gaullist and future premier, who, in November 1950, laid basic issues on the line in the National Assembly:

> . . . It is the overall conception of our action in Indochina that is false, because it relies both on a military effort that is too thin and weak to provide a solution through strength, and on a political effort that is too thin and weak to secure for us the allegiance of the population. . . . This cannot be on.
>
> There are only two solutions. The first would be to fulfil our objectives in Indochina by force of arms. If we choose it, let us now give up illusions and pious falsehoods. In order to achieve decisive military successes rapidly, we will need three times as many forces on the ground and three times as many funds, and we will need them very quickly. . . .[8]

The effort would be expensive and would demand drastic sacrifices on the home front. The alternative

> . . . is to seek a political agreement, an agreement, obviously, with those who oppose us. . . . An agreement means concessions, wide concessions. . . .
>
> A choice must be made. . . . Apart from the military solution, the solution of force, there is only one possibility—negotiation. . . . Have we the means of escaping this outcome when we ourselves have made it unavoidable by our failures and mistakes?[9]

Mendès-France told the Assembly that concessions would include Vietnamese independence, negotiated withdrawal of French troops, and free, supervised elections.[10]

In the ensuing debate, Jean Letourneau, Minister for the Associated States, stated ". . . that the government of Premier René Pleven intended to carry out the March 8, 1949 [Élysée] agreements with the greatest liberalism. Virtually all of the administrative machinery would be in Vietnamese hands by January 1, 1951, he promised, and the French would hand over power as rapidly as possible to a Vietnamese army."[11] Having won Assembly approval, Pleven's government recalled Carpentier and Léon Pignon and appointed the forceful general Jean de Lattre de Tassigny to the dual civil-military command.

Although a sick man, De Lattre possessed considerable charisma, and his evident enthusiasm and tireless efforts brought a much needed boost to morale and army discipline. A cocky little fellow, called "Le Roi Jean"—King Jean—by some, De Lattre promised his troops no easy

8. Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War; Indochina, 1954* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969).
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Hammer ("Genesis of the First Indochinese War"), *supra*.

road, but he also told them, ". . . No matter what, you will be commanded."[12]

De Lattre walked into an extremely crucial tactical situation. Giap's autumn victories had given him ideas made the more grandiose by initial Chinese successes in Korea and by an increasing flow of arms from Communist China. The Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam was now unquestionably committed to the Communist camp—in early 1951, the government would re-create the Indochinese Communist Party, under the title of Lao Dong, and would begin the transformation of the state to a "people's democracy."[13] By late 1950, the army included heavy weapons, artillery, and even engineer units.[14]

As prelude to a push on Hanoi itself, Giap attacked the outpost of Vinh Yen with two divisions in mid-January 1951. This kicked off with a skillful diversionary effort that enticed a French mobile group into ambush and cost it some two battalions in casualties. But unexpectedly strong defenses at Vinh Yen, including well-directed artillery support and aircraft dropping newly introduced napalm, stopped the main effort. Giap foolishly ordered mass, or "human sea," tactics that sent wave after wave of infantry against determined defenders well dug in and supported by heavy artillery and air. Giap's logistics system was not up to this kind of warfare. Each of his divisions, of about twelve thousand men, depended on about fifty thousand human porters to support an offensive role.[15] Although he was said to have utilized 180,000 porters during the action, his primitive supply lines were unable to furnish resupply. Continuing intermittently for four days, the Viet Minh attacks suddenly ceased—a major setback which cost the Communists some six thousand killed, several thousand wounded, and five hundred taken prisoner.[16]

Apparently undeterred, Giap shifted his effort to the southeast, to the hill range around Dong Trieu. A successful attack here would open approaches to the coal-mining area and would cut the delta from the vital port of Haiphong. In late March, three divisions struck at Mao Khe. The small French garrison held out until reinforced by paratroopers, and once again the attack failed at considerable cost to the Viet Minh.

Giap struck next from the south, a surprise attack aided by a regiment he had infiltrated behind French lines. In late May, three of his divisions fell on Thai Binh. But their lines of communication ran across the Day River and here were interdicted by French river units and by planes dropping napalm. Thus hindered, assault units could not sustain the attack.

12. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra;* see also Buttinger, op. cit., and Lancaster, op. cit., for a more critical appraisal.
13. Lancaster, op. cit.
14. Giap, op. cit.
15. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Indo-China War, 1945–1954* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964).
16. Lancaster, op. cit.; see also O'Ballance, op. cit., who cites 7–8,000 wounded.

In mid-June, having lost about a third of their force, the Viet Minh abruptly broke contact and retreated to the mountains.

This series of battles produced important developments in each camp. As a Viet Minh failure, the actions caused Giap to reverse his thinking and postpone the third, or all-out offensive, phase. Rightly assuming that time was on his side, he spent summer of 1951 in rebuilding shattered divisions. He then turned to the Thai Highlands and Laos and in September began a series of nibbling actions against semi-isolated outposts.

Equally important developments occurred in French and American camps. The winter-spring battles, though far from "victories," removed much of the sting from earlier French defeats. By so doing, they combined with other factors—with De Lattre's conventional military background, with his dangerous belief in superiority of Western-style warfare in a guerrilla-warfare environment, perhaps with his illness—to blind him to the exact nature of the political challenge.

By spring of 1951, the French staff held ample evidence that France was fighting an extremely determined enemy whose operations depended in large part on co-operation of the Vietnamese people. Yet, no more than earlier administrators and military commanders, did De Lattre come up with a plan to steal this support and thus weaken his enemy perhaps irreparably.

Instead, De Lattre sought to inject enthusiasm into his forces and into the Vietnamese people, particularly the *attentistes,* or fence sitters, *not* by changing the nature of the political approach, but by changing the nature of the war, a task simplified by the East-West confrontation in Korea. The French historians Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture later wrote:

> . . . While the [French] Chiefs of Staff Committee recommended a concentration of effort in southern Indochina, where the chief French interests lay, de Lattre maintained—and secured government support for his views—that the loss of Tonkin would lead to the West's loss of Indochina and Southeast Asia. Here was the bolt to the door, he claimed, and he added that a serious setback in the north might well cause the Vietnamese government simply to fade away. Having thus linked the fates of Indochina and Tonkin, he demanded absolute priority for this theater of war and the immediate dispatch of large reinforcements.[17]

De Lattre vigorously denied that his was a colonial war. Instead, in Robert Shaplen's words:

> . . . De Lattre was convinced that he was leading a crusade against Communism. He told me that the French were in Vietnam "to save it from Peking and Moscow," and he predicted victory in fifteen months. He in-

17. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.

sisted that there was no longer an ounce of colonialism left in French intentions. . . .[18]

In July 1951, De Lattre stated that the war

. . . no longer concerns France except to the extent of her promises to Vietnam and the part she has to play in the defense of the free world. Not since the Crusades has France undertaken such disinterested action. This war is the war of Vietnam for Vietnam.[19]

Whether De Lattre believed this or whether he realized the appeal that his words would have to conservative members of the American Congress and public, it was palpable nonsense. One thing certain, his words could not have convinced many Vietnamese, for as Shaplen pointed out:

. . . The French still owned practically all of the real wealth of Indochina, and their investment was close to two billion dollars; they owned all the rubber plantations, which, despite the war, were still operating . . . and they owned two-thirds of the rice, all the mines, all the shipping, virtually all the industry, and nearly all the banks. . . .[20]

Prompted by French and American governments, the former furnishing the authority, the latter most of the money, De Lattre also turned to building a Vietnamese army, authorized by the Élysée Agreements but so far consisting only of a few battalions. De Lattre began a widespread recruiting campaign designed to increase this force to thirty battalions. Due to hostility of French officialdom and Vietnamese apathy, he only partially succeeded—under the circumstances, a major failure. But he did succeed in obtaining some fresh troops from North Africa.[21]

Strategically, he insisted on continuing the war and again refused the notion of withdrawing from the North. Wanting to deprive the Viet Minh of the Red River Delta rice bowl, he attempted to seal off this vast area, about seventy-five hundred square miles and eight million inhabitants, with a complicated complex of forts, some twelve hundred large and small concrete structures, known as the "de Lattre Line."[22] At the same time, he introduced the tactical innovation of mobile groups, special task forces of his best infantry, armor, and artillery units used ". . . as offensive striking forces to attack key Viet Minh installations and force combat on . . . [De Lattre's] own terms."[23] De Lattre mobilized seven of these *Groupes Mobiles*. Together with eight parachute battalions, they constituted his striking force, which was supposed to check and defeat between six and seven Viet Minh divisions.

18. Shaplen, op. cit.
19. Buttinger, op. cit.
20. Shaplen, op. cit.
21. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.
22. Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra;* see also Lancaster, op. cit.
23. Tanham, op. cit.

Although De Lattre commanded a force of about half a million men, 350,000 of them ". . . were tied down in static assignments . . . or in noncombatant supply. . . ."[24]

De Lattre continued to rely on his air force and on two other tactical innovations. One consisted of Dinaussauts, or special river units of various-sized landing craft that patrolled numerous waterways. The other was an attempt to outdo the Viet Minh at their own game by sending special teams, consisting in part of "converted" Viet Minh prisoners, into Viet Minh territory to work up guerrilla resistance. The command of these units, called *Groupements de Commandos Mixtes Aéroportés,* or GCMA, went to a young paratroop major, Roger Trinquier, of whom we will hear more in the final chapter of this war. The units, which mostly parachuted into target areas, were supplied by airdrop while working with tribes loyal to the French.[25]

Thus armed, De Lattre set to work to "win" the war.

De Lattre's "victories" in winter and spring of 1951 also influenced American officials, both in Indochina and in Washington. The American attitude toward Indochina, if anything, had grown more ambivalent. Prime Minister Nguyen Phan Long had complicated matters in early 1950 by asking for economic and military aid directly from the United States. The prime minister optimistically argued that a grant of $146 million would allow him to build a national Vietnamese army that would defeat the Viet Minh in six months.[26] This drew a sharp retort from the French commander, General Carpentier:

> . . . I will never agree to equipment being given directly to the Viet Namese. If this should be done, I would resign within twenty-four hours. The Viet Namese have no generals, no colonels, no military organization that could effectively utilize the equipment. It would be wasted, and in China the United States has had enough of that.[27]

The pending conflict, never satisfactorily solved, was noted by Walter Lippmann, who, in early April 1950, wrote:

> . . . Everyone knows that the great majority of the people of Indo-China are bitterly opposed to the continuation of French rule, and that they could be united behind a government only if that government were clearly and certainly destined to make Indo-China as independent as Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon. But if Bao-Dai or anyone else were promised independence, it is equally certain that the French army could not be induced to continue the war. The French officers and troops and the

24. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.
25. Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare—A French View of Counter-Insurgency* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).
26. Lancaster, op. cit.
27. Ibid.; see also Hammer (*The Struggle for Indochina, 1940–1955*), *supra.*

French assembly may be willing to fight for the preservation of French interests in this rich colony. They cannot be counted upon to fight a dangerous, dirty, inconclusive war which is to end in the abandonment of the French interests in Asia. . . . Put bluntly but truthfully, the French army can be counted on to go on defending Southeast Asia only if the Congress of the United States will pledge itself to subsidize heavily—in terms of several hundred million dollars a year and for many years to come—a French colonial war to subdue not only the Communists but the nationalists as well.[28]

But when the United States agreed, in autumn of 1950, to help France raise a Vietnamese army, Ambassador Donald Heath, in Saigon, advised ". . . that the desired political and psychological effect [of a national army] could be obtained only if the Associated States were given a real role in the arrangements."[29] Shortly after, Secretary of State Acheson was advised by one of his lieutenants that ". . . Prince Bao Dai should be pushed to assume maximum effective leadership" and ". . . that although Indochina was an area of French responsibility, in view of French ineffectiveness it would be better for France to pull out if she could not provide sufficient force to hold; that we should strengthen a second line of defense in Thailand, Malaya, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. . . ."[30] Just prior to Chinese intervention in Korea, still another lieutenant presciently warned the Secretary of State

. . . that the appearance of the Chinese in Korea required us to take a second look at where we were going in Indochina. Not only was there real danger that our efforts would fail in their immediate purpose and waste valuable resources in the process, but we were moving into a position in Indochina in which "our responsibilities tend to supplant rather than complement those of the French." We could, he added, become a scapegoat for the French and be sucked into direct intervention. "These situations have a way of snowballing," he concluded.[31]

Thus, American officials in Vietnam began to find the going increasingly frustrating. The aid question became a particularly sore point. During the 1950 negotiations, American officials wisely had held out for bilateral aid agreements between the United States and the three Associated States: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Most economic aid, which, up to July 1951, amounted to $23.5 million, went to Vietnam. But in administering funds, the head of the American aid program, Robert Blum, collided with French officialdom, which accused him of undermining French interests by fomenting Vietnamese nationalism. As one result, the French used obstructive methods to downplay the American effort and, at times, to nullify its most beneficial effects.

28. Lancaster, op. cit.
29. Acheson, op. cit.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

A strong diplomatic stand undoubtedly could have rectified this unsavory situation, but external factors previously discussed continued to play a major role by dividing American councils. In Washington, George Kennan, by far the most prescient diplomat in the State Department, had become seriously alarmed by events in Indochina. In late August 1950, he wrote an official memorandum to Secretary of State Acheson that, unlike other advices of the time, offered a positive course of action based on grim reality:

. . . In Indo-China, we are getting ourselves into the position of guaranteeing the French in an undertaking which neither they nor we, nor both of us together, can win. . . . We should let Schuman [French Foreign Minister Maurice Schuman] know . . . that the closer view we have had of the problems of this area, in the course of our efforts of the past few months to support the French position there, has convinced us that that position is basically hopeless. . . . We should say that we will do everything in our power to avoid embarrassing the French in their problems and to support them in any reasonable course they would like to adopt looking to its liquidation; but that we cannot honestly agree with them that there is any real hope of their remaining successfully in Indo-China, and we feel that rather than have their weakness demonstrated by a continued costly and unsuccessful effort to assert their will by force of arms, it would be preferable to permit the turbulent political currents of that country to find their own level, unimpeded by foreign troops or pressures, even at the probable cost of an eventual deal between Viet-Nam and Viet-Minh, and the spreading over the whole country of Viet-Minh authority, possibly in a somewhat modified form. We might suggest that the most promising line of withdrawal, from the standpoint of their prestige, would be to make the problem one of some Asian regional responsibility, in which the French exodus could be conveniently obscured.[32]

Unfortunately, Dean Acheson could not be persuaded to such a course. Committed to forging a defensive pact in Europe, he refused to antagonize the French by withdrawing support for their effort in Indochina. Donald Heath, American minister (and later ambassador) in Vietnam, ". . . did not believe in rocking the boat, and when De Lattre arrived, he fell completely under the General's spell."[33] Edmund Gullion, Heath's consul general and later minister counselor, opposed such a compliant attitude, as did Robert Blum, the aid chief, whose efforts to circumvent French obstructionism gained De Lattre's particular opprobrium. But the impact of Gullion's and Blum's worthy efforts was largely absorbed by continuing American support of the French military effort. In December 1950, the American Government agreed that all military aid ". . . would be handed over to the French Command, while direct

32. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1950–1963* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), Vol. 2.

33. Shaplen, op. cit.

relations between the Associate States and MAAG were to be expressly precluded."[34] In 1951, the United States furnished French forces in Indochina over half a billion dollars' worth of military aid.

The United States could not satisfactorily identify with both the French and the Vietnamese. As Shaplen has pointed out, De Lattre may have been conducting an anti-Communist crusade, but ". . . as it developed, it was solely a French, and not a Vietnamese crusade." Neither De Lattre nor French and American officials who had donned armor and were marching on what they appeared to believe was a God-given mission could persuade the Vietnamese to enthusiasm, particularly since the Vietnamese were consigned to hold the horses of the French knights. The Vietnamese wanted independence, and, in autumn of 1951, they wanted the United States to help them gain it. Instead, she was obviously backing France. As Robert Blum sadly concluded, ". . . on balance, we came to be looked upon more as a supporter of colonialism than as a friend of the new nation."[35]

Blum's and Gullion's voiced concern was somewhat silenced by Ambassador Heath's policy of extreme co-operation with the French, but their portents nonetheless filtered into top Administration minds. Secretary of State Acheson later wrote these revealing paragraphs:

> . . . Our military aid [to France in Indochina] mounted in the year 1951 to over half a billion dollars. General de Lattre came twice to Washington to demand more aid and faster delivery and to urge us to declare that loss of Indochina would be a catastrophic blow to the free world; yet he resented inquiries about his military plans and his intentions regarding transfer of authority to the three states. Too little seemed to be happening in Vietnam in developing military power and local government responsibility and popular support. While in 1951 the Vietnamese forces rose to four divisions, they had only seven hundred Vietnamese officers out of the two thousand required, and their military academy at Dalat was graduating only two hundred a year. Our offer of instructors from our military mission in Korea, which was mass-educating officers for twelve Korean divisions, was refused.
>
> As the year wore on without much progress and we ourselves became bogged down in the negotiations at Panmunjom, our sense of frustration grew. A review of the situation in late August, before I left for a series of meetings in the autumn of 1951, brought warning from the Joint Chiefs of Staff against any statement that would commit—or seem to the French under future eventualities to commit—United States armed forces to Indochina. We did not waver from this policy.[36]

Considering ramifications of the situation, this negative approach could scarcely be termed viable policy. In truth, the United States did not have one, and by trying to establish the groundwork from which one

34. Lancaster, op. cit.
35. Shaplen, op. cit.
36. Acheson, op. cit.

could grow, Gullion and Blum reaped opprobrium of their seniors. De Lattre, who called Blum ". . . the most dangerous man in Indo-China," was instrumental in getting him relieved, in late 1951. Soon after his return to the United States, Blum summed up both the French and the American dilemmas:

. . . The attitude of the French is difficult to define. On the one hand are the repeated official affirmations that France has no selfish interests in Indo-China and desires only to promote the independence of the Associated States and be relieved of the terrible drain of France's resources. On the other hand are the numerous examples of the deliberate continuation of French controls, the interference in major policy matters, the profiteering and the constant bickering and ill-feeling over the transfer of powers and the issues of independence. . . . There is unquestionably a contradiction in French actions between the natural desire to be rid of this unpopular, costly and apparently fruitless war and the determination to see it through with honor while satisfying French pride and defending interests in the process. This distinction is typified by the sharp difference between the attitude toward General de Lattre in Indo-China, where he is heralded as the political genius and military savior . . . and in France, where he is suspected as a person who for personal glory is drawing off France's resources on a perilous adventure. . . .[37]

Blum went on to analyze the dichotomy of American participation in this colonial affair:

. . . It is difficult to measure what have been the results of almost two years of active American participation in the affairs of Indo-China. Although we embarked upon a course of uneasy association with the "colonialist"-tainted but indispensable French, on the one hand, and the indigenous, weak and divided Vietnamese, on the other hand, we have not been able fully to reconcile these two allies in the interest of a single-minded fight against Communism. Of the purposes which we hoped to serve by our actions in Indo-China, the one that has been most successful has been the strengthening of the French military position. On the other hand, the Vietnamese, many of whom thought that magical solutions to their advantage would result from our appearance on the scene, are chastened but disappointed at the evidence that America is not omnipotent and not prepared to make an undiluted effort to support their point of view. . . . Our direct influence on political and economic matters has not been great. We have been reluctant to become directly embroiled and, though the degree of our contribution has been steadily increasing, we have been content, if not eager, to have the French continue to have primary responsibility, and to give little, if any, advice.[38]

37. Shaplen, op. cit.
38. Ibid.

Blum's and Gullion's dissent was not altogether wasted, for their obvious sincerity in wanting to help the Vietnamese help themselves won the U.S.A. numerous friends in the area. Nor did their dissent go unnoticed at home. In 1951, a young senator, John F. Kennedy, visited Vietnam, where he listened to Edmund Gullion, among others. Upon his return to the United States, he stated:

> . . . In Indo-China we have allied ourselves to the desperate effort of a French regime to hang on to the remnants of empire. . . . To check the southern drive of communism makes sense but not only through reliance on the force of arms. The task is rather to build strong native non-Communist sentiment within these areas and rely on that as a spearhead of defense rather than upon the legions of General de Lattre. To do this apart from and in defiance of innately nationalistic aims spells foredoomed failure.[39]

39. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

Chapter 56

De Lattre's new tactics • General Salan takes over • Jean Letourneau • French political failure • Acheson's dilemma (III) • Giap's problems • His shift in targets • Salan's countermoves • Orde Wingate's ghost (I) • Continued French failure • Acheson loses patience • Giap fans out • General Henri Navarre arrives

UNFORTUNATELY, Senator Kennedy's expressed pessimism concerning the Indochina scene represented a minority opinion—so often the natural corollary of fact. De Lattre and his fellow crusaders, French and American, clearly won the opening rounds. In spring of 1951, American officials, legislators, and faithful friends of Vietnam, riding the anti-Communist bandwagon, saw to it that De Lattre was well received in Washington, where press and television interviews ". . . did much to persuade the American public not only that effective national independence had been given to the Associate [sic] States but also that France's role in Indochina was disinterested."[1] He also won the promise of greatly increased military aid.

Flushed with this triumph and with renewed support from his own government, De Lattre, upon his return, embarked on a fresh tactical adventure. Impressed by the obstinacy of Viet Minh attacks at Thai Binh (see map, Chapter 55), he decided to try to woo Giap into another

1. Lancaster, op. cit.

"meat-grinder" situation where superior French firepower could tell. As bait, he chose the town and surrounding area of Hoa Binh, a key communications point between Viet Minh forces in the Northeast and a Viet Minh division in Annam that supported operations in Interzone Five, in central Vietnam.[2]

In mid-November, three battalions of paratroopers dropped into the area and, within twenty-four hours, secured all objectives—with minimum resistance. This alone was suspicious, but no one at De Lattre's headquarters seemed alarmed. Instead, his press officer announced to foreign correspondents that ". . . the conquest of Hoa-Binh represented a pistol pointed directly at the heart of the enemy."[3]

This sentence reflected considerable wishful thinking.

The conquest?

The conquest was occupation uncontested because Giap pulled back his units until he could send in reinforcements and reclaim the initiative; that is, until he could fight on his own terms.

The heart of the enemy?

The French task force interdicted a road flanked by dense jungle. But roads mean many things to many people. To armies dependent on motor transport and tanks, they are all-important. But Giap's supply traveled on very few trucks; indeed, it either rode to Annam on coolie backs or on coolie-pushed bicycles. Within a month, ". . . the Viet-Minh had (in its usual fashion) built a bypass road around Hoa-Binh."[4] In so far as effectively interdicting Viet Minh communications was concerned, the French battalions might as well have remained in Hanoi.

But what of De Lattre's main tactical objective?

De Lattre unquestionably brought the Viet Minh to combat, but with unforeseen results. Giap waited until his units had infiltrated the area in strength and then struck at French lines of communications. Although the Viet Minh employed a variety of guerrilla tactics to interdict De Lattre's supply lines, they did not hesitate to use costly assault tactics where necessary to eliminate key outposts. These attacks also took a heavy toll of French defenders. By the time that De Lattre, a sick man, suffering from terminal cancer, was evacuated, in December, he had already begun committing his limited reserves.[5]

His successor, General Salan, found the operation so costly that, in January, he terminated it. But, by now, the Hoa Binh task force was encircled! In the end, over three reinforced regiments spent eleven days fighting their way down twenty-five miles of road, a rescue effort that cost dearly in men's lives, precious vehicles, and time.[6]

In capturing, defending, and evacuating Hoa Binh, De Lattre and

2. Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra.*
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.; see also Giap, op. cit.
5. De Lattre died in Paris in January 1952.
6. Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra.*

Salan had used about a third of their mobile forces, which weakened other areas and opened the delta to extensive infiltration by Viet Minh regulars. According to Fall, ". . . by March, 1952, the French were mounting combined operations involving several mobile groups *behind* their own lines in order to keep their communications open."[7]

Nothing epitomized the French dilemma more clearly than this situation, which directly resulted from refusal to equate force with mission. De Lattre and Salan were indulging luxury operations in an environment that called for strictest stringency. Ironically, the French command was concurrently supporting a number of *ratissage* operations much more in keeping with the tache-d'huile technique. Colonel John McCuen has described one such operation in the Red River area, a subsector assigned to an Algerian rifle battalion supplemented by a Vietnamese company, a force of about one hundred locally recruited Vietnamese guerrillas, and a river patrol of a few landing craft. Dividing his subsector into four parts, as dictated by terrain and enemy activity, the commander opened a vigorous territorial offense, what McCuen calls "nomadization," consisting of active and aggressive patrols and ambush operations:

> . . . When the territorial offense began in early 1952, there was approximately a regular Vietminh Battalion in the area, reinforced by strong regional and local forces. The Sub-sector was in a state of decay which seriously threatened communications along the Red River. . . . Continuous nomadization seized the initiative from the guerrillas, assured security of the lines of communication and critical points, and exposed the Vietminh to attack by the mobile reserves. Within six months the estimated guerrilla casualties were 292 killed and 70 captured. Some 376 Vietminh political agents were arrested. Captured were 49 sampans and junks and numerous arms, including two 60mm mortars. The Sub-sector had been virtually cleared of regular, regional, and local Vietminh forces, most of which had sought safer havens. . . .[8]

So far, so good. At this advanced point in the pacification process, a civic action team should have entered the play. These teams, Mobile Operational Administrative Groups, or GAMO (*Groupes administratifs mobiles opérationnels*), were supposed to complete the pacification process: screen and clear the area of *all* Viet Minh military and civil agents and generate a viable local administration while temporarily supplying basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, and security (through local militia).[9]

Several factors hindered GAMO operations. The first was scarcity of properly qualified teams—again, a matter of matching resources and

7. Ibid.
8. McCuen, op. cit.
9. Ibid.; see also Lancaster, op. cit.: ". . . the teams . . . had been formed at the instigation of Nguyên Huu Tri, Governor of North Vietnam."

mission. The second was lack of political appeal: team members could tell peasants that the Viet Minh were evil, but peasants, from personal experience, knew that the Viet Minh were no more evil than the French administration with all its traditional injustices. Lacking political inspiration, teams perforce had to rely on superior performance, on setting up and running viable community services and continuing to protect the people until they could protect themselves. This frequently called for the regular military force; where this force had been transferred to a new area, the GAMO stood naked before renewed Viet Minh attacks.

In the case cited above, GAMO operations never did take place. McCuen described the inevitable result:

> . . . Considering it [the area] pacified and needing the troops elsewhere, the French High Command called off its territorial offense in the Sub-sector by March 1953. The Algerian Rifle Battalion turned over its responsibilities to the civilian authorities with their National Guard and village militia. Vietminh military and political agents returned in strength to reinitiate their dormant operations among the unorganized and now unprotected people. The population started to decay. Vietminh regulars and regional units returned. Without popular support from the population or quick military support from nearby French regulars, the National Guard and village militia were no match for the tough, battle-hardened rebels. Within a few months, much of the Red River Sub-sector was again well on the way to becoming a Vietminh base.[10]

The devastating effect of the French political failure on military operations did not seem to strike the French high command.

De Lattre and his successors, Letourneau and Salan, persisted in dragging their feet on the issue of real Vietnamese independence, a move that undoubtedly would have spurred the pacification program. Similarly, a viable Vietnamese army would have solved, in large part, the military manpower problem. Yet, in January 1952, although thirty-six battalions of Vietnamese troops existed,

> . . . only one division had been formed, and that was assigned to the defense of the Crown Domains, while the remaining three divisions, without staff, artillery, engineers, and communications sections, consisted merely of a mosaic of infantry battalions.[11]

Of seven hundred Vietnamese officers commissioned, only eighty held field rank and only four the rank of colonel. The first chief of staff, Nguyen Van Hinh, whom we shall encounter again, was an airman, a colonel in the French air force hastily promoted to brigadier general.[12] The upper classes did not willingly participate in a recruitment program, nor did conscripted students make the best officers. Too many of them

10. McCuen, op. cit.
11. Lancaster, op. cit.
12. Ibid.

claimed perquisites and privileges and ignored performance, often treating peasants with disdain:

. . . the supercilious attitude of these scions of the bourgeoisie towards officers of the ill-armed and underpaid militia bodies was also a recurrent cause of friction and resentment, for many of the officers in the auxiliary forces, in spite of proven military capacity, were themselves debarred by lack of the requisite scholastic qualifications from access to the better-paid officer corps of the regular army.[13]

So it was that the French high command continued to fail both politically and militarily. Nor did the Truman administration intervene actively to force the French hand. In February 1952, the United States agreed to provide further military aid. In May, prior to Secretary of State Acheson's meeting with the French and British in Bonn, President Truman instructed him ". . . to avoid mentioning any specific amount of further aid and of internal changes in Indochina beyond the development of the forces. It was thought that such an agenda would keep the French to the points of immediate practical importance and avoid irritation on secondary and peripheral matters."[14]

It was these ". . . secondary and peripheral matters" that should have been discussed—and resolved. But factors present since 1946 had come of age to father new factors, all of them continuing to play a blocking role, as the Secretary of State later wrote:

. . . cables from Paris and Saigon [i.e., American embassies in these cities] show the quandary in which we found ourselves. Paris told us that the French connected Indochina with the Tunisian-Moroccan problem and resented what they considered "United States intervention." Both Paris and Saigon agreed that Indochina needed to be "revitalized" or the drain on French resources might cause a decision to cut losses and withdraw. Bao Dai was not the man to pull Vietnam together, yet the French must go further to speed the evolution of the Associated States, just when de Lattre's death had removed effective French leadership. Saigon, while recognizing French sensitivities, believed that we should insist on information and action at the same time that the French asked us for aid. This, of course, is what we had been doing for two years.

Dutifully, in mid-June [1952] when Letourneau, who had succeeded de Lattre as High Commissioner, asked for more aid, I insisted, as my colleagues had suggested, that at a time when we were contributing more than a third of the cost of the campaign in Indochina it did not seem unreasonable to expect that we should be given the information to explain to our people why we were doing so and what progress was being made. Furthermore, friendly suggestions on the conduct of affairs from an ally so actively supporting them would not seem to be officious meddling. While Letourneau

13. Ibid.
14. Acheson, op. cit.

did not dissent, not much happened as a result. No one, however, seriously advised that, with the Bonn agreements awaiting ratification by the Senate and the French National Assembly and the situation in Indochina in its usual critical state, it would be wise to end, or threaten to end, aid to Indochina unless an American plan of military and political reform was carried out. Instead we recognized in a communiqué that the struggle in Indochina was a part of the worldwide resistance to "communist attempts at conquest and subversion," that France had a "primary role in Indochina," such as we had assumed in Korea, and stated that within the authority given by Congress we would increase our aid to building the national armies. Letourneau went home issuing optimistic statements of military and political progress in Indochina and the prediction that during the next six months American aid would increase to forty per cent of total French expenditures in Indochina.[15]

One reason, and a very good one, for French silence as to the military aspects was considerable ignorance. Where General Giap knew virtually every move contemplated by the French army, General Salan literally had no idea of Giap's next move. Typical was the post-Hoa Binh period. Although Giap could claim the upper hand in the Hoa Binh fighting, it was a fairly expensive claim. His casualties of just over a year probably topped twelve thousand dead, with many more thousands wounded. Not only were such losses difficult to replace, but they created a decided morale problem, and they also brought increasing criticism from party leaders beset with major agricultural and economic crises on the home front.[16] The French pacification effort was also beginning to cause Giap difficulty by depriving him of popular support that was essential to his tactics, particularly in predominantly Catholic areas. His concern is plainly shown in a directive of September 1952:

. . . In order to intensify guerrilla activity our attention must be focused not only on the regional troops but also on the armed bases of the communes and the communal guerrillas. The principal question is that of popular troops and the guerrillas. In certain regions one strives to reinforce these troops but is faced with great difficulties. The morale of the population [there] is not as solid as elsewhere. The bases of the popular troops and the cells of the party have been largely annihilated by the enemy and no longer present a satisfactory situation. These armed bases cannot perform their activities and are safeguarded only with great difficulty. Thus, our mission of first priority is to reinforce the popular bases.[17]

Until this happened, Giap wished to avoid further costly confrontations in the delta. Giap decided to strike instead in a less likely, and therefore, from the French standpoint, a more vulnerable area.

15. Ibid.
16. Hammer (*Struggle for Indochina*), *supra.*
17. Tanham, op. cit.; see also Giap, op. cit.

Beginning in 1950, the Viet Minh had been allied with the Communist-oriented Pathet Lao movement in nearby Laos. For some time, four Viet Minh battalions had been training Laotian cadres as well as spreading propaganda among Vietnamese living in Laos. Now, in autumn of 1952, Giap decided to push an army across the Thai Highlands in order to reach the Lao border (see map, Chapter 55).

In October, Giap started three divisions across the Red River. Within a week, they had overrun a series of small French outposts. But, in the interim, Salan organized defensive airheads at Lai Chau and Na San. In late November, the Viet Minh attacked Na San, where they expected little resistance. Instead, they encountered heavy fighting and, significantly, reverted to earlier and costly tactics, suffering an estimated seven thousand casualties in three unsuccessful attempts to overrun the position.[18] Giap now ordered his troops to bypass Na San. Although the French stand slowed the Viet Minh advance, the garrison subsequently failed to cut Giap's supply lines. Thus,

> . . . the entrenched camp served principally to immobilize a force of from ten to twelve French Union battalions whose requirements in arms, ammunition, food, and comforts represented a heavy commitment for the French air force.[19]

Meanwhile, the Viet Minh advance forced Salan to evacuate other, smaller outposts, such as that at Dien Bien Phu (see maps, Chapters 52 and 62). By end of November, the Viet Minh army controlled much of the northwestern area and had reached the Laos border.

As Giap had foreseen, French artillery and armor had proved relatively useless against foot troops traveling in jungle, which also furnished excellent cover from French aircraft. Thus stymied, Salan reacted in two ways.

Despite failure of the Hoa Binh "meat-grinder" strategy, he and his staff were impressed at casualties inflicted on the Viet Minh, and they continued to think in terms of luring the enemy into attacking defended positions. The experience at Na San—Salan had hastily reinforced the garrison by airlift—encouraged the idea and led to establishing a series of *Bases Aéro-Terrestres,* or air-ground strong points, in the Northwest.

The reader will perhaps recognize a *Base Aéro-Terrestre* as the French version of Orde Wingate's "stronghold" concept (see Chapters 47–49, Volume I). A strong point consisted of a small garrison located in a remote mountain area, generally where local tribes had remained friendly to the French. Largely supplied by air, garrisons theoretically performed a psychological mission by maintaining French presence and a tactical mission by luring Viet Minh units to the attack. They also supported limited offensive action including support of GCMA units organized by De Lattre.

18. Lancaster, op. cit.
19. Ibid.; see also Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra.*

At the same time, General Salan thought to check Giap's drive toward Laos by a massive operation against his supply bases at Yen Bai and Phu Doan. Involving thirty thousand troops, ". . . by far the largest force ever assembled in a single attack in Viet-Nam," Operation Lorraine kicked off in late October, its first goal a hundred miles distant.[20]

Giap did not respond as Salan had hoped. Correctly reasoning that the French counteroperation would soon run out of steam, he kept his divisions on the Laos border while sending two regiments to fight a guerrilla-style delaying action. Although the French force "captured" the Phu Doan supply depots, the hard-pressed Salan called off the operation in mid-November. On the long road home, a Viet Minh regiment successfully ambushed two French mobile groups to cause heavy casualties.[21]

All this tactical activity personified protracted war, which at this stage clearly benefited the Viet Minh. The sad truth was that, while Ho Chi Minh and Giap relentlessly pursued limited and realistic goals, France continued to drag her heels both politically and militarily, the inevitable result of fecklessly pursuing an impractical, if not hopeless, ambition of retaining complete control of her Indochinese possessions. Not only was her increasing failure causing dangerous political explosions in France proper, but it was beginning to rile her most generous supporter —the United States. In mid-November 1952, when President-elect Eisenhower visited the White House, Secretary of State Acheson warned that ". . . we had been concerned for a long time about the course of action in Indo-China. There was a strong body of opinion in France which regarded this as a lost cause that was bleeding France both financially and by undermining the possibility of French-German equality in European defense."[22]

Despite Letourneau's promises to Acheson at their meeting in June 1952, no real information had been provided by the French, although it was obvious that the situation was deteriorating. The Secretary of State later wrote:

> . . . In mid-December [1952] the Department [of State] noted the rising uneasiness in France about Indochina and a large gap in our government's information about the situation there and about French military plans, and it recognized as no longer valid an earlier French intention to so weaken the enemy before reducing French forces in Indochina that indigenous forces could handle the situation. It seemed clear to our observers that Vietnamese forces alone could not even maintain the existing stalemate. At the council Schuman pleaded for relief from France's "solitude" in Indochina and for volunteers to share the burden. He did not ask for troops, but for financial

20. Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra.*
21. Ibid.
22. Harry S Truman, op. cit.

help (we were already carrying forty per cent of it) and for recognition of the equal importance of the struggle in Indochina and Korea. Letourneau also spoke to the council, which responded with a resolution of support for the struggle against communism in Indochina but with no pledges of financial aid.[23]

At a later, private meeting of Acheson, Eden, Schuman, and Letourneau, the latter began an impassioned plea for aid which the American Secretary of State impatiently interrupted. Acheson was willing to provide a fact-finding military mission:

> . . . I said it would go where Letourneau was; if he wanted to work with it in Saigon, that was satisfactory, but we would not struggle any longer to extract information from inferior officials who never seemed to have the authority to give it. He wanted aid; we wanted information. The next move was up to him.[24]

Jean Letourneau was in no position to have his Indochina books audited. He had installed as premier a rubber stamp named Nguyen Van Tam, who had failed, as had his predecessors, ". . . to build up any popular support, despite his talk of agrarian and other reforms."[25]

Militarily, he had become increasingly insolvent.

Although Vietnam forces had increased to sixty battalions comprising some 150,000 men, these were being organized, trained, and employed in the French tradition of conventional warfare, with French officers and (generally) NCOs in command. Yet the Vietnamese were playing an increasingly important combat role: in 1952, 7,730 of them were killed serving either with the Expeditionary Corps or in their own army, versus 1,860 and 4,049 Foreign Legion-African dead and missing.[26] Not unnaturally, the Vietnamese government and general staff wanted increased autonomy over its units. Significantly, in late 1952 the new Vietnamese general staff proposed a plan that, properly treated, would have solved many of Salan's problems.

The Vietnamese plan called for "light" battalions trained in guerrilla warfare and commanded by Vietnamese officers. These lightly armed, highly mobile units ". . . would be entrusted with the task of combating Viet Minh regional troops and pacifying areas from which enemy regular units had been expelled."[27] In the event, those units formed often consisted of unwilling and inadequately trained conscripts commanded by inefficient and often corrupt officers.

The national army suffered severely from lack of Vietnamese officers. In early 1953, only twenty-six hundred Vietnamese officers were serv-

23. Acheson, op. cit.
24. Ibid.
25. Shaplen, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.
26. Lancaster, op. cit.
27. Ibid.

ing, with only a few above the rank of major; yet, over seven thousand French officers served in Vietnamese units. Edmund Gullion later told Shaplen: ". . . It remained difficult to inculcate nationalist ardor in a native army whose officers and noncoms were primarily white Frenchmen."[28]

This military difficulty, lack of indigenous leadership, paralleled the civil, or political, difficulty, and derived directly from it. Joseph Buttinger, in concluding that the major military deficiency ". . . was a lack of competent [Vietnamese] officers," put his finger squarely on the problem:

> . . . The best elements of the Vietnamese educated middle class had no desire to serve in an army created to fight, still under French over-all direction, for a regime they despised and against people who, even if led by Communists, were still known to be fighting primarily for national independence. For these political reasons, which the colonial French mind failed to grasp, the Vietnamese National Army never became much of a fighting force. It remained indifferently trained, poorly led, and dubiously inspired. At the end of the war, the French had at their disposal a Vietnamese force of 300,000 men, organized in various stages of training and availability for combat. But not another square mile of territory had been pacified as a result of its creation, and very few French troops had been relieved of their static duties or become available for offensive action against the Vietminh.[29]

Because of failure to create a viable Vietnamese army, Salan continued generally on the defensive. The famed "de Lattre Line" (which he privately called ". . . a sort of Maginot Line") had more holes than a Swiss cheese, yet Salan continued to use some eighty thousand troops to man ". . . more than 900 forts . . . using an armament of close to 10,000 weapons, 1,200 mortars and 500 artillery pieces."[30] At the time, Viet Minh strength *behind* the line continued to grow until Giap's three regular regiments were working with fourteen regional, or semiregular, battalions and an estimated 140 peasant militia companies —some thirty thousand irregulars.[31] The French rightly termed this the strategy of *pourrissement*—of "rotting away." As Giap now learned, it was far more effective than that of meeting French forces head on—so long as the French remained blind to the necessity of winning the population to their side.

With the bulk of French forces tied down, Giap continued to probe into Laos while simultaneously expanding his control of central Vietnam. By spring of 1953, his units, working with various mountain tribes, had reduced French control to a few beachhead areas such as Hué, Da Nang and Nha Trang. In April, Giap's main force began infiltrating

28. Shaplen, op. cit.
29. Buttinger, op. cit.
30. Fall (*Street Without Joy*), *supra.*
31. Ibid.

into Laos. To gain time to build a central defense, Salan withdrew his outposts, two of the garrisons being badly mauled in the process. But, with help of an around-the-clock airlift, he organized a central defensive position on the Plaine des Jarres. Viet Minh attacks against this and against Luang Prabang failed, and in May, at onset of the rainy season, Giap called his divisions back to Vietnam. Important Viet Minh cadres remained behind, however, to continue working with the Pathet Lao.

If all this filled Foggy Bottom with alarm, it created something akin to panic in the Quai d'Orsay. In spring of 1953, a French Parliamentary Mission of Enquiry visited Vietnam and accused Letourneau of maintaining a ". . . veritable dictatorship, without limit or control," and of playing a game of ". . . power and intrigue."[82] Shortly after, a new French Government dismissed Letourneau and Salan, and appointed General Henri Navarre as commander in chief.

Navarre's appointment opened the final chapter in the French saga in Indochina. But before proceeding to those dramatic events, we must turn to equally vital guerrilla actions that were being fought elsewhere.

32. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Hammer (*Struggle for Indochina*), *supra;* Lancaster, op. cit.

Chapter 57

The Greek civil war • Postwar confusion • Communist organization and strength • Communist defeat • Markos changes tactics • Growth of Communist strength • Government strength and weakness • The balance sheet • Communist guerrilla operations • Communist strength and weakness • Yugoslavia and Albania • The Truman Doctrine • The American army's quantitative approach • Greek army offensives • Communist political errors • Tito's defection • End of the war • The cost • Reasons for Communist defeat • Western "victory"

THE COMMUNIST-LED INSURRECTION in Greece broke out even before World War II ended (see Chapter 38, Volume I). Following German evacuation, a British force commanded by Lieutenant General Scobie landed in early October 1944; Prime Minister Papandreou and the government followed two weeks later.

Scobie commanded a hodgepodge force: two British brigades, British and American commandos, and some Free Greek units. Called III Corps, it numbered about twenty-six thousand men supported by five squadrons of aircraft—a weak army further diluted by erroneous command estimates that credited the Communist organization, EAM/ELAS, with co-operative intentions and with considerably less strength than they had.[1]

Scobie could do little more than occupy principal towns while

1. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Greek Civil War, 1944–1949* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966); see also C. M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord* (London: Hutchinson, 1948).

UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] units began the immense task of civil rehabilitation. EAM/ELAS used this confusing period to strengthen its ranks for all-out civil war. As Germans moved out, ELAS units filled vacuum areas and, in the North, established liaison with Albanian and Yugoslav Communist guerrillas. EAM already had organized a secret police (OPLA) and a gendarmerie (EP), both of which began to consolidate control of the countryside, major targets being hated Greek security battalions. EAM also used various delaying and obstructive tactics to prevent Papandreou from organizing a national army and a national guard. With the worsening situation apparent, Scobie called for reinforcements and received two Indian brigades.

The KKE Central Committee, the real authority behind EAM/ELAS, now came to a fateful decision that rested in large part on an arrogance derived from ignorance of the enemy's strength. Over the strong objections of Yioryios Siantos, who had led EAM during World War II, it decided to shift ". . . from infiltration and political intrigue to force."[2]

According to Major Edgar O'Ballance, whose excellent book *The Greek Civil War* I have largely relied on in this brief account, ELAS strength at the time had risen to above forty thousand, divided into two "armies": Army Southern, commanded by Siantos and Mandakas and comprising three divisions, or about eighteen thousand; and Army Northern, commanded by Saraphis and Aris and comprising five divisions, or about twenty-three thousand. While Army Southern drove the British from Athens to establish the new Communist government, Army Northern would destroy what was left of EDES resistance group.

Fighting broke out in early December 1944. Army Southern quickly gained the upper hand, separating and besieging British forces in Athens and Piraeus. But Scobie, hastily reinforced by a division from Italy, counterattacked in late December. Churchill and Eden also flew in and managed to bring dissident nationalist parties together in a new government under Plastiras, with Archbishop Damaskinos as regent.

Scobie quickly drove Army Southern from its positions, and a ceasefire, in mid-January, forced ELAS units to withdraw one hundred miles from Athens as well as from Salonika and the Peloponnese. ELAS foolishly refused to release civilian hostages, estimated between fifteen and twenty thousand, which greatly reduced its popularity in the country and allowed the Plastiras government to assume control of large areas.

These serious defeats jolted the KKE back to a covert strategy of infiltration. Under terms of the Varkiza Agreement, in February 1945, ELAS demobilized and disarmed its units, and released prisoners and hostages. The government reinstated regular army officers who had been serving with ELAS into the new national army, and it also legalized the

2. Edgar O'Ballance (*The Greek Civil War*), *supra:* The author suggests that Stalin might have been responsible for this decision.

KKE and promised to hold a plebiscite to determine whether monarchy should be restored and also a general election as soon as possible.[3]

Although a few ELAS units refused to disband and took to the hills, the main body turned in arms and went home. The uneasy peace soon broke down. The KKE accused the government of stalling. Rampant inflation, ". . . largely because of the influx of gold sovereigns through the Allied Military Mission," during the war,[4] helped Communists to foment unrest and demonstrations. The government, accusing ELAS of secretly burying arms and wholesale murder of hostages, instigated a repressive policy that included widespread arrest and detention of Communists, suspected Communists, and sympathizers. This policy helped to revive the Communist movement, as did return from German captivity of the former secretary-general of the KKE, Zakhariadis, in spring.

Throughout summer and autumn of 1945, charge and countercharge reverberated through the warm Greek air to intensify passions already inflamed by terrible human suffering. German occupation had left hundreds of thousands homeless and hungry, and, in the war's last months, only UNRRA relief shipments fended off mass starvation.

The end of World War II brought some relief to Greece, but the reconstruction task demanded a unified effort, with concomitant party and personal sacrifice. Instead, the country remained occupied by British troops whose commander attempted to reason with innumerable squabbling political factions, a pathetic caldron of internecine hatred fired by traditional, deep-seated, and often petty feuds fattened from the war years.

When the British, virtually frantic in frustration, asked Washington for financial help in autumn of 1945, President Truman gladly promised aid if the Greek Government would

> . . . adopt a program of economic stabilization. I added that the extent to which we would help would depend on the effectiveness of the Greek action. . . .[5]

Although some progress resulted, nothing approximating good government appeared. Wanting to exploit the muddled situation, in December 1945 the KKE decided to reorganize scattered insurgent forces into a secret army capable of challenging the legitimate government. These groups now filtered across the border into Yugoslavia and Albania, which furnished training camps and some material aid. Although Stalin approved the decision, the Soviet Union subsequently furnished neither arms nor supply.[6]

While Nikos Zakhariadis launched this effort, he continued to pre-

3. Woodhouse, op. cit.
4. Ibid.
5. Harry S Truman, *Year of Decisions 1945* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1955).
6. O'Ballance (*The Greek Civil War*), *supra*.

side over a policy of infiltration and subversion of government. In March 1946, the KKE refused to participate in a general election, which overwhelmingly returned a rightist administration. Communists now stepped up disruptive tactics on two levels: in cities, by continued infiltration and obstructionism in government, armed forces, and labor unions; and in the country, by revival of small ELAS raids on villages.

In summer of 1946, the newly formed Republican Army began sending small guerrilla units over the border, mainly to carry out hit-and-run raids on villages to obtain food and also recruits.

In September, Markos Vaphiadis assumed command of the new army. A man of about forty years, Markos had joined the party in his teens, had been imprisoned, and had served with ELAS forces in Macedonia. Markos established small bases inside Greece and, aided by old EAM/ELAS village networks, stepped up guerrilla raids in quantity, depth, and purpose. In October, his groups began killing village policemen and progovernment peasants as well as taking hostages to insure later village co-operation.

How did the government react?

A confused official policy helped the Communist movement more than it hurt it. The initial error already had been made: a much too severe repressive policy, which allowed police, national guard units, and such paramilitary right-wing organizations as Colonel George Grivas' "X" group virtually a free hand in "cleaning up" ELAS remnants. By September, this policy had driven hundreds of people either to ELAS bands in the countryside or to Markos' new army across the border. And when a plebiscite, in September, returned a nearly 70 per cent vote to restore the monarchy, the new Tsaldaris government expanded its repressive policy by purging former ELAS officers from army and government service, closing down Communist and left-wing newspapers, and similar measures.

The government should have directed its zeal to the countryside, both to alleviate human suffering—numerous areas remained dependent on UNRRA supplies to avoid starvation—and to protect the people from guerrilla depredations. Partially influenced by British advice, the Tsaldaris government continued to think in "bandit" rather than "guerrilla" terms. To suppress "bandits," government relied on security forces totaling about thirty thousand—village gendarmerie, town police, and national guard units. Though not well organized, trained, or equipped, this total force, despite unco-ordinated operations, probably could have coped with bandits.[7] It could not cope with Markos' fast-moving guerrillas. Despite such measures as arming "anti-Communist" villagers—one can imagine the organization, training, and performance of this militia—the government continued to lose control of area after area.

In October, the government persuaded the British to go along with

7. Woodhouse, op. cit.

its committing regular army units. The Greek national army numbered only about a hundred thousand at this time and, like the national guard, was neither organized, trained, nor equipped for counterinsurgency operations. It also suffered from political controls: Powerful politicians insisted on guarding their own areas of interest, which meant tying up units in static defense; division commanders literally could not move units without permission from the army general staff in Athens, and the general staff itself was subordinate to a large, unwieldy, and politically divisive National Defense Council. In this respect, the Greek scene resembled that in Nationalist China and, as we shall see, the Philippines.

At this stage, then, winter of 1946–47, considerable red ink appeared in the Greek ledger: a continuing political anarchy that British efforts failed to ameliorate and that continued to hinder a proper attack on economic problems; a paucity of British aid, due to Britain's own severe economic problems; a repressive rather than progressive political policy, which drove some people to join the Communist insurgency; and a disorganized army and other security forces operationally hindered by severe deficiencies in organization, training, and equipment.

But black ink also appeared. In December 1946, in answer to formal complaint by Greece, the United Nations Security Council authorized a commission of inquiry to investigate and report on the allegedly Communist-provoked insurgency. This brought the problems of Greece into world focus. The United States simultaneously sent an economic mission to determine the country's needs. The people, themselves, remained amazingly resilient—a vast reservoir of strength, if only the government had recognized it: Despite the tragedy, sorrow, and hardship of four decades (indeed, of centuries), the fantastic spirit of the Greek people, particularly the rural people, with their love of freedom, never diminished. Significantly enough, a government amnesty policy (in refreshing contrast to over-all policy) had brought in several hundred deserters from Markos' ranks by end of 1946.

Nevertheless, red ink splashed over black, and government pusillanimity, fear, and corruption, prospered the Communist cause. Markos had started serious operations in September with about four thousand guerrillas divided into small, semi-independent units of about one hundred fifty men each. At year's end, his forces numbered perhaps seven thousand. In early 1947, this force (now called the Democratic Army) controlled a large area of northern Greece including perhaps one hundred villages. He next established general headquarters *inside Greece* at the junction of Albania, Yugoslavia, and Greece, the rugged terrain of the Grámmos and Vítsi mountain ranges. In March, he counted some thirteen thousand armed insurgents. In addition, the KKE in Athens, though operating underground, continued many subversive activities. Its highly secret terrorist organization, the OPLA, continued to intimidate and assassinate effective opponents. Of more importance to Markos was the country-wide organization known as YIAFAKA, which fur-

nished his groups with intelligence, supply, recruits, and money, and sometimes performed propaganda and terrorist missions. Operating clandestinely, this organization probably had one or more "cells" in every town and village in Greece. Major O'Ballance estimated that, in mid-1947, it numbered some fifty thousand active members plus another quarter of a million sympathizers![8]

But red ink also appeared in the KKE ledger. As early as the end of 1946, the insurgency was falling between two stools of internal and external communism. The exile army needed material aid of Balkan countries, but, in exchange, Tito and Enver Hoxha demanded portions of northern Greece once the KKE won control. These guarantees caused a good deal of grumbling from the nationalist element of KKE, many of whom favored the Siantos theory of revolution from the inside.

Markos himself saw the danger of removing the revolution from the country, which was one reason he insisted on spreading operations throughout Greece, including the Peloponnese. But this also backfired, in that he needed at least fifty thousand armed rebels for the purpose. In trying to expand his meager force, he began impressing recruits, whom he held by threat of reprisals against village wives and families.

This proved a basic error—and on several counts. When unwilling recruits deserted, and they frequently did, Markos ordered reprisals, which further alienated the people from the insurgency. Unwilling recruits who remained in the mountains formed an abrasive element in a small guerrilla army whose ranks already were becoming disaffected by isolation, meager rations, physical discomforts, and inadequate arms and supply from parsimonious Yugoslavs and Albanians. Markos countered growing disaffection by sterner discipline and by circulating a false rumor that international brigades were on their way to aid the cause. Such palliatives only partially succeeded: By end of 1946, Markos faced a deserter problem.

The attempt to claim national affinity also explained in part transfer of Democratic Army headquarters to Greek territory (although Tito, anxious to free his diplomatic hand, urged removal of this insurgent incubus from Yugoslav territory). In taking this step, Markos established both an identity for the Athens government to exploit (particularly important from the standpoint of American public opinion) and a specific target for the Greek national army. Just as important, his move represented the first step in reverting to the earlier and unsuccessful doctrine of revolution by conventional warfare, which Siantos and Markos himself constantly argued against. But, in spring of 1947, Siantos died, and Markos perforce succumbed to pressure not only from a substantial element within the KKE but from Tito and Hoxha, who, so to speak, controlled the purse strings.

This new strategy might have worked had the Greek national army

8. O'Ballance (*The Greek Civil War*), *supra.*

remained dependent on its moribund British military parent. But, in February 1947, the Attlee government suddenly informed Washington that economic circumstances would force British withdrawal from Greece at the end of March. American advisers in Greece simultaneously warned Washington of an imminent Communist takeover. President Truman responded to the crisis with a massive military-economic aid program, announced in mid-March.[9]

The famous "Truman Doctrine" provided a much-needed shot in the arm to the Greek Government. In April, the army managed to round up fifteen thousand troops to launch a surprise offensive in the North. Although it caught Democratic Army units napping and inflicted reasonable casualties, the effort lasted only two weeks. But when Markos, goaded by Balkan allies, launched attacks on such towns as Flórina, Kilkís, and Kónitsa, local garrisons held until reinforced by neighboring units. This disappointing result caused the Democratic Army to revert temporarily to guerrilla tactics.

The KKE suffered another setback, in summer, when the Athens government launched a country-wide crackdown on known and suspected Communists. Although this got out of hand—some fifteen thousand persons were deported to the Aegean Islands—and brought down the government, it nonetheless disrupted and in some cases stopped the OPLA and YIAFAKA from supporting Markos.

Markos' strength continued to grow, however. In mid-1947, his forces numbered about twenty-three thousand, with perhaps seven thousand more in training. He now increased operational unit strength to about two hundred fifty men—some sixty-five to seventy "battalions" supported by a special area network, the ETA, whose units delivered supplies and evacuated wounded. His northern neighbors had also provided machine guns, mortars, and light artillery. His bands roamed virtually unimpeded over northern Greece, they were becoming increasingly active in central Greece, and one was even operating in the Peloponnese. According to Greek Government figures, in October 1947 the Democratic Army ". . . attacked and pillaged 83 villages, destroyed 218 buildings, blew 34 bridges and wrecked 11 railway trains."[10] Major towns managed to hold out, however, and Markos lacked strength and the necessary logistic setup for sustained attacks. He also lacked suitable officers and faced constant ammunition shortages. Moreover, he had lost command autonomy to a Yugoslav-dominated Joint Balkan Staff, which increasingly began to call operational signals.

Partly at Tito's and probably Stalin's instigation, the KKE announced formation of the "Free Democratic Greek Government" in December. Simultaneously, the Democratic Army attacked the major town of

9. Harry S Truman (*Years of Trial and Hope*), *supra;* see also Kennan (*Memoirs*—Vol. 1), *supra.*

10. O'Ballance (*The Greek Civil War*), *supra.*

Kónitsa, which was to serve as the new capital. Although Markos supported the attack with mortars, machine guns, and 105-mm. guns, it failed at considerably heavy cost: twelve hundred including deserters; as added mortification, not one ally recognized the new government, nor was it allowed to join the recently established Cominform.

The spirited defense of Kónitsa reflected some healthy changes in the Greek army, which showed both in increased firepower of infantry units and in air support. Massive shipments of military equipment from the United States had been arriving since summer. By end of March 1948, this aid totalled $71 million and included seventy-five thousand weapons, seven thousand tons of ammunition, twenty-eight hundred trucks and vehicles, and enough aircraft to support two squadrons.[11]

Simultaneously, an American military mission worked with the government in enlarging and reorganizing the Greek armed forces. This effort eventually resulted in an army of two hundred thousand supported by artillery, armor, and aircraft. The "fist" of this army consisted of an imposing eight infantry divisions, three independent brigades, and some special commando-type units trained in counterinsurgency warfare. To free the army for offensive operations, a reconstituted national guard numbering about fifty thousand and comprising some hundred battalions became responsible for local security.

The American organization responsible for this new look was a ponderous thing called the Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG), headed from February 1948 on by General James Van Fleet. JUSMAPG already had decided on a "military" solution of the insurgency problem, and neither Van Fleet nor the Greek National Defense Council objected. A combined Greek-American planning staff worked out a series of offensive operations, a co-ordination extended to the field via American officer advisers attached to Greek units.

In theory, the newly organized Greek army should have walked over Markos' twenty-three thousand guerrillas. In fact, nothing of the sort happened. Although local garrison defenses improved, which caused increased guerrilla casualties, large-scale government offensives, or "search-and-clear" operations, met only limited success. In June, for example, forty thousand troops attacked eight thousand guerrillas in the Grámmos Mountains area. In the ensuing fighting, Markos called in another four thousand guerrillas. But, late in August, when the national army was pushing in, Markos broke out. The government admitted eight hundred killed and five thousand wounded; they claimed three thousand guerrilla dead, 589 captured, and over six thousand wounded.

Meanwhile, JUSMAPG had been feverishly training fresh units; the magnitude of their effort was suggested by arrival from the United

11. Ibid.

States of 8,330 trucks and four thousand mules in June 1948. At the end of August, the army again attacked, with about fifty thousand troops, in the neighboring Vítsi Mountain area. Markos, with some thirteen thousand guerrillas, counterattacked and actually pushed the army back, although at the price of heavy casualties.

Considerable political action accompanied military give-and-take. In autumn of 1947, the Greek Government, prodded sharply by American authorities, cracked down hard on Communist elements. Actions included "total" conscription, with segregated political instruction or permanent detention for left-wing and Communist dissidents. Government police closed Communist newspapers, attempted to purge the civil service of suspects, and abolished the right to strike,[12] repressive measures continued throughout winter: In February, for example, the government publicly executed sixty-five Communists. In May, when Communist terrorists murdered the Minister of Justice, in Athens, the government replied with a bloodbath so severe that Britain and the United States finally protested.[13]

All this activity unfortunately furnished excellent propaganda both for the KKE and the Communist cause in general. Had the KKE acted more wisely, it could have been exploited into a powerful weapon. Instead, the KKE acted stupidly, by continuing to misuse the valuable weapon of terror. Markos' units displayed almost no discretion in dealing with villagers. Shortly after the civil war, this writer visited countless villages in Macedonia and Thrace, and the extent of wanton destruction and reported cruelties defied belief. In March, the KKE allowed Markos' units to spirit away nearly thirty thousand children for rearing in Cominform countries, a heinous act that caused widespread protest.[14] The murder of Justice Ladas in Athens was equally pointless, as were other random acts of terror, which only brought wholesale reprisals. But the biggest blow of all came in June and was no fault of the KKE: the Cominform suddenly expelled ingrate Yugoslavia.

Although Tito continued to support the insurgency, just how long his aid would last was anyone's guess. By late autumn, Markos' fiction of international brigades had become obvious to all, as had failure of the general population to rise inside Greece. Markos was forced to repair losses in the Grámmos-Vítsi campaigns only by brutal conscription. To add to his woes, Zakhariadis, the powerful secretary-general of the KKE, forced him to abandon protracted guerrilla strategy in favor of forming conventional units, small brigades of three or four battalions, the whole forming five "divisions." This fundamental split in the insurgent camp occurred in November 1948; it swiftly widened, and, at the end of January 1949, Zakhariadis replaced Markos in command of the Democratic Army.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Woodhouse, op. cit.

Meanwhile the national army had grown much stronger. The failure of the Grámmos-Vítsi campaigns had caused a basic change in tactics. Beginning in January 1949, the government lowered sights to concentrate on specific areas. By temporarily removing whole sections of population—a costly and onerous but highly effective process—it began to deprive guerrilla bands of intelligence and material support and led to some important gains.

By end of January, the army had cleared four thousand insurgents from the Peloponnese at a cost of fifty-eight killed (versus sixteen hundred insurgent dead). In February, the government appointed a new commander in chief of the army, the able and popular architect of the 1940 triumph over the Italians, General Papagos. Papagos accepted only after being promised that the National Defense Council would not intrude in field operations.

Although some heavy fighting lay ahead, the days of the Democratic Army were numbered. The final blow fell in July, when Tito closed his border to the insurgents. Papagos now attacked in six-division strength and, by end of August, cracked the Vítsi stronghold. In mid-October, Zakhariadis, possibly at Stalin's insistence, asked for a cease-fire.

The physical cost of the Greek civil war was enormous. The Greek Government later claimed that the war had taken nearly twenty-nine thousand Communist lives and that perhaps twice as many were wounded. Greek army losses included almost eleven thousand killed, some twenty-three thousand wounded, and thirty-seven hundred missing. Civilians suffered much-more-severe losses. Major O'Ballance estimated that, all told, 158,000 Greeks died, about half of whom were militant Communists.[15]

This tragic war also produced other losses, which paradoxically accrued as a result of what the West called "victory." The first such loss was Western failure to analyze the war accurately and learn thereby. Unfortunately, American military commanders, primarily army commanders, concluded that a Communist insurgency could be defeated by conventional methods of warfare. In subsequent years, army planners gave far too much credit to the importance of regular armies and increased firepower, and insufficient credit to the success of such methods as temporarily removing the civil population from guerrilla-infested areas and to the importance of a single, forceful commander not unduly restricted by civil control.

Neither did the enemy receive proper attention. If questioned on the cause of Communist defeat, most American officers today would mention Tito's defection and subsequent closing of the border, a misconception also held by the author of this book until he accompanied a U. S. Marine Corps mission to Greece in the early 1950s and discussed

15. O'Ballance (*The Greek Civil War*), *supra.*

the insurgency with numerous senior Greek officers and officials, in addition to traveling extensively in the north.

Tito was not the principal cause of Markos' defeat. Markos was beaten before he started. The KKE had never concentrated on establishing an identity with the people needed to support a protracted insurgency. As early as winter of 1941–42, Greek nationalists began to see through the fiction of EAM/ELAS, which, despite its coalitionist pretensions, would brook no minority opposition.[16] British SOE officers operating in Greece in World War II remarked on the cavalier behavior of ELAS leaders toward the civil population. ELAS' disregard increased

in the civil war, as evidenced by barbarous treatment of civilian hostages, rapacious behavior in villages, and kidnaping children and sending them from the country—stupid actions personally and feelingly described to this author by numerous villagers in Macedonia and Thrace not long after the war. This major miscalculation stemmed in part from the urban bias of Marxist-Leninist teachings (as opposed to those of Mao Tse-tung), teachings seemingly substantiated by immediate popu-

16. Woodhouse, op. cit.

larity and success of the insurgency, which unduly impressed the Soviet-oriented element of the KKE Central Committee; Zakhariadis was probably in large part responsible for this major error.

The second important Communist mistake also appeared during World War II, the attempt to acquire power by a military putsch. After the failure of EAM/ELAS to take power, in 1945, the KKE should have followed Siantos' advice to revert to infiltration and penetration tactics. Failing that, they should later have let Markos continue with guerrilla warfare; whether he could have survived with only Romanian and Bulgarian help is a moot question that probably would have involved the Soviet Union.

The West greatly overestimated the Soviet role in Greece. What Western leaders considered a great "victory" against Russian communism did not bother Stalin nearly as much as Tito's defection. *There* was a victory for the West—and one far removed from influence of Western arms.

Believing that it had won a victory in the conventional sense, the West could only have been disillusioned by subsequent events in Greece. The war did not eliminate Communist influence. Country people may have come to loathe Markos' guerrillas, but that does not mean they came to love their deliverers. Although a healthy political stability followed the end of the war—two prime ministers, or governments, in twelve years—the work of reconstruction proceeded slowly, partly the fault of fiscal demands of a military plant far too large for a small state to support. A plodding and generally feckless reconstruction naturally caused grumbling and, in time, turned some Greeks once again to the Communist cause.

As political conditions grew more unsettled, the government again exacerbated matters by invoking the traditional repressive policy that jailed thousands and eventually led to the loathsome dictatorship of the colonels.

The end result was hardly what President Truman and his advisers envisaged when he announced his brave doctrine in 1947. At that time, he told the American people

> . . . that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.[17]

In words drowned by the irony of events, he told his vast audience that he wanted these free peoples to enjoy the American system:

> . . . Our way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion and freedom from political oppression.

17. Truman (*Years of Trial and Hope*), *supra*.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. . . .[18]

18. Ibid.

Chapter 58

The Philippine problem • Postwar situation • The Huks • Basis of Communist popularity • Communist tactics • Government countertactics • American army influence • Success and failure • Magsaysay takes over • His ultimate failure

ONE OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S earliest official callers, in April 1945, was the exiled president of the Philippine Islands, Sergio Osmeña, who expressed concern for the postwar future of his country. Truman hastened to assure him that he would ask Congress to support a reconstruction effort for this American possession that had been promised independence.[1]

The war left these islands in appalling condition: Over a million Filipinos had been killed and hundreds of thousands wounded; disease filled the barrios; millions of people were homeless and hungry; Manila and other important cities lay in ruins; the transport network essential to ship produce in a country predominantly agricultural had been virtually destroyed, along with schools, hospitals, and villages. The political framework essential to proper government had been splintered by Japanese occupation forces and wartime collaborators.

1. Truman (*Year of Decisions*), *supra.*

The volatile nature of Filipino politicians caused further discord, as did the crying need for legislative reforms, particularly land reforms, a banner immediately hoisted by the Communist Huks, a group that survived the war in very real strength (see Chapter 40, Volume I).

The Huks did not attempt a putsch during the immediate reconstruction period. One reason was the powerful and popular presence of American military forces, which, as General MacArthur had promised, did return to liberate the islands. The obvious desire of the United States Government to grant independence also enhanced this popularity, as did human relief soon felt from a generous aid program.

But another, more subtle reason existed. In 1945–46, the Communist Party of the Philippines was not a cohesive political party controlled from either Moscow or Yenan. It contained socialist and Communist components, and each component contained members holding a variety of views generally expressed with nationalist bias. The Communist hierarchy included Mao-oriented Chinese members, but these were in a minority. Party officials had remained out of touch with each other for long periods, and no single voice dominated party councils. Luis Taruc, the *Supremo,* or commander in chief, of the Huks during and after the war, went so far in his memoirs as to write of autumn of 1945: ". . . As far as I could judge, there was no plan to prepare for a future revolution."[2]

Claiming to want a political solution, Taruc won a seat in the new Congress, elected in April 1946. Just what would have happened had Taruc and his fellows been allowed a minority function in the new government is anyone's guess. Disruptive they were, but they were scarcely alone in using strong-arm methods before and during the election. Their subsequent opposition to such legislation as the Bell trade agreement and a military-bases agreement with the United States should have surprised no one, particularly since Filipino and American non-Communist liberals also questioned the terms of these acts.

Although the Communists were disqualified from their congressional seats on grounds of using terrorism during the campaign, the trouble went much deeper. Taruc and his associates represented a distinct challenge to a hegemony exercised by immensely powerful landowners and industrialists spawned during four decades of American overlordship. This group, which included substantial American interests, had usurped the old landowning role of the Church, which had made itself hated by peasants. William Howard Taft's dreams of giving peasants a fair shake (see Chapter 14, Volume I) had disappeared into a day of real greed: In 1944, peasant farmers still owned only about 10 per cent of the land they tilled. They farmed remaining land on a tenant

2. Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).

basis, with the average plot too small to support the farmer once his rent, 50 per cent of the crop, was paid.

Nothing was secret about system or figures. They were over four hundred years old. They explained four centuries of poverty punctuated by uprisings, and, in 1946, they explained a Communist popularity that a reactionary government was too greedy and frightened to admit or accept.

Quiet analysis would have shown the fragile nature of this popularity, which hard-core Communists suffered rather than enjoyed. It derived from protest against perverted democracy, not belief in atheistic communism—abhorrent to good Catholics. It was a Red balloon highly vulnerable to puncture by proper leadership and corrective legislation, but a balloon equally capable of expansion to unpleasant proportions. A genuine land-reform bill in 1946 would have deflated the balloon virtually overnight and would have saved the government a long and costly war that nearly resulted in Huk victory.

Instead of absorbing and then neutralizing opposition by legislation, the government challenged the enemy. Charge collided with countercharge, the friction depositing powder that soon exploded into intimidation and murder. When the government unseated Communist members of Congress, the Huks took to the hills and raised the standard of revolt.

This was not as forlorn as it sounds. Many Huks had buried World War II weapons against such a contingency, and, in the back country of central Luzon, had little trouble in finding relatively secure bases. The Politburo in Manila ordered dissidents to revert to wartime organization and establish Regional Commands or, Recos. Each of the half dozen Recos occupied a specific area, where it operated in squadrons of varying size. The party had also kept alive its village network, which was called the Barrio United Defense Corps or BUDC, the "farmers by day, guerrillas by night." BUDC units normally operated ". . . in their own locality, attacking targets of opportunity, assisting or reinforcing forces from the higher strata, or simply maintaining the 'guerrilla presence,' their domination of the local citizens."[3]

In short order, then, the Huks had a cause centered on the age-old cry of "land for the landless," and they had a viable organization that, for the moment, answered such urgent problems as food, clothing, and shelter.

Where should they go from here?

The history of guerrilla warfare confirmed a potential, but it also suggested weaknesses. One was need for food, clothing, shelter, and security over a long period. Another was need for communications between units operating in six thousand square miles of primitive country and between units and the underground Central Committee in Manila.

3. Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations—The Philippines Experience* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).

The guerrillas also required additional weapons and, most of all, information as to government strength and weakness.

The factor common to these needs was the peasant population. Although no figures exist, veteran observers have suggested that the Huks probably found about 10 per cent of the peasants actively favoring them, about 10 per cent actively opposed to them, and about 80 per cent neutral. This middle body, this frightened and apathetic 80 per cent, would have to furnish food, clothing, shelter, security, and information essential to Huk survival. They constituted Mao's famous water in which guerrilla fish were to swim.

The process of winning active or passive support of this group was immensely complicated, with one factor merging into another. The most important step, however, was *recognition* of need for this support. Literally every *action* of the Huks provoked a *reaction* from the peasant mass.

How did the guerrilla go about winning peasant support? He used to advantage his physical and armed presence in proclaiming a cause that struck a responsive note among many disgruntled peasants. The Huks oriented their appeal personally rather than politically. The honeyed words held a strong nationalist bias that associated people virtually devoid of hope and dignity with the freedom fighters of yesterday and today, the whole performance gaining force from contrast of the guerrilla presence with either minimum or no government presence.

But the guerrilla did not appeal by words alone. By successfully attacking police stations and small military outposts, the Huks encouraged the eager and intimidated the wary, and in the process, gained arms for new recruits. Nor did they hesitate to eliminate known opponents by using selective terrorism, usually torture and murder.

This consolidation process should have been a dangerous time for the Huk movement. Despite advantages gained by seizing the initiative, the Huks could not set up communication networks overnight; neither could they effectively broaden their support base in a short time. Had the government reacted skillfully, it might have ended the insurgency in short order. Unfortunately, its reaction was such as to help, and not hinder, the insurgent cause.

The Philippine Government was ill-equipped to cope with this insurgency. Police forces, along with other public services, were still being reorganized. The government's armed forces consisted only of a constabulary, the Military Police Command (MPC), equipped with small arms and supervised by American army officers. These company-size units lacked training and discipline, and in early raids on suspected Huk hideouts, they used little restraint either in rounding up suspects or in dealing with peasants.

This was partly the government's fault. President Roxas and his advisers failed to understand that the basic mission of democratic government is to represent the people and defend their interests. It follows

that, in an insurgency situation, the first mission of government is to protect the people, not alone on humanitarian grounds but also because only the people can furnish information necessary to accomplish the corollary mission of destroying insurgent organization.

As two veterans of the Philippine insurgency, Colonels Valeriano and Bohannan, have pointed out in their invaluable book *Counter-Guerrilla Operations—The Philippine Experience*,[4] Roxas confused priorities and ordered the constabulary to eliminate the threat without due heed of either security or rights of peasants. He compounded this error by placing operational restraints on the constabulary. In effect, the government told the constabulary to suppress the rebellion by arresting rebels, but, at the same time, it refused to pass emergency legislation giving the constabulary sufficient powers to accomplish the task.

Under the writ of habeas corpus, a suspect could be detained only seventy-two hours. This meant, in effect, that the most carefully planned and humanely conducted raid was a waste of time. The government's problem was to provide ". . . a means by which troops could deal with prisoners and suspects in an acceptable, civilized way without releasing them. Politically speaking, this problem could not be solved unless the government enjoyed substantial public confidence. . . ."[5] Aware of its shaky foundations, the government did not act courageously, and the problem remained. The normal troop solution was to beat a suspect as warning. This, the theory of deterrence, had been exploded a thousand times in all countries, and is particularly dangerous if the suspect happens to be innocent.

The government also erred in ordering the MPC to place garrisons in towns and villages and on large estates of powerful politicians. This tied down units, and such was general behavior of troops that their presence further alienated the peasant population. Huk spies were everywhere, and soldiers could not move without their knowing it.

Deprived of information, the MPC could not begin to accomplish its mission. Initial failure produced frustration. The Huks, on the other hand, were daily gaining support and, with it, ample information on MPC plans and movements. As MPC patrols fell into ambushes and small outposts suffered surprise attacks, fear joined frustration to increase brutality toward people whom the soldiers were supposed to be protecting. Each instance of brutality converted more people to the Communist cause, a vicious circle that could only have been terminated by intelligent and decisive action at top governmental levels.

In the political sphere, the government relied on half measures that solved nothing. Valeriano and Bohannan offer a striking illustration of this in 1947, when the Huks demanded that the government guarantee a "fair share" of the rice harvest to tenant farmers. The Huks, most of

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

whom came from farm backgrounds, knew that an increased share of the harvest would not solve the peasant's economic plight. Tenant farms were mostly too small to support the tenant and his family, let alone the landlord as well. By enacting legislation that changed the fifty-fifty share arrangement to seventy-thirty in the tenant's favor, Roxas angered landlords without gaining peasant favor, and also showed himself prone to pressure of Huk propaganda (which the Huks quickly pointed out to the peasants).

If Roxas failed to assuage peasant dissatisfaction by legislative means, he positively encouraged it with his executive policy. He answered initial Huk successes by building an imposing (and expensive) national army, a policy encouraged by American military advisers and supported by the American Government.

Unfortunately, enlarged effort merely embraced old errors. The new battalion combat teams were splendid enough, supported as they were by armor, aircraft, artillery, and even war dogs, but they continued to fight guerrillas as if waging conventional war. Although search operations at times disrupted guerrilla communications and even, on occasion, trapped a few Huks, they more often than not disrupted and antagonized the native population.

The use of the *zona* is a case in point. Unable to obtain accurate information from alienated peasants, the army employed a technique of sealing off and "screening" one or more hostile villages. The *zona* was stupid psychologically, because the Japanese had used it frequently and people associated it immediately with horrible tortures and executions. If employed at all, it should have been but sparingly and then only by disciplined troops who would go out of their way to regain support of villagers. Instead, it was used frequently, and, all too often, to gratify baser instincts of soldiers, as described by Taruc:

> . . . When the soldiers rounded up the barrio people, they would drive them at gun-point to the nearest town. Meanwhile, the raiders would be busy looting and burning. For a day or two, the troops would live well off the barrio people's poultry and domestic pets. . . . To cover their misdeeds, the soldiers would report that the vandalism was the work of the Huks who had "offered stiff resistance before finally running away." Or their story might be that the destruction they had left behind was the result of cross fire between themselves and the Huks who, of course, had suffered heavy losses, but had nonetheless succeeded in burning the barrio to cover their retreat and got away with their dead and wounded.[6]

Large-scale search-and-destroy operations also backfired. The army would spend weeks and sometimes months preparing a surprise attack in force against a guerrilla redoubt. Then several battalions suitably reinforced by artillery and air units would throw what communiqués

6. Taruc, op. cit.

called "a ring of steel" around the target area. These attacks rarely, if ever, achieved surprise. Taruc later wrote:

> . . . If we knew it was going to be a light attack, we took it easy. If it might give us more trouble than we could handle, we slipped out quietly in the darkest hours of the night, abandoning the area of operation altogether. There were a few occasions when we were detected in our attempt to slip away and a running battle resulted. Occasionally, we carried out a surprise attack, achieving a lightning breakthrough and throwing our enemies into confusion. We were familiar with the terrain and had the advantage of light packs, the ability to move fast, and the support of the local people. Even the army's dog teams, cavalry, and motorized units were useless in the dark of night against an enemy that set out in small groups and dispersed in all directions, only to regroup again on the following day at a previously agreed meeting place. We were invariably successful in such fast, diversionary, tactical retreats.
>
> When our ruse went undetected, it could be both amusing and saddening to watch the Philippine Air Force busily bombing and strafing, or to see thousands of government troops and civil guards cordoning our campsite and saturating, with every type of gunfire, the unfortunate trees and vegetation. Or we would watch them, worn and weary, scaling the whole height and width of a mountain, with not a single Huk in the area. After a week or two of such costly but useless efforts, we would often read glowing reports in the newspapers of the success of the operation. Such successes had to be claimed to justify the millions of pesos that were being wasted.[7]

Taruc claimed that six years of fighter-bomber attacks killed exactly twelve guerrillas!

These "ring of steel" operations inevitably involved peasant communities, whose villages sometimes became subject to *zona* treatment or even to outright attack. This merely deepened basic antagonisms, while false claims of success only heightened Huk prestige. The gulf between army (government) and people was so great that, by 1950, army units

> . . . adopted the practice of entering every inhabited area in Huklandia in an exaggerated combat posture. Troops would move in by truck, obviously battle-ready, weapons pointing out in all directions as though they expected immediate assault.
>
> From their demeanor, it was to be assumed that they felt they were among enemies, that they anticipated momentary attack. The psychological effect of this was deplorable. . . .[8]

Other gimmicks proved harmful to the objective of winning over the population. One was the absurd ". . . reconnaissance by fire—firing

7. Ibid.
8. Valeriano and Bohannan, op. cit.

into areas where guerrillas might be, without concern for the civilians who might equally well be there."[9] Similarly, the "open area" technique allowed troops in certain areas to shoot at anything that moved. Notices proclaimed this fact, but a certain percentage of any group "never gets the word" and the death of several innocent people, not to mention precious carabaos, scarcely increased army popularity. Road checkpoints further antagonized the populace, because, more often than not, the soldiers ". . . were collecting toll while disrupting thoroughly a great deal of commercial traffic."[10] Propaganda posters depicting Huk cruelties were so realistic that they frightened peasants not *away* from but *toward* the Huks.

More-sophisticated tactics also boomeranged. In theory, the Nenita units seemed unbeatable. This was a small detachment, Valeriano and Bohannan tell us, that was organized and trained ". . . to seek out and destroy top leaders of the Huk. Openly based in the heart of the strongest Huk area, it sought by disciplined ruthless action to strike terror into the Guerrillas and their supporters." In practice, ". . . the unit did succeed in capturing or killing many Huks, in substantially dampening the fighting spirit of many more, and in reducing the effectiveness of local support organizations." Alas, the operation was a success, but the patient died:

> . . . the overall effect of the Nenita operation . . . was, on the whole, to increase support for the Huk. How could a government claiming concern for the welfare of the people and protection of their interests support a gang of ruthless killers, many of whose victims were not proved traitors? The political repercussions were serious, as might be expected in a democratic country. Even more damaging to the government was the condemnatory attitude of the press, cunningly intensified by Huk propagandists. In the end, many Filipinos were convinced that the government, by the use of such a force showed itself to be at least as bad as the Huk, and perhaps less deserving of support than the "agrarian reformers."[11]

Luis Taruc succinctly summed up the lesson: ". . . One thing seems clear: no country—least of all a Christian land—can defeat Communism by the use of un-Christian methods."[12]

Unfortunately, during this crucial period neither the Philippine Government nor its American advisers correctly analyzed the nature of the insurgency, which would have caused a rearrangement of priorities. As a result, clouds of confusion continued to cover the action, with a harmful and wasteful proliferation of official agencies. Valeriano and Bohannan pointed out the duplication of intelligence agencies. Constabulary, army, national police, and Manila police *each* maintained an

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Taruc, op. cit.

intelligence organization. ". . . Nearly a dozen other agencies, ranging from the special agents of the Office of the President to the Customs Secret Service, thought they had a proper role in the collection of intelligence about Communists, or the Huk, or both, and they too engaged in it."[13]

Naturally, the Huks prospered from this needless competition and from misplaced military zeal. While government troops harassed the people by day, ". . . every night the barrios were visited by Huk units, organizers, and propagandists who held impromptu meetings enlivened by revolutionary songs and short political skits."[14] Such grass-roots propaganda sessions allowed the Huks to disrupt communications between government and people by constantly contrasting official sayings with official doings. A Huk agent working in ruins of a village with firelight flickering on a corpse or two, the result of a government attack, did not have to be a William Jennings Bryan to alienate the peasant further from his government.

The Huks also continued to appeal by association, asking for and often receiving a penny or two; ". . . the farmer was asked, politely and

13. Valeriano and Bohannan, op. cit.
14. Taruc, op. cit.

humbly, if he could spare some food for the men who were fighting 'for his cause, on his behalf, and to establish the new peoples' democracy.' Thus guerrilla foraging was actually made to contribute to their propaganda campaign."[15]

Nocturnal visits also obtained young recruits for guerrilla units in the hills. Here the recruit usually attended school: ". . . a school for cadet officers, another for mass organizers . . . schools for intelligence officers, couriers, and medical workers. . . . The more advanced students attended classes in Philippine and world history, social and civic science, politics and government, mathematics." The Huks used group forums both to disseminate slanted news and for the weekly "production meeting"—". . . a criticism and self-criticism session of the type common in all Communist parties everywhere."[16]

Such methods resulted in steady growth of Huk strength, which Taruc later reported as ten thousand armed fighters and two thousand active sympathizers in 1948. Valeriano and Bohannan agreed with the figure of twelve thousand guerrillas, but concluded, ". . . perhaps 150,000 of the nearly two million people in the area [of central Luzon] were sympathizers and supporters of the Huk."[17] This did not include an undoubtedly high percentage of the passive population, which the Huks continued to intimidate in their favor.

Despite substantial Huk gains, the insurgency confined itself largely to central Luzon. Although the Central Committee in Manila grandly proclaimed formation of a People's Liberation Army, with ". . . a timetable for expansion and for the seizure of national power,"[18] the socialist and Communist factions already were arguing over long-term goals.[19] Neither the Central Committee in Manila nor the most united and determined Huk leadership in the field could overcome logistic and administrative problems in converting guerrillas to a semiregular force. Guerrillas lacked supporting arms and services of all types, and they possessed neither geographical proximity nor logistic means to gain these arms. They lacked safe areas in which to organize and train semiregular forces, and their supply system probably could not have supported the effort. An army would have ended the almost autonomous authority jealously protected by Reco commanders. Necessarily rudimentary communications also hindered disciplined and co-ordinated operations, and the Huks never did eliminate the bandit and criminal element that often hurt the insurgency by exploiting the environment for private gain.

Lack of co-ordinate command and growing dissension in higher ranks tended to panic some units into placing mistaken emphasis on terrorist methods, which culminated, in April 1949, with ambush and murder of

15. Valeriano and Bohannan, op. cit.
16. Taruc, op. cit.
17. Valeriano and Bohannan, op. cit.
18. Ibid.
19. Taruc, op. cit.

a motor party that included the popular widow of President Quezon: ". . . For the first time, widespread popular wrath flared against the Huk."[20] The high command also incensed public opinion by ordering all-out attacks on cities and army garrisons in 1950.

By this time, the insurgency had produced some excellent counter-tactics by the Philippine army and constabulary. By far the best army tactic was the small patrol (as Americans had learned in 1898–1902). Ranging from half-squad to platoon size, patrols carried out a variety of missions. They extended the government's presence to villages, they sometimes obtained intelligence on guerrilla movements, they set up mobile checkpoints to disrupt guerrilla communications. Extreme mobility of patrols kept the guerrilla off balance and, not least, they allowed the soldier an active and interesting role, as opposed to the deadening garrison, or passive role, and thereby spawned new and sometimes effective tactical ideas.

The best army commanders practiced a variety of patrol tactics:

> . . . regular patrols which passed through specified areas almost on a schedule, following roads or trails. There were unscheduled, unexpected patrols, sometimes following an expected one by fifteen minutes. There were patrols following eccentric routes, eccentric schedules, moving cross-country at right angles to normal travel patterns, which often unexpectedly intercepted scheduled patrols.[21]

In guerrilla-infested country, one patrol paralleled another so that either could respond to an attack. Some commanders saturated an area with patrols to overload the guerrilla intelligence service—rather like dropping strips of tinfoil to jam a radar screen.

Colonel Valeriano's constabulary company trained a force of four officers and seventy-six men, Force X, as ". . . a realistic pseudo-Huk unit that could, in enemy guise, infiltrate deep into enemy territory." The reader may remember that General Funston employed a similar device to capture the insurgent leader Aguinaldo in 1901 (see Chapter 14, Volume I). Valeriano heightened the illusion by including two wounded men (volunteers) in the force and by staging mock battles with the rest of the company. His sophisticated operation resulted in spectacular successes. In addition to excellent "kills" of Huks, Force X ". . . found that most of the town mayors and chiefs of police were in collusion with the enemy. They discovered that there were enlisted men in the PC [constabulary] company on the other side of the swamps who were giving information to the Huks. They learned that supplies were left by women in selected spots along the road to be picked up at sundown by the Huk. . . ."[22] On occasion, Valeriano's regular company

20. Valeriano and Bohannan, op. cit.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

would "capture" some of his Huks and turn them over to local police. In jail, they frequently obtained valuable intelligence on collaborators. Valeriano also tested loyalty of local officials by "kidnaping" peaceful farmers: If the local mayor or police chief failed to report the man's absence within five days, he was probably pro-Huk.[23]

Other units used civilian disguises to infiltrate villages and pick up valuable information. One unit acquired small panel trucks and filled the back end with soldiers—an unpleasant surprise for any Huk foraging patrol that stopped the vehicle. A commander well versed in old Moro campaigns remembered an American army habit of "losing" .45-caliber cartridges. Loaded with dynamite, they blew the Moro to bits when he fired them. This particular commander prepared cartridges that would blow up only the rifle, then inserted them into Huk supply channels with reportedly substantial "psychological and physical effects."[24] Some commanders left units behind to surprise guerrillas after a regular army "sweep"; others confused guerrillas into precipitate action by firing hundreds of flares.

Well-trained and -motivated soldiers will usually come up with shrewd and cunning battle practices, but these count for little if basic strategy is in error—and that was the case in the Philippines.

Fortunately for the future of that country, a natural leader finally tore himself from Manila's festering political womb to emerge in 1950. This was the famous Ramon Magsaysay, who became Minister of National Defense in the Quirino government.

Magsaysay was a peasant with a purpose hammered home by a determined but winning personality, which partially removed the sting from his decisive and sometimes ruthless actions. Believing that the power of his country lay in peasant hands, he insisted that first mission of government was to represent and protect peasants. In its simplest form, this meant returning government to people or, conversely, convincing the people that representatives of the government existed to serve their needs.

To the fury of many politicians, Magsaysay usurped the Communist call of "land for the landless" to make it the rallying cry for his party in the 1950 elections. Though his plans were later sabotaged, these were not empty words, and he went to a great deal of trouble explaining his reform program to the peasants.

Appointed Secretary of National Defense, Magsaysay turned to the immense task of effectively organizing the counterinsurgency for the first time. One of his early successes consisted in arresting the Politburo and Secretariat of the Communist Party in Manila. He then turned to teaching the army to associate itself with the people. He first introduced widespread internal reforms designed to check corruption and improve

23. Hosmer, *Counterinsurgency: A Symposium—April 16–20, 1962* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1963).
24. Valeriano and Bohannan, op. cit.

discipline. At the same time, he tried to explain the government's mission to the military and show commanders how to carry it out. Magsaysay summarily eliminated such flagrant violations of human rights (and common sense) as "free-fire" areas, and he sharply curtailed the "combat-posture" of troops "at the ready" entering villages they theoretically were to protect. He changed the *zona* technique to a civilized interrogation, which insured the individual privacy and, just as important, left no doubt in the individual's mind that the purpose of the operation was his own protection. He insisted that the major aim of any military operation was to win civil co-operation—for, without it, the army would lack information and would not catch guerrillas. If a village was short of food because of its contribution, voluntary or forced, to the Huks, Magsaysay ordered the soldiers to replace the food.

As peasant hostility disappeared, military commanders began to receive valid and timely intelligence on which they based operations that soon yielded Huks—killed, captured, or surrendered. A generous amnesty program also attracted Huk defectors, particularly when pressure mounted from military operations.

Eighteen months after taking office, Magsaysay had brought the insurrection under control.

Magsaysay's political reforms did not work as well. In resigning his cabinet post, in February 1953, he wrote:

> . . . Under your concept of my duties as Secretary of National Defense, my job is just to go on killing Huk. But you must realize that we cannot solve the problem of dissidence simply by military measures. It would be futile to go on killing Huk, while the Administration continues to breed dissidence by neglecting the problems of our masses.
>
> The need of a vigorous assault on these problems I have repeatedly urged upon you, but my pleas have fallen on deaf ears. To cite an instance, some eight months ago I informed you that the military situation was under control, and I offered to leave the Department of National Defense in order to speed up the land-resettlement program of the government. My purpose was to shift our war on Communism to one of its basic causes in our country, land hunger. . . .[25]

25. Ibid.

Chapter 59

Rise of Indonesian nationalism • Allied occupation • Clashes with the British • The Communist element • Negotiations break down • The Dutch take over • A military solution • Guerrilla warfare • Sukarno's problems • The Communist revolt • Dutch intransigence • American intervention • The Dutch yield

SO INTENSE the cold war, so mighty the issues, that it became tempting to blame all world problems on this quarrel of ideologies. To do so was to ignore recognized historical forces, particularly that of nationalism, which, decades earlier, had created and subsequently sustained a host of problem areas. In some instances, the Kremlin and local Communist parties attempted to exploit the condition. Other areas, however, held but peripheral connection to the conflict between the Soviet Union and the West, and almost no connection with communism. Such was the case with Indonesia and Palestine, whose peoples now used differing forms of guerrilla warfare to achieve specific political goals.

The Dutch never did regain balance in the East Indies. World War II left the Netherlands bruised and battered, unable to fill the power vacuum created by Japan's surrender. A powerful expeditionary force, acting promptly and effectively, would have had its hands full in reclaiming

the islands from the new Sukarno-Hatta government. The Netherlands had no such force. Instead, she had to rely on Admiral Lord Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command, itself stretched thin in this vast area.[1]

Dutch attempts to have the Japanese govern by proxy proved futile. Clashes between Japanese soldiers and Indonesian nationals soon turned to heavy fighting.[2] The first allied officers who reached Djakarta, on September 8, 1945, reported that the nationalists ". . . controlled the public utilities of Jakarta and many more cities. The Republican government had set up ministries, was operating radio stations and newspapers, and regarded itself as the nation's functioning authority."[3] Professor Kahin noted ". . . throughout most of the area, in Java and Sumatra in particular, civil administration was operating at a level of efficiency that quite amazed the Allied forces."[4]

In mid-September 1945, a military mission arrived with Dutch representation, and toward the end of the month, Mountbatten sent in a company of troops. The Dutch wanted this mission to arrest the republican leadership, ". . . because apprehension of the leading persons and a show of force will strip the movement of its strength."[5] Refusing the request, Mountbatten advised Dutch officials to open negotiations with Sukarno's government, wise advice in view of Japan's legacy to Indonesia.

However empty Japanese words, the promise of independence, exploited variously by the Sukarno-Hatta government during the occupation, had claimed millions of minds. The Japanese also left the newly proclaimed republic with a militia-style army, the Peta, which numbered about 120,000. Finally, Japanese reliance on Indonesians during the occupation left a reasonable framework of government. In Dr. Otto Heilbrunn's words, ". . . The Indonesians were provided with a national will to independence, the military means to achieve it, and the administrative ability to sustain it."[6]

The Dutch refused this premise. A build-up in occupation forces, both British and Dutch, caused the newly appointed lieutenant governor, Dr. Hubertus J. van Mook, to insist on non-appeasement. His hand was strengthened in late October, when the British commander, Lieutenant General Sir Philip Christison, told Sukarno that the British recognized only the Netherlands government of the East Indies. Continuing clashes between Dutch and Indonesian nationals caused Christison, however, to prohibit more Dutch troops from landing in Java.

1. J. K. Ray, *Transfer of Power in Indonesia, 1942–1949* (Bombay: P. C. Manaktala & Sons, 1967).
2. Kahin (*Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*), *supra.*
3. Louis Fischer, *The Story of Indonesia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).
4. Kahin, op. cit.
5. Fischer, op. cit.
6. Abdul Haris Nasution, *Fundamentals of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965). Introduction by Dr. Otto Heilbrunn.

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Christison's recognition of the Netherlands Government infuriated Indonesians. So did his use of Japanese troops in reclaiming cities from republican forces in Java, Sumatra, and Bali. When a British task force attempted to reoccupy the major port of Surabaya, in Java, some twenty thousand republican troops supported by a hundred twenty thousand civilians brandishing krises, clubs, and poisoned spears attacked a British Indian brigade.[7] British troops were actually being torn limb from limb when Sukarno and Hatta flew in and tried to stop the massacre. The British finally had to land another division, supported by air and naval gunfire—a battle that lasted until the end of November, when the Indonesians gave way.

This unfortunate period, in which other serious clashes occurred between Indonesian and British troops,[8] convinced the British more than ever that a solution had to be reached through negotiation:

. . . the battle of Surabaya was a turning point in their [Indonesians'] struggle for independence. It demonstrated to the British the fighting strength and the willingness to sacrifice life itself that were behind the popular movement they confronted. It awoke them to the fact that the Republic was backed by the Indonesian masses, not apathetically but positively and en-

7. David Wehl, *The Birth of Indonesia* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948).
8. Ray, op. cit.

thusiastically. The Battle of Surabaya shocked the British into the realization that, unless they were willing to bring to Indonesia and *expend* a greatly increased strength of soldiers and equipment, they would have to alter their policies and find some measure of common ground with the leaders of the Republic. As this became clear, the British commenced to stiffen against the refusal of the Dutch to deal with the Republic and put strong pressure on them to negotiate to the end that peaceful compromise might be effected. . . .[9]

Although the Dutch army continued "pacification" operations, sometimes with considerable brutality, as in southwestern Celebes,[10] local Dutch officials were inclined to agree to solution by negotiation. If they detected a factional threat to the Sukarno-Hatta government, mainly from Communists led by Tan Malaka, they nonetheless estimated that seventy-five thousand troops would be needed to pacify the archipelago —whatever the ruling party. At the end of 1945, their military force numbered about twenty thousand, with a promise of ten thousand more during 1946.

Sukarno and Hatta also were willing to negotiate. Frightened by extremist elements that brought about the Surabaya rebellion, they attempted to broaden the base of their government. They now introduced a prime minister, the able and pro-Western Sutan Sjahrir, who was to answer to a parliament, KNIP. Although this was a far cry from parliamentary democracy, Sjahrir introduced a modifying element both within republican ranks and in the conflict with the Dutch.

The British, cautiously backed by the United States, brought contesting parties to the conference table in February 1946. Although talks began quite favorably, extremist elements of both flags soon brought on an impasse. In the case of Indonesia, the obstruction came from the National Front, a Communist organization dominated by Tan Malaka. In March 1946, Sukarno invited the Front to form a cabinet, and when it failed to do so, he returned Sjahrir as prime minister. He answered the Front's next attempt to overthrow the government by jailing its prominent leaders. He also successfully put down an attempted *coup d'état* in June. The government, however, was walking on eggs and could not afford to be too conciliatory in negotiating with the Dutch.

Despite all this trouble, Sjahrir had still introduced a workable proposal which got as far as a conference in the Netherlands in April. And here the Dutch conferees proved intransigent. Their attitude befitted the seventeenth century, not the mid-twentieth. Louis Fischer later pointed out:

. . . a major difficulty was the permeation of Dutch politics by religious ideas. Many Dutchmen believed in the divine right of the Dutch to rule

9. Kahin, op. cit.

10. Ibid.; see also Raymond Westerling, *Challenge to Terror* (London: William Kimber, 1952).

the Indies. ". . . all authority derives from God," said Mr. Max van Poll, leader of the big Roman Catholic party, ". . . therefore, Dutch authority in the Netherlands East Indies is willed by God." Similarly, Mr. J. Meijerink of the Anti-Revolutionary (Calvinist) party, declared, "To maintain God's authority, the [Dutch] government may consider itself in God's service. . . . It must not hesitate to wield the sword if necessary."[11]

Mainly by threat of withdrawing all troops by November, the British again brought the Dutch to new talks at Linggadjati, on the northern coast of Java, in September 1946. To everyone's surprise, this meeting prospered from the beginning. After agreeing to a cease-fire, the two sides worked out an agreement in line with the Sjahrir proposals. The Netherlands recognized ". . . the Republic of Indonesia as exercising *de facto* authority over Java, Sumatra, and Madura."[12] The two governments were to co-operate in forming ". . . a sovereign democratic state on a federal basis to be called the United States of Indonesia." Together with the Netherlands, this would form a Netherlands-Indonesian Union.[13] Meanwhile, the republic would resist extending its contacts abroad.

Dutch and Indonesian representatives initialed the agreement in mid-November 1946. Although important political groups in both countries opposed the main provisions, the agreement is one of the might-have-beens of history. The Dutch Government, however, failed to sign the document until the end of March 1947. By that time, good-will engendered at Linggadjati was fast disappearing, and each government was violating one or more clauses.

Before the Linggadjati meeting, the Dutch had set up the puppet state of East Indonesia; they now established the states of West Borneo and West Java, and when the British evacuated their troops, in late 1946, extended control to coastal areas on Java and Sumatra that they soon held with ninety-two thousand troops. By late 1946, the Dutch Government was strong enough to undertake a "pacification campaign":

. . . In the areas where Indonesian resistance was most stubborn, authority was given to the savage Captain "Turk" Westerling to do what was necessary to break it. His most effective method was to have his troops round up village populations in the areas of principal resistance and arbitrarily pull men out of the crowd and shoot them, continuing this process until he was satisfied that the assembled villagers had yielded sufficient information concerning which of their members had been active in the resistance and the whereabouts of resistance forces. Probably between 500 and 1,000 Indonesians were killed in this manner, while probably at least 10,000 others were killed in the course of the whole campaign [that is, the pacification

11. Fischer, op. cit.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.; see also Kahin, op. cit.; Leslie Palmier, *Indonesia and the Dutch* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

campaign from mid-December 1946 to March 1947]. Most of those associated with the resistance who were not killed were jailed and for the most part remained in jail until after the transfer of Dutch sovereignty at the end of 1949. . . .[14]

In many instances, Indonesians reacted violently to this treatment, and incidents mounted. The republican government continued to sabotage the Dutch Government in East Indonesia, and also to extend contacts abroad in search of international support. Nor did the government seem in a hurry to ship rice necessary to feed Dutch-occupied areas of the large islands.[15]

The Dutch seized on this last issue as an excuse to solve the issue by military means: ". . . by maintaining that the Republican government did not exercise sufficient control over dissident extremist elements within its territory to implement agreements which it entered into."[16] In July 1947, the army launched a "police action"—a euphemism for a large-scale attack supported by aircraft and spearheaded by tanks that soon rolled over hundreds of miles to occupy cities, ports, and other key areas in Java and Sumatra.

Although republican forces numbered perhaps five hundred thousand, they included a good many disparate units neither organized, trained, nor equipped for modern warfare. Wisely, the Indonesian high command ordered all units to carry out scorched-earth tactics and retreat to woods and hills, there to wage guerrilla warfare as best they could.

By the time the United Nations brought about a cease-fire, the Dutch occupied nearly two thirds of Java and large areas of Sumatra and Madura. Fighting continued in numerous areas; under guise of "mopping-up operations," the Dutch seized large amounts of territory: ". . . Such actions and the refusal of the [UN] Security Council to contest them demonstrated to Indonesians how little in awe of the Security Council the Netherlands stood."[17]

A UN "Committee of Good Offices," consisting of Belgian, Australian, and American representatives, next brought antagonists together to hammer out the Renville agreement.[18] Although this saved the republic, it left the Dutch with its gains until various plebiscites could determine the people's wishes. The agreement favored the Dutch far more than the Indonesians, who signed under considerable pressure from Western powers; subsequent failure of the Dutch to abide by the agreement and failure of the Western powers to reinforce it caused most Indo-

14. Kahin, op. cit.; see also, Ray, op. cit.; Westerling, op. cit.
15. Fischer, op. cit.
16. Kahin, op. cit.; see also Alastair M. Taylor, *Indonesian Independence and the United Nations* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1960).
17. Kahin, op. cit.
18. Ibid.; see also Alastair M. Taylor, op. cit., for further discussion of this period.

nesian leaders to suspect Western, particularly American, motives.[19]

Sukarno's republic was now in bad shape. Compressed into one third of Java, the poor one third, its normal population of 23 million swollen by some seven hundred thousand refugees, the republic visibly faltered. Prime Minister Sjarifuddin, who had replaced Sjahrir, resigned in January 1948. Mohammad Hatta replaced him and at once began drastic surgery on economy and army, transferring hundreds of thousands of people to the land. He reduced the army from nearly half a million to a regular force of 160,000 plus some irregular, guerrilla-type units. He hoped eventually to reduce it to fifty-seven thousand regulars, a well-armed and well-trained force that

> . . . would be prepared to operate at battalion strength in a mobile, hard-hitting guerrilla war against the Dutch, should they again attack. The old "static defense" would be changed into a "mobile offensive system" of shifting pockets that could not be mopped up. Supplementing this force of highly trained regulars would be a wide network of territorial militias made up of the local peasantry, who would be called upon to devote part of their time to military training.[20]

Hatta could do little, however, to repair material shortages incurred by a Dutch blockade or alleviate severe human hardships and inevitable inflation that arose from a distorted economy.

Hatta's reforms, coupled with the deteriorating domestic situation and the pro-Dutch attitude of the United States, made numerous enemies for Communists to exploit. Sjarifuddin, who was probably a secret Communist while serving as prime minister, openly joined the movement, which gained impetus from those headed by other Communist leaders such as Musso. In September, Communists rose in the city of Madiun and proclaimed a soviet government. Sukarno successfully rallied the rest of the country and managed to keep control of the army, which put down the rebellion. In late October, the last large rebel unit surrendered to republican forces. Musso was killed, Sjarifuddin executed. Such were the intricacies of Indonesian politics that the veteran Communist Tan Malaka had opted for the Sukarno-Hatta government. Released from jail, he was returned to house arrest when the revolt failed; he was later executed by a republican officer.

The Communist revolt further weakened the republican government. UN efforts to solve the impasse between the republic and the Dutch had come to nought. Observers reported frequent truce violations by each side. The Dutch steadily strengthened their economic grip on the islands and seemed particularly unwilling to co-operate and compromise over conflicting interpretations of various aspects of the Renville agreement.[21]

19. Kahin, op. cit.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.

But time was serving the republicans. The occupation was costing the Netherlands an immense sum of money—well over a million dollars a day—that she could ill afford. In December, the Dutch broke off UN negotiations and, presumably wanting to exploit Sukarno's immediate weaknesses, started the Second Police Action by a surprise bombing of his capital, Jogjakarta. Dutch troops quickly rounded up Sukarno and his principal officials and banished them to Sumatra.

This crass refutation of the Renville agreement triggered violent world reaction against the Dutch. The UN Security Council called for an immediate cease-fire and a release of republican leaders. When the Netherlands ignored the demand, the United States suspended Marshall Plan aid to the Dutch in the Indies and threatened to stop it to the home country. Governments around the world protested to The Hague, which at first denied responsibility, then attempted to defend the action.[22]

The Netherlands was fighting a losing battle. She could not afford to forfeit American aid. Her expenses in maintaining military forces in Indonesia in 1948 amounted to more than $400 million, which was approximately what the home country was receiving under Marshall Plan aid. Nor had her second offensive brought about the republic's collapse: ". . . by late January the 145,000 Netherlands troops in Indonesia were actually more on the defensive than on the offensive."[23]

In anticipation of the Dutch attack, the government had studied the earlier action carefully. As one result, it immediately enlisted its people in the new war. Citizens in Jogjakarta, for example, were ordered ". . . to obstruct and sabotage every effort to consolidate the Dutch government." Civil servants were to be ". . . 100 per cent noncooperative," their interim support if necessary assured by ". . . rich men and socially minded men." The people must hinder production of goods in every possible way; nor could they serve the Dutch politically: ". . . better to be jailed than to be a puppet and traitor."[24]

Another result of republican concern was army reorganization pushed through by Hatta, who also placed increased emphasis on guerrilla warfare. The chief of operations, thirty-year-old Abdul Haris Nasution, realized that the army could not stand against modern Dutch forces, but he also knew that ". . . to occupy Java down to the sub-districts, he [the Dutch] would need more than ten divisions, and it is certain that he is unable to form as many. With his actual strength of three to four divisions, he can occupy major towns and control communications, but

22. Ibid.: Professor Kahin offers a detailed analysis of these complex negotiations, with emphasis on the ambivalent American role; see also Fischer, op. cit.; Palmier, op. cit.

23. Kahin, op. cit.

24. Ibid.: Professor Kahin visited Jogjakarta at this time and found it, for the most part, ". . . a city of women, children and old men." Of some 10,000 indigenous civil servants, no more than 150 served the new Dutch administration, and most of these worked with republican approval.

he can never destroy the Indonesian forces if properly organized and dispersed."[25]

In essence, this is what happened in the Second Police Action. As usual, the Dutch high command underestimated staying power of the republicans. In early January the Dutch commander, General Spoor, announced ". . . that he would be able to crush the guerrillas within three months." His optimism soon faltered. As Dutch units moved into the country, occupying cities and towns and protecting lines of communication, they became increasingly immobile,

> . . . nailed to hundreds, yes thousands, of stationary guard posts. In general they were tied to cities and highways and only seldom did they conduct a long and hot pursuit that would lead them to explore mountains and pockets, which indeed would have been disastrous for our morale.[26]

Guerrilla forces now began to surround enemy garrisons and increasingly to isolate them. If the guerrillas, unlike Mao Tse-tung's forces, were not strong enough to attack, neither was the enemy strong enough to eliminate them.

Here was a military stalemate that could have been solved only by greatly increased Dutch strength. But, for the Dutch, time and money were running out. The Netherlands could afford neither political isolation from the world nor economic refutation by the United States. In late April 1949, the Dutch Government agreed to release of prisoners and to new negotiations with the republican government.

A series of summer conferences yielded a cease-fire in August. Subsequent conferences at The Hague brought the republic into common cause with Holland and the other federal states to form a Republic of the United States of Indonesia—". . . a federal government formed of the Republic of Indonesia and the fifteen political units established by the Dutch."[27] On December 27, 1949, the Netherlands transferred full sovereignty to the new nation.

25. Nasution, op. cit.
26. Ibid.
27. Kahin, op. cit.

Chapter 60

The Palestine problem • Historical background • The British role • Jews versus Arabs • The Zionist position • Origin of Haganah • World War II and the postwar situation • David Raziel: the militant element • Irgun and terrorism • Stern and the FFI • Menachem Begin • Guerrilla war • British counter-tactics • UN intervention • The British yield

THE PALESTINE PROBLEM was nearly as old as Jerusalem hills. Orthodox Jews had never yielded spiritual claim to the Holy Land, where some brethren remained after Romans destroyed the Judean state. Through vicissitudes of ages, many Jews continued to look eastward: As early as the fourteenth century, Jewish refugees from Europe began trickling into Palestine.

Desire for a "national home" continued to grow, especially in European ghettos burdened with all too frequent pogroms. In the 1870s, a wave of anti-Semitism started new migration from central Europe. Then, in 1898, Theodor Herzl organized a Zionist international movement, aimed at ". . . establishing in Palestine a home for the Jewish People secured by public law."[1] The trickle of refugees into Palestine now increased. At the century's turn, the Jews there numbered perhaps forty thousand; in 1917, the figure reached eighty-five thousand.

1. Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel's War of Independence, 1947–1949* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961).

And now came the watershed: the Balfour Declaration, which pledged England's support of Zionist aims. Its origins are obscure. According to Lloyd George, it was made ". . . for propagandist reasons"—to win support of international, particularly American, Jewry to the allied side at a crucial time in World War I. In his provocative book *Promise and Fulfilment—Palestine 1917–1949,* Arthur Koestler calls it ". . . one of the most improbable political documents of all time. In this document one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third."[2] Whatever the case, the Paris Peace Conference and subsequent conferences converted Palestine into a British mandate (later approved by the League of Nations), and this encouraged further Jewish immigration during the 1920s.[3]

As might be expected, Palestine Arabs resented intrusion into what they regarded as their land. In 1920, Arabs attacked Jews in Jerusalem, in 1921 in Jaffa. British administration, which tended to favor the Arab population, and economic improvements brought by Jews somewhat mollified Arab grievances, but did not ameliorate the land question. In selling land to Jews, rich Arab and Turkish absentee landowners deprived some Arab tenants of ancestral homesteads; though they received compensation, this fundamental grievance was ignored by British administration. In 1929, an anti-Semitic nationalist, the British-appointed Mufti of Jerusalem, struck out by inciting a series of violent attacks against Jews.

The British Government now faced a major dilemma. It could not defend the Jewish cause without irreparably alienating Arab countries. In view of Western need for Middle Eastern oil, this would have created serious economic difficulties. To avoid a split and yet honor their pledge to Zionism, the British chose a compromise policy that often favored Arabs. But political pragmatism can sometimes become self-defeating: Attempting to walk a middle path softly, the British administration soon bogged down in Palestinian sands of intrigue. By attempting to satisfy everyone, the British satisfied no one.

While British policy maintained precarious peace, forces of discontent gathered strength. Hitler's anti-Semitic policy increased the refugee flow and added to Arab resentment. In 1932, the Jewish population numbered two hundred thousand; in 1935, nearly half a million.[4] Fighting broke out in 1936. The Arab rebellion continued to spread until suppressed two years later by a major British military effort (which, considering the European situation, Britain could ill afford).[5]

2. Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine, 1917–1949* (London: Macmillan, 1949); see also Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London: Collins, 1965); John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate—An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: Cresset Press, 1959).

3. Marlowe, op. cit.; Sykes, op. cit.

4. Koestler, op. cit.

5. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra;* see also Christopher Sykes, *Orde Wingate* (London: Collins, 1959).

Various commissions meanwhile studied the problem, usually to recommend partition—that is, creating a small but separate Jewish state. Arab countries refused this solution, however, and such was their supposed importance to the coming international struggle that the British Government supported them. The famous Chamberlain White Paper of 1939 called for greatly restricted Jewish immigration—fifteen thousand a year at a time when tens of thousands were trying to escape concentration camps and ovens of central Europe—which would end altogether in five years; it also virtually prohibited land purchase by Jews; finally, it called for an Arab state within ten years, a state in which Jews would hold minority status.[6] A grossly unfair solution, the White Paper only added to smoldering Jewish discontent. When war broke out, however, the international Zionist organization and its executive, the Jewish Agency, chose to support Britain, as did the Jews in Palestine, the Yishuv.

Several factors explain the considerable forbearance shown by Jews in dealing with Arabs and the British administration. The Jewish Agency remained fully aware of basic antagonisms to the notion of a Jewish state: not only those of anti-Semitic gentiles, but of Jews themselves, of non-Zionists and anti-Zionists both in Palestine and the world. The two great Zionist leaders, Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion, were as much concerned with building and preserving as with administering. Money was as short as tempers; splinter movements were forever forming. To Weizmann and Ben-Gurion, only a policy of moderation could hold the movement together and retain support of international Jewry and sympathy of British and American governments.

The second factor was Jewish weakness in Palestine. In attempting to keep the peace, the British had never encouraged Jewish resistance. In the very old days, Jewish survival depended on assimilation with Arabs. As immigration continued and Jewish settlements developed, a sort of local militia sprang up. Then, in 1905, pogroms in Russia introduced new immigrants: tough, young men, for the most part socialist revolutionaries, who had experience in European arms and who founded ". . . the first country-wide para-military organization," Hashomer, or the Watchman—". . . a kind of Hebrew cowboy or Wild West ranger, highly respected among Arabs"—to protect lives and property.[7]

Hashomer slowly evolved into an underground Haganah (Defense Organization), ". . . a voluntary militia, organized in local units primarily for local defense."[8] The Haganah expanded during the 1936–39 Arab rebellion—as we have seen (Chapter 48, Volume I), Orde Wingate organized "Special Night Squads" from its reserve constabulary

6. Marlowe, op. cit.; Koestler, op. cit.; Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra.*
7. Koestler, op. cit.
8. Lorch, op. cit.

—but soon reverted to a protective role.[9] In 1941, the British allowed the Haganah to organize full-time guerrilla shock units, the Palmach, for fighting in Syria, but British policy continued to discourage a separate Jewish military force.[10]

The war nonetheless strengthened the Zionist hand. In 1942, Zionist leaders met in New York's Hotel Biltmore to censure the unpopular White Paper. The Biltmore Program, as it came to be known, called for unlimited immigration of Jews to Palestine, which, after the war, would become a Jewish commonwealth state.[11]

The war also strengthened the Haganah's military arm: Some thirty-two thousand Palestine Jews served in British forces, and, in 1944, the British authorized a separate Jewish Brigade Group. The brigade group dissolved at war's end, when a large British army occupied the area, but an underground Haganah army continued to exist. Commanded by a professional cadre of some four hundred soldiers, it consisted of Palmach guerrilla units totaling about twenty-one hundred men and women, backed by a small but ready reserve, and of a widespread territorial militia of some thirty thousand with many thousands of covert supporters.

Over-all weakness had caused the Jewish Agency and the Haganah to follow a defensive policy—the Havlagah—during the Arab rebellion, and a co-operative policy with the British during World War II. A good many Jews deeply resented what they deemed timid policies. In 1925, militant Zionists formed the Revisionist Party, under Vladimir Jabotinsky, who ". . . declared himself against any co-operation with Arabs until the Jews were their effective masters in Palestine, and he was pressing for the formation of a Jewish Legion to conquer the promised land."[12]

In 1935, the Revisionist Party splintered from the Zionist World Organization. Two years later, younger Revisionists formed a militant force, the Irgun Tsvai Leumi, or Etzel (National Military Organization), under a dynamic young leader, David Raziel.[13] A brilliant student, Raziel

9. Koestler, op. cit.
10. Sykes, op. cit.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.; see also Samuel Katz, *Days of Fire* (London: W. H. Allen, 1968). Katz places the origin of the Irgun, also called Haganah B, at an earlier year; Koestler, op. cit., offers a particularly interesting account: ". . . Its rank and file were recruited from the Revisionist Youth Organization *Betar*, and from the 'colored Jews'—Yemenites and Sephardis—for whom its flowery, chauvinistic phraseology had a particular appeal. These oriental Jews were eventually to constitute about one-half of Irgun's total strength, while the leaders were almost exclusively young intellectuals who had grown up in the Polish revolutionary tradition. This created the peculiar ideological climate of Irgun—a mixture of that quixotic patriotism and romantic chivalry which characterized the Polish student revolutionaries, with the archaic ferocity of the Bible and the book of the Maccabees. . . ."

switched from mathematics to military subjects in preparation for his messianic role:

> . . . He did not study military lore out of curiosity. He was consciously preparing himself to teach others. He wrote (together with his colleague, Abraham Stern) textbooks on the revolver and on methods of training. He conducted courses in the use of small arms and in the manufacture of home-made explosives. He was a scholar who could discuss the strategy and tactics of the Napoleonic wars, and write a commentary on Clausewitz. He fretted and chafed at the tardiness of the historical process. Although accepting Jabotinsky's leadership, he did not believe that party political action alone could achieve Jewish statehood. He was convinced that this could be attained only after an armed struggle with the British and he would have preferred to build the Irgun to meet the inevitable clash, rather than concentrate on retaliation against the Arabs.[14]

Under Raziel's inspired leadership, the Irgun concentrated first on smuggling illegal refugees into Palestine. Arab attacks on Jews in 1939 caused Irgun to open a terrorist campaign against the general Arab population. To protests of Zionist leaders, to the Jewish Agency and the Haganah, who pleaded the Sixth Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill," the Irgun answered with Exodus xxi, 23–25: ". . . life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning. . . ."[15] The Chamberlain White Paper brought another change, this time to British military targets; when a police inspector tortured some Irgun leaders, Raziel had him murdered. Raziel and his coleader, Abraham Stern, were themselves arrested, but soon released.

The two leaders quickly resumed operations, but Stern, also a brilliant student, disagreed with Raziel's policy of wartime truce with the British. In 1940, Stern broke from Irgun to form the Lokhammei Kherut Israel (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), or FFI. The Stern Gang, as it was generally known, concentrated on fighting the British by eliminating some Jewish moderates as well as gentiles: Anyone who opposed creation of a Jewish state became fair game. Raziel, in turn, agreed to work for the British army during the pro-German revolt in Iraq, and was killed in 1941, on his first mission. Stern fell to police bullets in 1942. A year later, another fanatic believer in the Jewish state, a Polish intellectual named Menachem Begin, took command of the Irgun. Stern's successor, a young scientist named David Friedman-Yellin, continued a policy of "unrestricted and indiscriminate terror"—from 1939 to 1943, Sternists killed eight Jewish, six Arab, and eleven British policemen, not to mention other victims.[16]

Continued British refusal to accept the Biltmore Program caused the

14. Katz, op. cit.
15. Koestler, op. cit.
16. Ibid.

Irgun, in 1944, to renounce its truce with the British and to form a loose, sometimes uneasy alliance with the Stern Gang in a new war for a Jewish state. In January 1944,

> . . . The first large-scale commando-style attacks were launched on British civil installations. In three rounds of simultaneous assault the offices of the Immigration Department, the Income Tax offices and the CID headquarters throughout the country were blown up. One limiting decision was taken. As long as Britain fought Hitler, the Army was not to be touched.[17]

By early autumn, the Stern Gang had murdered fifteen men, mostly moderate Jews, and destroyed government installations including four police stations.[18]

Irgun strategy hinged on three considerations, as later clarified by Menachem Begin in his tormented book *The Revolt*. From a study of ". . . the methods used by oppressor administrations in foreign countries," the terrorists concluded that to destroy British prestige in Palestine would destroy British rule:

> . . . The very existence of an underground, which oppression, hangings, tortures and deportations, fail to crush or to weaken must, in the end, undermine the prestige of a colonial regime that lives by the legend of its omnipotence. Every attack which it fails to prevent is a blow at its standing.[19]

Two other considerations strengthened this belief: the international situation and Britain's position therein, as well as Britain's internal strength. The terrorists concluded:

> . . . As a result of World War II the Power which was oppressing us was confronted with a hostile Power in the east and a not very friendly power in the west. And as time went on her difficulties increased.

Begin and his fellows naturally counted on international sympathy and aid, particularly from the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, in the United States.

A great many Jews, in and out of Palestine, disagreed with Irgun-Stern terrorism both on grounds of humanity and because they felt that evil acts would bring wholesale reprisals. Contrarily, terrorists shrewdly reasoned that a civilized power would find its retaliatory hands increasingly tied so long as the problem area claimed world attention:

> . . . We never believed that our struggle would cause the total destruction of our people. We knew that Eretz Israel, in consequence of the revolt, resembled a glass house. The world was looking into it with ever-increasing

17. Katz, op. cit.
18. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra*.
19. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (London: W. H. Allen, 1951). Tr. Samuel Katz.

interest and could see most of what was happening inside. . . . Arms were our weapons of attack; the transparency of the "glass" was our shield of defense. Served by these two instruments we continued to deliver our blows at the structure of the Mandatory's prestige.[20]

The Irgun drew a limit to terror, the Stern Gang did not. In November, two Stern Gang terrorists assassinated Lord Moyne, the Minister of State in Cairo. Public indignation, Jewish and gentile, ran high. The terrorist campaign already had alarmed the Jewish Agency and the Haganah, which believed that peaceful settlement could be made with England. Lord Moyne's death brought an open breach, with Agency and Haganah officials working with British authorities in rounding up and deporting nearly three hundred Stern and Irgun activists.[21] Since a good many Palestine Jews who deplored terrorist activities would still not turn in their fellows, the terrorists survived, though with greatly restricted means. Samuel Katz later wrote bitterly:

. . . The whole machinery of the Jewish Agency's security forces were now organized to wage war against the Irgun. The Haganah and the Palmach were sent into action. Hundreds of members of the latter were drafted into the towns from their kibbutzim [co-operative settlements]. Expulsions from schools, dismissals from places of work, kidnappings, beatings, torture, direct denunciations to the British, became the sole occupation of the action-hungry soldiers of the Haganah and the Palmach. In instinctive identification with the British overlord, they borrowed, from the tradition of the hunt, the term to describe this operation: it was called "the season."[22]

Zionist co-operation with the British did not reduce Zionist goals. In May 1945, after the German surrender, Dr. Weizmann wrote Prime Minister Churchill.

. . . demanding on behalf of the Jewish Agency the full and immediate implementation of the Biltmore resolution: the cancellation of the White Paper, the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish State, Jewish immigration to be an Agency responsibility, and reparation to be made by Germany in kind beginning with all German property in Palestine.[23]

The immigration issue headed the list. The Jewish Agency wanted unrestricted immigration for a hundred thousand Jewish, mostly Polish

20. Ibid.
21. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra;* see also G. Costigan, "The Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1919–1922," *University Review,* Dublin, Spring 1968. Eliahu Bet Zouri, one of the assassins of Lord Moyne in 1944, had been taught in Tel Aviv by Esther Raziel, sister of David Raziel, commander of the Irgun. She had a plentiful supply of I.R.A. literature about the Irish conflict, and held up as heroes to her youthful Zionist pupils Robert Emmet and Michael Collins, as well as Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Washington.
22. Katz, op. cit.
23. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra.*

survivors of German bestiality who languished in displaced-persons camps.[24] British delay, first by the Churchill government, then by Clement Attlee's Labour government, in treating this demand led to an extensive smuggling operation by the Haganah and, far more ominous, to an operational rapprochement between the Haganah, which claimed a country-wide membership of some forty thousand, and the Irgun-Stern groups, themselves steadily growing in strength and claiming thousands of passive sympathizers. Refugee smuggling increased, and, in October, the Haganah's clandestine radio station, Kol Israel, proclaimed the beginning of "The Jewish Resistance Movement":

> . . . On the night of the 31st of October the "single serious incident" took place. Palmach troops sank three small naval craft and wrecked railway lines in fifty different places; Irgun attacked the railway station at Lydda, and the Sternists attacked the Haifa oil refinery. The attacks were accomplished with great skill and little loss of life, probably none intentionally. The operation had the desired effect of making the British Government think seriously about Palestine, but it also had the effect of solidifying yet further Bevin's resistance.[25]

The British now enlisted American aid in form of an Anglo-American committee of inquiry, but domestic politics in both countries slowed formation of this body. Illegal immigration activities continued to increase, as did ugly incidents between Palestinian Jews and British troops (which would soon number eighty thousand). In late December, Irgun units raided two police headquarters and an arms dump, killing nine British soldiers.[26] In late January 1946, the new high commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, ". . . promulgated severe emergency laws which among other provisions ordained death as the maximum penalty not only for taking part in a terrorist raid but for belonging to a terrorist society."[27]

The Anglo-American Committee's report merely exacerbated the situation by recommending immediate admission of a hundred thousand Jewish DPs. In refusing this and other proposals at a time when ". . . the situation was particularly propitious for carrying out Partition in a bloodless operation," Bevin and the Labour government were imprisoned by the old Arab complex that had restricted British policy for so long. The picture of the "Middle East going up in flames" seemed to paralyze realistic thinking, and in so doing, brought a near crisis in Brit-

24. Koestler, op. cit.: About a million Jews escaped death in German concentration camps. Of these, some 300,000 were living in Western Europe with a "fair chance of rebuilding normal life"; 100,000 of the remaining 700,000 "driftwood" lived in DP camps in the Western occupation zones. The record of the Western countries in absorbing these Jewish remnants is, at best, modest.

25. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra*.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.: see also Katz, op. cit., who lists the regulations in detail.

ish relations with the Truman administration, itself acting far too cautiously as a result of domestic political pressures to solve a problem that the United States had helped create.[28]

Bevin and the Labour government were now on a collision course with disaster. In June, a new wave of sabotage swept over Palestine. In addition to usual attacks, terrorists destroyed twenty-two RAF planes at one airfield. The harassed British ". . . ordered the arrest not only of members of Palmach but of the Agency leaders. Ben Gurion was in Paris, or he would have been taken with the rest. There were widespread searchings by the military for Haganah, and especially Palmach arms. . . ."[29] During what Arthur Koestler has termed "Mr. Bevin's 18th Brumaire," the British also occupied the offices of the Jewish Agency, where they found documents that proved the Haganah's complicity in earlier terrorist operations.

Partly to destroy these documents and partly in keeping with its policy of reprisal, the Haganah agreed to an Irgun attack on British headquarters in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Although Irgun terrorists later claimed that ample warnings were given, the hotel was not evacuated, and the bombings claimed ninety-one British, Arab, and Jewish dead and forty-five wounded.

The deed shocked most of the civilized world, but what should have been a propaganda victory for the British turned sour when the British commander, General Barker, sent his officers a non-fraternization order at once intercepted and published by the Irgun. It reminded some observers of Gauleiter orders only too familiar from World War II:

> . . . I am determined that they (the Jews) should be punished and made aware of our feelings of contempt and disgust at their behavior. We must not let ourselves be misled by hypocritical sympathy expressed by their leaders and representative bodies and by the protestations that they are not responsible and cannot curb the terrorists. I repeat that if the Jewish community really wanted to put an end to the crimes it could do so by co-operating with us. I have accordingly decided that as from the receipt of this letter all Jewish places of entertainment, cafes, restaurants, shops and private houses are out of bounds. . . . I understand that these measures will create difficulties for the troops, but I am certain that if my reasons are explained to them, they will understand their duty and will punish the Jews in the manner this race dislikes most: by hitting them in the pocket, which will demonstrate our disgust for them.[30]

Uproar over this ill-advised order more than neutralized adverse publicity reaped by the ghastly hotel attack.[31] Each incident, however,

28. Koestler, op. cit.; see also Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra;* Truman (*Year of Decisions 1945*), *supra.* Acheson, op. cit.
29. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra.*
30. Begin, op. cit.
31. Ibid.

served the Irgun goal of focusing world attention on this torn and bleeding country.

In August, the British replied further with a massive raid on Irgun "headquarters" in Tel Aviv, which they sealed off with some twenty thousand troops supported by tanks.

> . . . Life in Tel Aviv was brought to a halt. Every house and apartment was searched. The adult male population was led in groups to screening centers set up throughout the town. CID officers armed with lists and photographs identified more than a hundred thousand people. Among them were almost all the leaders and staff of the Irgun and the Lehi [Stern Gang], and the total Tel Aviv manpower of both organizations. Nearly eight hundred people were indeed led away to detention, and a British communiqué claimed the capture of many important terrorists.[32]

Katz later wrote that the British captured only two terrorists. Menachem Begin spent the emergency in a tiny cupboard and was not discovered.[33]

The worsening situation caused the Jewish Agency to lower its sights by requesting a reasonable partition arrangement. Fearful of Arab reaction, the British responded with a trusteeship plan, but the Attlee government also appointed a new Colonial Secretary, who was more sympathetic to Jewish aspirations and who initiated an appeasement policy by freeing Jewish Agency leaders. In return,

> . . . Haganah dissociated itself from the terrorists and signalized the end of the alliance by issuing propaganda against them. The Central Executive of the Zionist organization condemned terrorism and called on the Yishuv to take action against the criminals.[34]

Something might have come of these moves but for the intransigence of the Arabs, who refused to countenance any partition plan; for the sympathy of the American Government to the Jewish plan, which infuriated the British; and for continued Irgun-Sternist activity.

By end of 1946, the Irgun-Sternist groups had killed 373 persons.[35] Although the police and army had imprisoned and deported some members, the organization continued to operate with at least tacit support of a large number of ordinary citizens. Considering the size of its full-time staff, never more than fifty persons, the task of running the Irgun to the ground was immense. British security forces could disrupt various groups and even cause operations to be suspended, but they could not eliminate the hard-core top command. Or, anyway, not without far better intelligence than they received. Instead of concentrating on improved intelligence procedures, which, among other things, required modera-

32. Katz, op. cit.
33. Begin, op. cit.
34. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra.*
35. Ibid.

tion in dealing with the general population, the British high command frequently antagonized the people. In Christopher Sykes's later words,

. . . Exasperated by the crafty malignity of the terrorists whom they could defeat in the straight combat which for political reasons was denied them, and forced to endure defeat and humiliation while keeping order during a time of undeclared war; subjected to continual mockery and misrepresentation and frequent efforts to goad them into misconduct, the Army became an emotional dispenser of justice.[36]

It now began to use corporal punishment on suspected terrorists, a practice stopped when the Irgun kidnaped two British soldiers and gave them each eighteen lashes before sending them back to their units. Besides gaining world-wide publicity, instant retaliation caused the British to abandon this nefarious practice. The British next organized a counter-terror unit, but it soon died an ignominious, if gory, death. In early 1947, the British sentenced a young terrorist, Dov Grüner, to death by hanging, for his part in the murder of a policeman. His execution made him a popular hero and won many converts to the Irgun-Sternist cause both in Palestine and abroad. It was Ireland all over again (see Chapter 21, Volume I). In Jon Kimche's later words,

. . . With all their great experience of governing other people, the British here made the classical error of antagonizing the entire population in the attempt to subdue a small terrorist minority.[37]

As Begin and his fellows had foreseen, the British could take only limited action, action sufficient to turn people against them but not sufficient to end the terrorist movement. In Begin's later words,

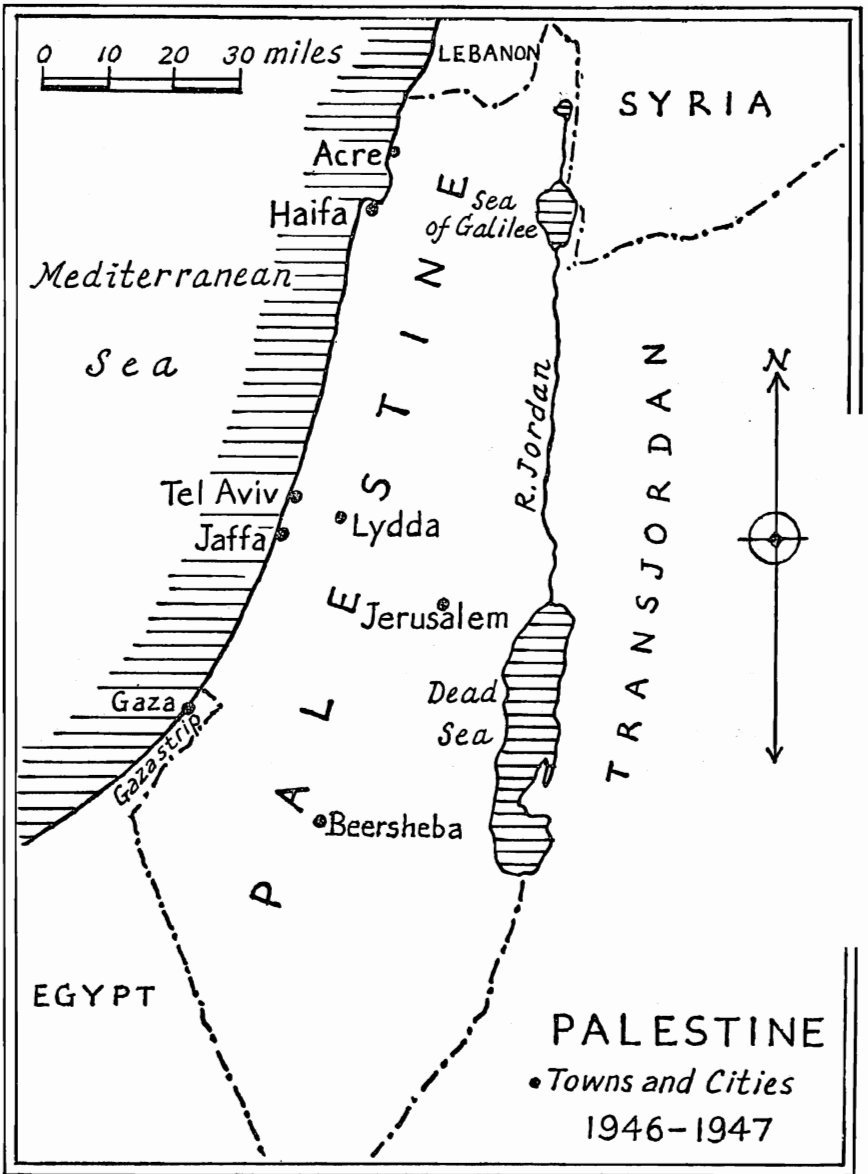
. . . We often encountered the argument that the British Government if it so chose could take revenge by destroying us all and thus our operations were endangering the whole Jewish population. This was indeed a very serious question, perhaps the most serious we ever faced. General Cunningham, the last High Commissioner, referred to it in his report on the storming of Acre fortress. The General argued that there was no means of destroying the Jewish underground except by the application of the whole military might against the entire population.

But, added the General, the British, unlike the Germans, could not do such a thing. . . .[38]

Against this sordid background, the British Government continued efforts to effect a political compromise. But time was running out and criticism mounting on the British home front:

. . . In the House of Commons, at the height of the coal crisis, Winston Churchill warned that Britain could not sustain, morally or materially, a

36. Ibid.; see also Koestler, op. cit.
37. Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel*), *supra.*
38. Begin, op. cit.



M.E.P.

long campaign in Palestine. He pointed to the expenditure of eighty million pounds in two years to maintain 100,000 soldiers there. She had no such interests in Palestine as to justify such an effort. . . .[39]

39. Katz, op. cit.

Ernest Bevin disagreed. Misreading the Jewish Agency's conciliatory attitude as weakness, he still thought he could bring Arab and Jew together under the British flag. To gain time, he turned to the United Nations in mid-February, a move that some interpreted as the first step in abandoning the mandate. The UN appointed a special committee, UNSCOP, to investigate the problem and recommend a new solution.

Meanwhile, terror and counterterror ruled Palestine, a ghastly period that kept the torn country in international headlines. Dov Grüner's execution brought widespread Irgun reprisals. In early March, terrorists attacked British installations and, in one day, killed or wounded some eighty soldiers. The British replied by declaring martial law, which infuriated the civil population without halting Irgun operations. The British also sentenced three captured terrorists to death. In May, Irgun units attacked Acre jail and released forty-one terrorists (and two hundred common criminals). In July, the refugee ship *Exodus 1947* arrived with forty-five hundred Jews aboard, only to be sent back to Europe to disembark its human, generally penniless, cargo on a Hamburg dock—a tragic event resulting from Bevin's intransigence, and giving militant Jews an enormous propaganda victory further exploited by Leon Uris' best-selling novel *Exodus*.[40] Also in July, the British hanged the three sentenced terrorists. The Irgun had kidnaped two British sergeants and, as promised, in retaliation hanged them on a tree outside Tel Aviv.

Undeterred by reciprocal savagery, UNSCOP worked throughout summer and autumn, finally to recommend an end of the British mandate in favor of still another partition plan, one reluctantly adopted by the Jewish Agency when the British made it clear that they intended to yield the mandate and withdraw troops in near future. In late November 1947, the UN voted to accept the UNSCOP plan. The Arab League responded by ordering attacks against Jewish settlements not only in Palestine but throughout the Middle East. In December, the Colonial Secretary announced that Great Britain would terminate its mandate on May 15, 1948.

By then the Haganah had secretly mobilized and Jew was fighting Arab as the beleaguered British garrison stood increasingly to one side. The British would remain for another few months, but their war was over. The Arab-Israeli war had started.

40. Leon Uris, *Exodus* (London: Allen Wingate, 1959).

Chapter 61

Postwar Malaya • Ch'en P'ing's Communist guerrilla army • Communist tactics • Government reaction • Counterinsurgency tactics • Ch'en P'ing's tactical adjustment • British problems • British tactical adaptation • The Briggs Plan • Guerrilla setbacks • Templer takes over: the qualitative approach • The tactical challenge • The cost

SEEDS OF TROUBLE planted in prewar Malaya burst into discomfiting bloom not long after Japan's surrender. Here, as elsewhere in Asia, a variety of elements enriched already fertile soil of dissatisfaction: Japanese victory over the white man, the white man's frantic effort to recover initiative by political promises inherent in such documents as the Atlantic Charter, political and economic dislocation caused by Japanese occupation, political awareness among all groups produced as defense against brutal Japanese occupation policies, active opposition and consequent improved organization of the Communist Party, the political vacuum created by Japanese defeat, the British return with initial political confusion and economic hardship, delay in restoring tin mines and rubber plantations to prewar condition.[1]

Soon after British troops returned to the peninsula, Whitehall an-

1. Lucian W. Pye, *Guerrilla Communism and Malaya—Its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956) offers a detailed political-economic analysis of this period.

nounced a new political arrangement known as the Union of Malaya. This was an attempt to juggle the three major ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese, and Indians)—some 5.5 million people—into a viable colonial state by improving the Chinese and Indian political position. It failed mainly because of opposition from powerful Malay sultans and the well-organized Malayan civil service. In December 1946, Whitehall began to consider a federation plan, not announced until 1948.

The political hiatus caused by bumbling bureaucracy suited the Communist Party of Malaya (MCP), which finished the war in a relatively strong position (see Chapter 46, Volume I). In 1945, it ostensibly disbanded its field army and turned in arms; in reality, it retained a cadre organization in form of an Old Comrades Association and buried a significant number of weapons. Its leader, Lai Teck, judged that he was not strong enough to seize power outright, a decision that some believe was occasioned by his being a British secret agent. The MCP did begin to attack by infiltration and subversion, however. Communist propaganda fell on willing ears, and Lai and his fellows successfully brought off numerous demonstrations and strikes.[2] Although these disrupted postwar recovery, they did not prevent it. As was and is quite common in Communist parties, a rift now developed: The Central Committee ousted Lai Teck, who disappeared, taking party funds with him.[3] His deputy in World War II, Ch'en P'ing, replaced him as party leader.

In February 1947, Ch'en P'ing was twenty-six years old. He had joined the MCP in 1940. At the time of the Japanese invasion, he was serving as party secretary in Perak state. During the war, he worked closely with the SOE (Force 136), an effort acknowledged by his being chosen to march in the Victory Parade in London and by being decorated with the Order of the British Empire![4] Ch'en P'ing brings to mind the young Burmese leader Aung San, who so impressed Field Marshal Sir William Slim. A British veteran of Malaya and expert on counter-insurgency warfare, Major General Richard Clutterbuck, later wrote, ". . . few people who have worked with him . . . deny that he is likable, intelligent and sincere."[5]

Unfortunately, in 1947 Ch'en P'ing was sincere only in bringing about a revolution in Malaya. Whether inspired by his own confidence, by an erroneous estimate of party strength, or by such outside influences as the Soviet Union and China is not known; he was never captured. He did send representatives to the Asia Youth Conference held at Calcutta

2. Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967): The author cites 300 major industrial strikes in 1947.

3. Pye, op. cit.; Special Operations Research Office (The American University, Washington, D.C.), *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare* (Washington: The American University, 1962). Hereafter referred to as SORO.

4. Paget, op. cit.: By the time the decoration reached Malaya, in 1948, Ch'en had taken to the jungle and would soon have a price of £30,000 on his head!

5. Richard L. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War—Counter-Insurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966).

in February 1948—a meeting that some authorities hold responsible for the outbreak of "wars of liberation" all over Southeast Asia.[6] Probably a combination of the three factors moved him to abandon infiltration strategy in favor of Mao's three-step plan: a limited guerrilla phase to wear down government strength while building MCP strength; an expansion phase with development of "popular bases" in towns and villages; a consolidation phase with conversion of guerrilla forces into an army and subsequent defeat of government forces.

To accomplish this program, Ch'en P'ing reactivated his World War II army of small guerrilla bands based in jungle areas. In 1947, the Malayan People's Anti-British Army consisted of about four thousand guerrillas, 90 per cent of whom were Chinese. Divided into eight regional regiments,

> . . . they lived in large camps, normally of company size. These were well-appointed, with parade grounds and classrooms in which the soldiers spent more than half their time, attending indoctrination and self-criticism sessions, lectures on current affairs, and classes in Mandarin Chinese. . . . The regiments operated in the early days mainly in the company groups in which they lived, though there were also smaller raids and a number of larger ones involving 200 or 300 men.[7]

Ch'en P'ing's army could not have functioned effectively without civilian support provided by an organization called the Min Yuen—the peacetime version of World War II's Anti-Japanese Union. The Min Yuen consisted of perhaps five thousand "formal" members assisted by thousands of Chinese rubber and tin workers living in villages bordering the jungle. In each village, one or more Communist "cells" performed a variety of essential tasks such as furnishing guerrillas with intelligence, recruits, food, medicine, clothing, and money. Armed members of the Min Yuen—plantation workers by day, guerrillas by night—undertook propaganda, sabotage, and terror missions. Administratively, the cells formed shadow governments, what the French in Indochina called "parallel hierarchies," at village, district, and province levels. This machinery enabled the Central Committee of the MCP to control Min Yuen activities as well as provide an instant government for "liberated areas." The Central Committee also organized bands of thugs called "Blood and Steel Corps" for terrorist activities in cities.[8]

6. Psychologically a good year in that it was the centenary of the European revolutions that so inspired Marx and Engels.

7. Clutterbuck, op. cit.; see also, Blair, op. cit.; Pye, op. cit., offers organizational and operational details including an interesting camp schedule.

8. Pye, op. cit.: A Central Committee member served as secretary of each State Committee, and at least one State Committee member sat on the next-lower District Committee, an overlap system that was supposed to insure continuity of policy. In most cases, regimental commanders belonged to the appropriate State Committee, and important Min Yuen leaders sat on district committees.

Ch'en P'ing used his primitive but effective organization to unleash a mounting reign of terror: in cities, strikes, bombings, assassinations (particularly of Chinese Kuomintang leaders), extortion from merchants (particularly Chinese), bank robberies; in carefully selected country areas, theft, arson, murder of policemen and village officials, sabotage of rubber trees and tin mines. His purpose was twofold: By such means he partially financed his movement and broadened his base of support, besides gaining recruits and necessary arms and supply; at the same time, he hoped to induce popular revolts that would give him control of "liberated areas," essential to the next revolutionary phase.[9]

Ch'en P'ing nearly carried off this plan. The Malayan police force numbered only nine thousand constables, who were neither organized nor equipped to deal with this rash of violence, nor did thinly spread military units at first prove effective. The British Government, beset by problems at home and elsewhere in the Commonwealth, reacted only sluggishly. Encouraged by initial successes, and possibly under orders from Yenan or Moscow, Ch'en P'ing stepped up the tempo in early 1948 in anticipation of establishing the Communist Republic of Malaya in August.[10]

But Ch'en P'ing had underestimated both governmental and popular reaction. Despite numerous attacks and murders, many constables and officials proved extremely brave and loyal, and as a result, most villages remained politically viable. People may have been cowed and intimidated, but nowhere were there mass uprisings as foreseen by Ch'en P'ing.

Whitehall also pulled itself together to replace the moribund Union of Malaya with a federation scheme that introduced centralized direction of government and a formal recognition of the threat to legitimate government.[11] In June 1948, the high commissioner, Sir Edward Gent (soon after killed in an air crash), declared a state of emergency, and the legislature passed an Emergency Regulations Act, which, without

9. Ibid.: The British at first called the perpetrators "bandits," as had Chiang Kai-shek, Japanese military commanders, the Greeks, and the Filipinos; in Malaya, the authorities wisely changed to the more realistic term of Communist Terrorists, or CTs; see also Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency—The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966): The author offers an excellent account of the opening of the insurgency.

10. SORO, *supra*.

11. The new government provided limited autonomy to each of Malaya's eleven state and settlement rulers. Real power remained in the office of the high commissioner, a Whitehall appointee, who was assisted by a cabinet and a federal legislature. The high commissioner appointed cabinet and legislative members, and exercised veto power over the legislature. Although generally satisfying disgruntled Malayan sultans, the new plan provoked Chinese and Indian elements and undoubtedly cost the government some support. But most authorities agree that its virtues outweighed its shortcomings, although a promise of independence was needed in the end.

invoking martial law, nonetheless provided security forces with some sharp teeth.

Malaya's new laws called for country-wide registration of all citizens over twelve years of age, temporary abandonment of habeas corpus, right of search without warrant, heavy sentences including that of death for illegal possession of weapons, severe sentences for anyone assisting the Communist propaganda effort, right to impose curfews as needed. Later measures gave security forces the right to shoot anyone found in certain prohibited areas (a dubious practice) and also authorized courts to impose heavy sentences on persons supplying guerrillas.[12]

No one can deny the severity of these and other "control" laws, but, at that time in Malaya, no one could deny the severity of Communist threat to legitimate government. If the laws were harsh and if some defied principles of Western jurisprudence, they nonetheless brought home to the general populace the government's determination to restore and maintain law and order. The government's promise of immediate repeal, once proper government was restored, also caused the average citizen to co-operate in hopes of return to normality. The registration system further stressed the incentive aspect, since, without an identity card, the citizen could not ". . . obtain a food ration, space in a resettled village, a grant to build on it, an extra patch for growing vegetables, and many other things. . . ."[13] He was also assured of being asked blunt questions if he could not produce his card.

While the law temporarily subjected the citizen to arrest, detention, and interrogation at the government's pleasure, it did this to *all* citizens; further, it guaranteed the citizen against maltreatment or torture: In case of detention, a Public Review Board accepted appeals and periodically reviewed cases. A special Information Service attempted to mitigate the harshness of the laws by explaining the need for them in view of the Communist threat: During the emergency, the government distributed over thirty million leaflets in various vernacular languages, printed simple newspapers for rural areas, and sent twelve public-address/motion-picture units around the countryside.[14]

Thus armed, the government turned to its primary mission, providing security to the people, with secondary missions of separating the guerrilla from the people and then eliminating him. At first, this required a holding operation. The police could neither adequately protect the populace nor pursue the guerrillas. They had their hands full protecting themselves. Military forces, eleven battalions of British, Gurkha, and Malay troops, necessarily concentrated on providing static guards, mainly in plantation and mine areas. Malaya is a country larger than England, and the army quickly spread itself thin.

12. Clutterbuck, op. cit.
13. Ibid.
14. Department of Information, Federation of Malaya, *Communist Banditry in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: n.d.).

By holding or even retreating a little, the government won vital breathing space. One of its first steps was an enormous police-expansion program. Within six months, the police force grew from nine thousand to forty-five thousand; a part-time Home Guard augmented the police effort, and in time grew to about fifty thousand members. Military forces reached forty thousand, including twenty-five thousand troops from Britain and over ten thousand Gurkhas; they would number fifty-five thousand before the Emergency was over.[15]

During the government's build-up of security forces, guerrillas continued to raid almost at will. They struck plantations and police stations and small military posts; they threatened people and burned houses and stole money and supplies. In 1948, Ch'en P'ing's guerrillas killed 315 civilians, eighty-nine policemen, and sixty soldiers. Although the MCP was gaining support, Ch'en P'ing and his close associates still saw no signs of a general uprising.

The Communist leader now shifted tactics. Seeing that he faced a protracted war, which would require jungle bases, he reorganized his army (which now became the Malayan Races Liberation Army, or MRLA). Pulling perhaps two thirds of his force deep into the jungle, he left the remainder to operate among squatters and in rubber estates and tin mines. This failed to work—the number of terrorist incidents fell to less than half in summer of 1949—so, in late 1949, he again shifted tactics. Bringing his forces from the jungle, he attempted to form "liberated areas" along the jungle fringe. Terrorist activity rose sharply. In 1949, guerrillas killed 723 persons, including 494 civilians. In May 1950, terrorist incidents climbed to 534![16]

Government reaction still lagged. The police remained in throes of reorganization. Although reinforced by British veterans from the Palestine police, the greatly expanded force lacked sufficient leaders; recruit training was also understandably rudimentary. Ch'en P'ing's guerrillas continued to attack local police posts, not alone to kill policemen and steal arms but often to intimidate and sometimes even to recruit them. A favorite tactic was to disarm constables and warn them to keep to their compound at night, thus leaving the village under Communist control—often without authorities realizing it.[17]

The natural ally of the police, the military, was also suffering teething problems. The average operation from 1948 to early 1950 can be described as "too big and too late." This operational difficulty resulted mainly from trying to use conventional tactics in an unconventional situation—from trying to destroy the enemy in one fell swoop instead of breaking up his larger units in order to neutralize and destroy them piecemeal.

15. Clutterbuck, op. cit.; see also Pye, op. cit.; Department of Information, op. cit.
16. Department of Information, op. cit.
17. Clutterbuck, op. cit.

Military forces in the Philippines, Indonesia, and French Indochina were similarly erring. World War II commanders found it difficult if not impossible to adjust tactical values—to evaluate the new tactical environment and adapt to it. The World War II veteran usually failed, for example, to realize that concentration of force essential to an ordinary battlefield made little sense in a guerrilla environment. In the early days in Malaya, a commander, learning of a guerrilla attack on a police post or a village, responded by dispatching a battalion; by the time it reached the threatened area, it found the damage done: police killed, arms gone. A platoon, on the other hand, responded far more quickly, often checking an attack.

Nor was this particularly hazardous. The British soon learned that preponderant force was not usually a vital element in this type of war. A handful of guerrillas could not stand against a handful of well-trained and well-armed soldiers. Moreover, guerrillas did not know in what strength soldiers were approaching, and could not afford to stick around to find out.[18]

Similarly, in trying to eliminate the guerrilla, or at least to keep him off balance, the British erred with the quantitative approach:

> . . . Initially, because of their previous training and experience, senior army officers were inclined to launch their units into the jungle in battalion strength —either in giant encirclement operations when a [guerrilla] camp was known to be in the area, or in wide sweeps based on no information at all. Neither of these types of operation had any success.[19]

One battalion, the Green Howards, spent most of the last four months of 1949 in the jungle; they killed *one* guerrilla.

The cumulative effect of this experience caused the military to decentralize control of operational units. General Clutterbuck later wrote:

> . . . As we gained experience, infantry battalions were spread out in company-size camps, each company being responsible for patrolling the rubber estates and the neighboring jungle, and for aiding the village police posts in its area. These camps were not "forts" or "strong points"; they were merely living quarters for the soldiers.[20]

Battalion commanders perforce yielded tactical control of their companies. One veteran commander later noted: ". . . It would be almost a physical impossibility for a battalion commander to control every operation launched within his battalion area."[21] Similarly, company commanders often yielded control of an action to the platoon leader. The platoon leader, in turn, frequently utilized small patrols—generally self-

18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. R. E. R. Robinson, "Reflections of a Company Commander in Malaya," *Army Quarterly*, October 1950.

sufficient, two-to-three day efforts commanded by sergeants and corporals.

Foreign as decentralized control at first seemed to regimental and battalion commanders (and their staffs), it soon began to pay off. As soldiers established closer contact with local functionaries and police posts, the flow of intelligence began to increase. Freed from higher staff delays, young officers learned to react quickly and effectively, not the least of the lessons being that ". . . only good battle drill and fire discipline will force a successful issue," while supporting arms will ". . . offer only indirect assistance."[22] As a natural corollary, unit commanders began to employ finesse in jungle operations by stressing tracking and listening operations. Instead of companies and battalions crashing through jungle to alert every guerrilla within a hundred miles, small patrols "disappeared" into jungle, where, in time and with the help of Dyak tribesmen from Borneo, they learned to track, observe guerrilla movements, set ambushes, and often locate and raid guerrilla camps.

These and other healthy changes were in the making when the counterinsurgency effort received a real boost. In April 1950, a recently retired general, Sir Henry Briggs, arrived to serve as director of operations.

The fifty-five-year-old Briggs introduced a new operational concept. The Briggs Plan, as it came to be known, recognized that the key to the situation lay in winning support of the civil population or at least in depriving guerrillas of that support. So long as guerrillas controlled large segments of the Chinese "squatter" population, police and troops would be deprived of intelligence concerning Communist village infrastructure and guerrilla movements; conversely, guerrillas would continue to receive intelligence regarding police and military movements.

How to prevent this?

Briggs answered this question with an imaginative resettlement plan that called for rounding up and moving almost half a million people into four hundred newly constructed villages. Like earlier segregation schemes that concentrated people in camps such as those the British introduced in the Boer war, the Briggs Plan aimed at collapsing the insurgency by depriving guerrillas of civil support. But the plan went further. As General Clutterbuck later wrote:

> . . . In this first directive, Briggs put his finger on what this war was really about—a competition in government. He aimed not only to resettle the squatters but to give them a standard of local government and a degree of prosperity that they would not wish to exchange for the barren austerity of life under the Communists' parallel hierarchy; in other words, to give them something to lose.[23]

22. Ibid.; see also "Noll." "The Emergency in Malaya," *Army Quarterly*, April 1954.

23. Clutterbuck, op. cit.

Briggs also recognized need for a unified command. At federal, or top, level he introduced a War Council of civil, police, and military representatives. This was not a command organization, but a co-ordinating committee, with each voice heard in formulating plans. The same system operated at state and district levels by War Executive Committees (SWECs and DWECs). By eliminating duplicate operational efforts and by providing more rapid and effective exchange of intelligence, the area committee system also began to produce better operational results.[24]

None of these measures took place overnight. Civil deaths continued to rise, the guerrillas claiming about twelve hundred victims in 1950 and about a thousand in 1951 (including the high commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, killed in a road ambush). The monthly incident rate remained high: By late 1951, guerrilla raids had caused about $27.5 million in damage to rubber plantations. One observer noted, ". . . at this time a marked drop in the confidence of the population, while reports showed considerable uneasiness over the situation in Government circles in Malaya."[25]

The government had not been idle, however. By autumn of 1951, over a quarter of a million people had been resettled at a cost of $21.5 million; the police numbered nearly eighty-four thousand including auxiliaries and special constables; the Home Guard counted another sixty thousand; troop strength reached fifty-five thousand and comprised over twenty-five battalions supported by several squadrons of aircraft including one of helicopters.[26] The government was also actively promoting an amnesty program for surrendered Communists, and three hundred of these had agreed to return to the jungle in special units to fight their brethren.[27]

As security forces cleared fringe areas, as more police and troops appeared in the field to work with village militia units in providing local security, as troops grew more adept in jungle operations, pressure against Communist communications and logistics slowly began to tell. As early as 1950, the guerrillas had abandoned "regimental" operations:

> . . . By 1952 even the platoons were being broken up, and some of the sections were assigned to work directly with small Min Yuen groups. This process not only placed a greater strain on the party organization but made the District Committee level the critical point in the hierarchy.[28]

With central leadership giving way to state and district leadership, any semblance of a co-ordinated guerrilla campaign vanished. Despite

24. Ibid.; see also Thompson, op. cit.
25. Blair, op. cit.
26. Ibid.
27. Pye, op. cit.
28. Ibid.

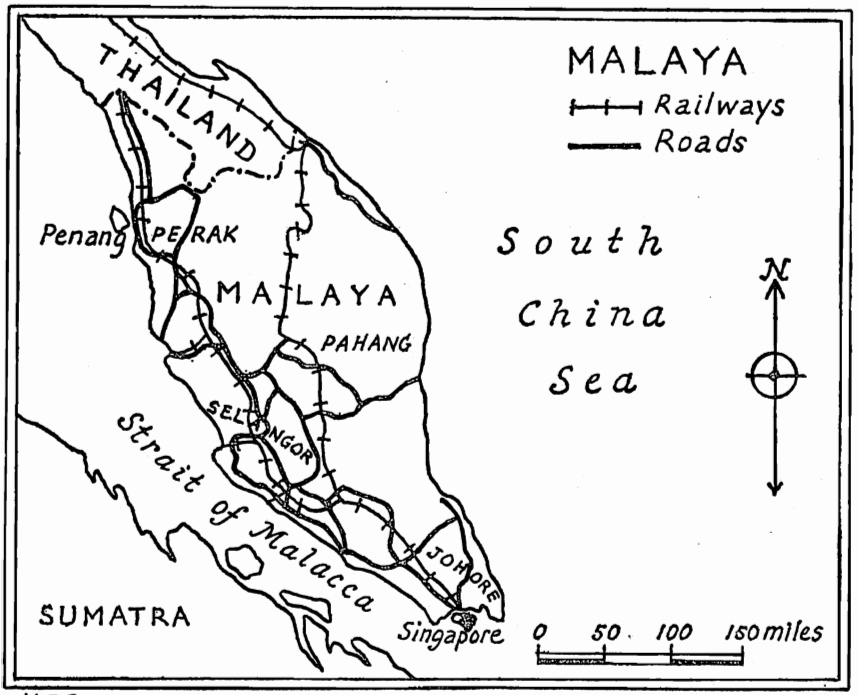
"formal" directives, plans, and orders (often reaching jungle headquarters months late), local guerrilla leaders increasingly turned to terrorism to survive.[29] Although the Min Yuen sometimes succeeded in reorganizing cells in resettled areas and among the Home Guard, the MRLA began to suffer distinct supply shortages. At first, guerrillas overcame this difficulty by direct purchase at inflated prices, but increased security measures began to dry up necessary money income from extortion and theft. Recruits no longer flocked willingly to the guerrilla banner. One well-informed source, in Selangor, ". . . estimated that by the end of 1952 about 80 per cent of all new recruiting was based on some combination of coercion and trickery."[30]

At this stage, a remarkably able commander appeared on the government scene. General Sir Gerald Templer arrived in early 1952 in the dual role of high commissioner and director of operations. If Briggs had struck the correct operational note, Templer brought with him the correct political tone: ". . . the policy of the British Government is that Malaya should in due course become a fully self-governing nation."[31] This promise of eventual independence, and particularly the optimism inherent in its expression at a critical time, cleared the air to an astonishing degree and virtually allowed Templer a dictatorial policy during the next two vital years, in which the guerrillas suffered military defeat.

These years recorded steady gains, a series of contacts and small battles that neutralized guerrilla operations by hindering communications and reducing forces. Although a dynamic and, on occasion, explosive leader, Templer was ". . . a great listener, particularly to the people with ideas, the policemen, platoon commanders, district officers, and rubber planters."[32] He insisted that ". . . the fighting of the war and the civil running of the country 'were completely and utterly interrelated.'" He refused to allow a military takeover of what essentially remained a civil problem. As director of operations, he utilized a staff that *never exceeded nine officers,* its main element being ". . . a team of four officers of lieutenant colonel level—a soldier, an airman, a policeman, and a civil servant."[33]

Field operations followed a low tempo, with village security the primary mission. This is the first of two points to stress, for local security is vital to waging successful counterinsurgency warfare. The decisive tactical element in Malaya was not a troop unit (though troops were

29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Clutterbuck, op. cit.; see also Robert Thompson, op. cit., and Robert Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969).
32. Clutterbuck, op. cit.
33. Ibid.



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vital) but, rather, the village police post, which, as General Clutterbuck has emphasized,

> . . . was the only thing that could provide security against the threat that really mattered in the villages—the man with the knife, who lived in the village and prowled the streets at night seeking out those people who had actively supported the Government or betrayed the guerrillas during the day. They were, I believe, far more frightened of this man than of any raid coming in from the outside. I believe that the primary function of the army during this period was to operate in such a way that the guerrillas could never attack in such strength that they could destroy the police post before help could arrive, and this, in general, was achieved.[34]

In early 1951, halfway through the resettlement program, construction of new fortified villages moved ahead of police expansion. After one or two ugly experiences, General Templer wisely delayed further occupation of new villages *until a police post was functioning in that village.*

Once local security was achieved, if only partially, real flow of intelligence began. This is the second point to stress, for, without intelli-

34. Richard Clutterbuck, letter to the author.

gence, the security forces are blind and cannot possibly pursue the selective tactics demanded by this type of warfare. The intelligence flow began in late 1951, only when police posts in general were secure, which meant protection to the population—not necessarily 100 per cent protection, but protection in that the government obviously cared and was doing its best to protect its people.

As security forces continued to regain control of large areas while preventing guerrilla raids in any strength, civil administration daily grew stronger, and the population, protected and promised political gains, increasingly furnished information necessary to root out the Min Yuen guerrilla infrastructure.

The government could now concentrate on improving flow of intelligence and further hurting Ch'en P'ing's guerrilla bands. Of decisive importance to the intelligence-collection process was Special Branch, which utilized Chinese operatives and, in 1952, began to achieve spectacular results. The police were now sufficiently strong to form jungle squads and, aided by Special Air Service (SAS) units, to begin manning "forts" deep in the jungle. From these strongholds, patrols interdicted MRLA communications while attempting to win co-operation of primitive Sakai tribes.[35] The government also strengthened the police hand by offering impressive rewards to informers: Capture of a state committee member earned the informant about seven thousand dollars; a district committee member brought four thousand dollars, lesser persons two thousand dollars.[36]

An enlarged police role allowed military forces to concentrate on exploiting intelligence furnished by Special Branch and other organizations. Valid intelligence alone enabled military commanders to ambush or attack remaining guerrillas, and where the commander lacked intelligence, he had to go without or procure it himself.

Like the rest of the emergency, the offensive phase was a time-consuming process that demanded enormous patience. Large-scale battalion and regimental "sweeps" had proved useless. Random shelling of open areas or suspected guerrilla areas had produced minimal results, as had Lincoln bombers and Hornet and Vampire fighters plastering various areas of the jungle. Instead, the war reverted to the small infantry unit, often operating entirely on its own. General Clutterbuck concluded:

> . . . our best commanders in Malaya were the ones who set themselves the task of managing the war in such a way that their small patrols came face to face with the guerrillas on favorable terms; in other words, with good intelligence. This meant long hours of tactful discussions with police officers, administrators, rubber planters, tin miners, and local community leaders, get-

35. J. M. Woodhouse, "Some Personal Observations on the Employment of Special Forces in Malaya," *Army Quarterly*, April 1955.
36. Pye, op. cit.

ting them to co-operate with the soldiers and to promote the flow of information to them. Such commanders would regularly accompany their patrols, often placing themselves under the platoon commanders, so that they really understood the war and knew what was needed to win it.[37]

What *was* needed to win it?

Basically, a realignment of tactical thinking—away from conventional terms of "battle" and "victory" to much more sophisticated terms of "pressure" and "gain." Commentators then and later sometimes missed this essential requirement. One top American analyst later wrote that

> . . . this failure of the MCP is significant as a demonstration that guerrilla warfare cannot achieve victories over an enemy vastly superior by conventional military standards. Although the Security Forces in Malaya have had a difficult and thankless task in fighting the Communists, they have proved that superior technology and resources provide the same advantages in irregular as in regular warfare.[38]

Nothing could be farther from the mark, yet this belief was to gain and hold considerable currency in U.S. military circles. It completely contradicted lessons offered by China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Greece, French Indochina, and Malaya.

In Malaya, superior technology and resources played a shadow second to human performance in a war that blended civil and military factors to an almost inexplicable degree. The airplane, the artillery piece, the psychological warfare program, the jungle "fort"—none approached the importance of the individual working among the people, his determination and brain his best weapons. Superior technology and resources did not "win" the Malayan war; they did help the government to establish an effective pacification program, and they did help the military carry out effective small-unit operations. But it was the pacification effort combined with the small-unit military effort that prevented the guerrilla threat from growing and finally countered it to the extent that guerrillas were unable to fight effectively any longer.

Tactically, patience had to replace impetuosity. At times, guerrillas holed up for weeks and even months. A young British officer, Arthur Campbell, later wrote a book, *Jungle Green,* that brought home the new tactical challenge faced by the Western soldier.[39] One ambush he described, a fifty-hour effort in a filthy, insect-ridden jungle swamp, succeeded in killing one guerrilla. Other ambushes trapped no one; sometimes guerrillas appeared but escaped into the night; sometimes his people scored several kills and broke up guerrilla camps. Similarly, police and soldiers, on occasion, spent months building information on locating an enemy camp which soldiers, after enduring appalling physi-

37. Clutterbuck, op. cit.
38. Pye, op. cit.
39. Arthur Campbell, *Jungle Green* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953).

cal hardships, attacked only to discover that the enemy had fled to still another sanctuary. Disappointment caused by such fruitless efforts, each calling for extreme individual sacrifice, was overcome only by outstanding leadership.

Frustrating as these operations were, they eventually paid off. To accomplish his mission, indeed to survive, the guerrilla had to leave his jungle sanctuary sooner or later in order either to mount an attack or to receive food and supply from clandestine supporters. That was his vulnerability, and that was where the tactical force had to outdo him in patience—not an easy requirement, in view of the hurly-burly Western environment.

Yet patience and persistence, and a combination of small civil and military efforts from one end of the infected areas to the other, slowly cracked the insurgency. As the first, halting movements produced intelligence and machinery to exploit it properly, the effort became a crawl, and, as more intelligence flowed in to co-ordinated commands and as police and military tactics improved, the crawl became a walk. In two years, from 1952 to 1954,

> . . . two-thirds of the guerrillas were wiped out, the terrorist incident rate fell from 500 a month to less than 100 and the casualty rate went from 300 to less than 40.[40]

Where once guerrilla leaders whistled and new guerrillas appeared, now they whistled in vain. The remainder found themselves increasingly cut off from support forces and increasingly under pressure from military units. Time favored security forces, for as strength, organization, and tactical abilities increased, the guerrilla could only suffer proportionally.

Yet the process was painfully slow and very expensive. The government's offensive phase did not end until 1955, and the consolidation phase continued until 1960. The twelve-year war cost the lives of nearly two thousand men of the security forces; guerrillas killed or kidnaped 3,283 civilians in the same period[41] and also did millions of dollars' worth of damage to the mines and plantations. The guerrillas themselves lost nearly six thousand killed, 1,752 surrendered, and 1,173 captured.[42] Ch'en P'ing and four hundred of his fellows escaped to the Malaya-Thailand border area, where, after a short hiatus, they resumed operations.

They remain active today.

40. Clutterbuck, op. cit.
41. Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency*), *supra.*
42. Pye, op. cit.

Chapter 62

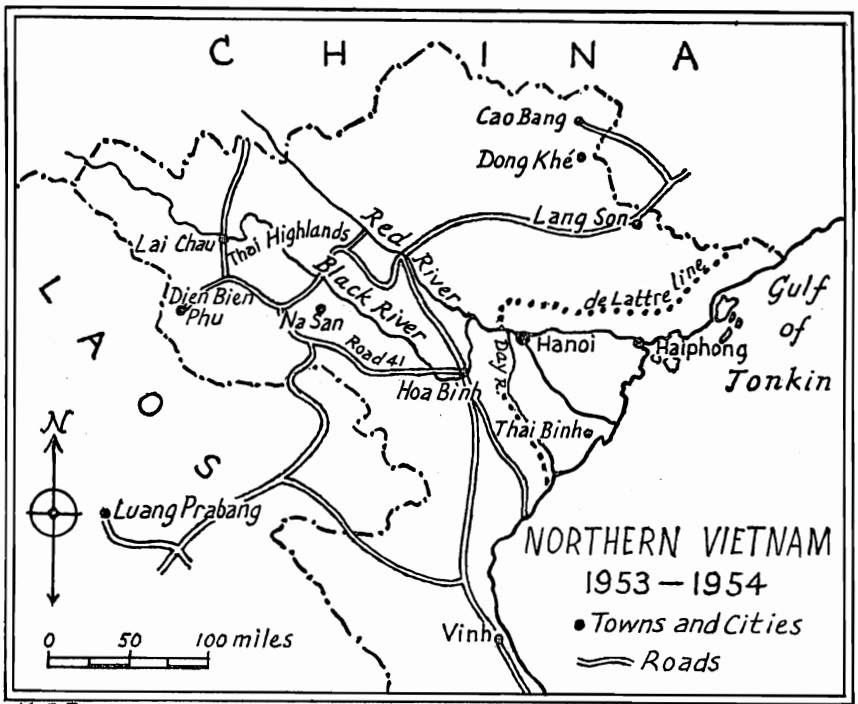
The Vietnam war • Navarre's tactics • Chinese aid • The American position • Erroneous estimates of the situation • Genesis of the domino theory • On strategic values • "Strategic keys" versus "strategic conveniences" • Mark Clark's recommendations • General O'Daniel's mission • The Navarre Plan: ". . . light at the end of a tunnel" • Giap's response • Orde Wingate's ghost (II) • Dien Bien Phu • Giap's secret plans • Navarre's problems • Origin of the Geneva Conference • Navarre's continuing errors • American aid

LESSONS LEARNED from insurgencies in the Philippines, Greece, Indonesia, Palestine, and Malaya did not rub off on the French in Indochina. Despite American and British appeals, France refused to push through political reforms that, in spring of 1953, might still have stolen nationalist thunder from Ho Chi Minh and the DRV Government.

Premier Laniel's new government offered only negative direction to its new commander in chief in Vietnam, fifty-five-year-old General Henri-Eugène Navarre, an armor officer, a military intelligence specialist, European-oriented, a reserved, somewhat colorless man, an art collector and cat-lover, of whom a friend said: ". . . There is an eighteenth century fragrance about him."[1]

Navarre was a mortal given an almost superhuman task. He was to expect no further troop replacements from France; his mission was to defend Laos while jockeying for a favorable negotiating position with the Viet Minh, but he was not to risk defeat of his forces. Navarre, him-

1. *Time*, September 28, 1953.



self, remained under no illusions as to the military situation, secretly reporting to his government ". . . that the war simply could not be won in the military sense (just as the Korean War could not, without drawing Red China into it) and that all that could be hoped for was a *coup nul* —a draw."[2]

Like De Lattre and Salan before him, Navarre found himself tactically restricted:

. . . with an organized and better-equipped fighting force, almost twice the size of Giap's regular army, fewer troops were available to them for offensive action than to the Vietminh. Navarre estimated that of the total of 190,000 men in the Expeditionary Corps, at least 100,000 were tied down in static defense duties. Lacouture and Devillers claim that of the 500,000 soldiers of which the French disposed after the build-up of the Vietnamese National Army in 1953, no less than 350,000 were assigned in "static duties." The Vietminh battle corps consisted of six divisions; the French had only the equivalent of three, including their eight parachute battalions. The other 350,000 were assigned to defending cities, holding isolated strongpoints, accompanying convoys, patrolling highways, and conducting punitive

2. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra.*

actions against villages suspected of hiding and feeding the guerrillas, and of informing them about French moves. Alone sealing off and trying to pacify the [Red River] delta absorbed almost one-third of the Expeditionary Corps, a force obviously still insufficient for the task. When Navarre, in May, 1953, looked over the northern scene, he discovered that of the 7,000 villages in the delta, the French could boast of fully controlling no more than 2,000.[3]

Despite paucity of means, Navarre struck out variously at Viet Minh forces in the delta area. He also evacuated a series of outposts and garrisons, including the expensive airhead at Na San, which had been under siege since late 1952, and those ten battalions proved a welcome addition to his small operational force. By means of letters in the army newspaper, he exhorted troops elsewhere to adopt aggressive tactics:

. . . Your posts and blockhouses are only shelters. Shut up in them, you are besieged, without influence over the surrounding country and people. Bit by bit, climate and habit sap you of your aggressiveness.

Your best defense is to seek out the enemy. Reconnaissance is indispensable, not only to your security but to the accomplishment of your mission. By organizing frequent patrols and ambushes, you will restrict the enemy's freedom of movement and prevent him from undermining your sector, gathering intelligence and massing for surprise attacks. This is the only way by which you can gain the moral ascendancy essential to victory.[4]

These sound words produced no magic, nor did Navarre's tactical "jabs" result in lasting effect. An airborne raid near Lang Son, for example, destroyed ". . . some 5,000 tons of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and petrol," but encountered no enemy forces.[5] Other attacks, on occasion, hurt a few of Giap's units, but most of these avoided direct confrontation and continued to interdict French lines of communication. At this crucial period, Giap had five regiments operating in the delta, that is, behind the "de Lattre Line," where an estimated sixty thousand guerrillas, not to mention innumerable Viet Minh sympathizers, supported them.[6]

At the same time, the Korean cease-fire, signed in late July 1953, allowed the Chinese to provide instructors, arms, and equipment, much of it captured American equipment, which enabled the Viet Minh to increase their regular forces: ". . . the Viet-minh received trucks and

3. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Lancaster, op. cit.: ". . . whereas the Viet Minh had at their disposal seven regular infantry divisions, which together with their independent regiments were now estimated to constitute an operational force with a strength equivalent to nine divisions, the French Union forces were only able to muster seven mobile groups and eight parachute battalions, or the equivalent of three divisions."; see also Giap, op. cit.

4. McCuen, op. cit.

5. Lancaster, op. cit.

6. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra*.

light and heavy weapons, including bazookas, mortars, and cannons, sufficient to outfit and transport heavy artillery units. . . ."[7] In mid-1953, the army boasted ". . . seven mobile divisions and one full-fledged artillery division, and more were likely to come rapidly from the Chinese divisional training camps near Ching-Hei and Nanning."[8]

This dismal picture stood at dramatic odds with French and American pronouncements. In May 1953, General Salan ". . . had predicted a 'shift' in the war to France's advantage within three years,"[9] an extraordinary statement, since, at the time, France controlled very little of the countryside. On the other hand, extensive American military aid was by then flowing into Saigon and Hanoi, an effort in keeping with the new, Eisenhower administration's determination to bring about French "victory"—an ambition, it should be said, more hotly pursued by Secretary of State Dulles, prompted in part by his own hatred of communism, in part by pressures from anti-Communist crusaders in government, military, and Congress, than by President Eisenhower himself.

Dulles was greatly concerned that a cease-fire in Korea would cause Communist China to turn southward. His was not a layman's opinion entirely, but, rather, the expressed fear of many senior military commanders. Whatever Eisenhower's real feelings, shortly after the Korean truce, in August 1953, he called attention, in a major speech, ". . . to the strategic, economic, and political importance of holding Indochina."[10]

The military opinion, which so largely influenced American actions, derived in part from fear produced by the Communist-monolith theory, in part from an exaggerated estimate of Communist China's aggressive intentions, and in part from warning reports submitted by members of the U.S. military aid group in Indochina. In 1953, most military analysts unfortunately were not impressed with developing strains in the Communist bloc: If a rift had not yet occurred between the Soviet Union and China, the rupture between the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia proved beyond doubt that communism meant many things to many people. The misreading of Communist China's aggressive intentions stemmed from the Korean war and a refusal to recognize that China's entrance therein resulted directly from General MacArthur's aggressive and incredibly inept strategy. As for reports from American officers in Indochina: not understanding the nature of the war, these observers, with some splendid but unheralded exceptions, failed to realize that Giap neither needed nor wanted Chinese troops to fight the French, so long as the French remained intent on defeating themselves.

The erroneous military estimate of the situation does not excuse the

7. Gurtov, op. cit.
8. Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1967).
9. Gurtov, op. cit.
10. Hammer (*Struggle for Indochina*), *supra.*

administration's failure to make a more realistic strategic appraisal. But here two villains were at work. We have seen how Indochina, from the standpoint of American national interests, grew from a "nothing area" to a "nuisance area" to a "crucial area"—the result primarily of French intransigence coupled with the fall of Chiang Kai-shek. Having made political capital from Chiang's defeat, the Republicans fell prisoner to their own inflamed oratory. They had not only accused the Democrats of losing China, but had imputed the loss to sinister deeds of American officials. As one result, they could not think of losing even a portion of Indochina to the Communists.

To the villain of political opportunism, however, must be added that which afflicted the administration's military advisers: ignorance. In 1950, Representative Walter Judd had reported on a fact-finding mission to the Far East in part as follows:

> . . . The area of Indochina is immensely wealthy in rice, rubber, coal, and iron ore. Its position makes it a strategic key to the rest of Southeast Asia. If Indochina should fall, Thailand and Burma would be in extreme danger, Malaya, Singapore, and even Indonesia would become more vulnerable to the Communist power drive. . . . Communism would then be in an exceptional position to complete its perversion of the political and social revolution that is spreading through Asia. . . . The Communists must be prevented from achieving their objectives in Indochina.[11]

This appraisal, an extension of William Bullitt's lopsided thinking in 1947 (see Chapter 51, Volume I), the genesis of the later, famous domino theory, was as impassioned as it was specious. As any interested CIA analyst could have testified, Indochina is not immensely wealthy in natural resources. In 1937, Doctor Virginia Thompson published vital and depressing statistics substantiated more recently by Gunnar Myrdal's comprehensive study of the Asian economy.[12] Vietnam's coal traditionally has gone from North to South, its rice from South to North. The French exported Vietnamese rice, as Joseph Buttinger has demonstrated, only at expense of the Vietnamese people's health. Rubber and coal exports were (and are) valuable to owners of French plantations and mines; they are not vital to Western production. Compared to Burma, Malaya, Thailand, and Indonesia, French Indochina is a poor area.

Just as inaccurate was Judd's assertion that Indochina forms ". . . a strategic key to the rest of Southeast Asia." In the first place, Vietnam belongs to East Asia, not to Southeast Asia—an intense rivalry has always existed between the Thai and the Vietnamese (see Chapter 42, Volume I). The second error is to call Indochina a "strategic key." If it

11. Gurtov, op. cit.

12. Virginia Thompson, op. cit.; Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama—An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1968), 3 vols.

were, it would follow that whoever held Indochina would control Southeast Asia, a falsehood repeatedly demonstrated by history.

The term "strategic key" should be used with great caution. Like "communism," it means many things to many people. A diplomat of the caliber of Ambassador George Kennan saw it in 1947 in terms of

> . . . areas that I thought vital to our security and ones that did not seem to me to fall into this category. . . . There were only five regions of the world—the United States, the United Kingdom, the Rhine valley with adjacent industrial areas, the Soviet Union, and Japan—where the sinews of modern military strength could be produced in quantity. . . .[13]

A military planner concerned with armies and fleets and air armadas tends to demand certain geographical characteristics for a "strategic key." These usually concern control of communications—hence the geographer's terms "control cities" and "control points," for example Istanbul and Gibraltar, the Suez and Panama canals.

A "strategic key" logically should fit a door of national policy. A "strategic key (or necessity)" for one country is not necessarily a "strategic key (or necessity)" for another. Gibraltar, for example, would be a "strategic nothing" for a nation without a navy (unless the nation profited by granting base rights to a nation with a navy). Airfields in Morocco or Spain would scarcely serve the national interest of Basutoland, nor would Polaris-submarine bases in Scotland prove of interest to Ecuador.

Strategic values also change: Where once Gibraltar was a "strategic key" to British naval control of the Mediterranean, with the demise of the British Empire, it has become less important and Britain could comfortably survive without it, just as she survives without possession of the Suez Canal—a "strategic key" so long as national policy supported a Far Eastern empire. To take an example closer to home, the strategic value of the Panama Canal was far greater to the United States in the days of a one-ocean fleet than it is today. It is still important; it is not vital to the continued existence of the United States.

Technology also affects strategic values. Development of synthetic rubber in World War II, for example, almost canceled loss of the world's major rubber-producing areas to Japan. More recent development of super oil tankers cut sharply into strategic importance of the Suez Canal. Recent discoveries of rich oil fields in Alaska in time will reduce strategic importance of Middle Eastern oil fields to Europe, while, as Mr. Dean Acheson had suggested, development of a practical electric car—surely within the capability of nations that can place humans on the moon—would make Middle Eastern sheiks talk and act more circumspectly.

The majority of so-called "strategic keys" in reality are "strategic

13. Kennan (Volume I), op. cit.

conveniences." The difference is immense. Whereas a genuine "strategic key" is vital to a nation's existence, a "strategic convenience" is not vital, and acquisition or retention can be measured in terms of limited investment. Control of Albania, for example, would be a "strategic convenience" for the United States and the West—but invasion and possession essential to control are not worth the world war that they would undoubtedly bring about. In 1956, when Britain yielded control of the Suez Canal, it had become a "strategic convenience" to her and was not worth a threatened atomic holocaust—and recently Britain and the West have survived quite comfortably without it. American air bases in Libya and Morocco were "strategic conveniences" yielded without significant weakening of U.S. defense posture. In 1954, Britain deemed the island of Cyprus a "strategic key" to her Middle East position. When the cost of fighting for its control became too great, she reassessed its importance to recognize it as a "strategic convenience"; accordingly, she relinquished control to the United Nations in return for two base enclaves, which have served her military purposes adequately.

French Indochina has never formed a "strategic key." The area became a "strategic convenience" to the French for reasons discussed in Chapter 42, Volume I. Japan utilized it similarly in World War II. Both countries used the northern region to support incursions into southeastern China, and Japan also used it to support southern, eastern, and western incursions. The ease of her occupation and the abject French surrender only underlined Indochina's awkward geographic position from the standpoint of military defense, as did the subsequent allied blockade that effectively interdicted communications between Indochina and Japan proper. Also significant, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang government could have made a good case with the allied powers for acquiring control of the northern area; instead, Chiang contented himself with a temporary occupation followed by evacuation with profit.

No more is French Indochina a "strategic key" for Communist China. The prize of the Southeast Asian littoral is Burma, which borders China for over a thousand miles. A direct Chinese conquest of Burma would not depend on Chinese control of French Indochina, though, again, the area would be a "strategic convenience," as it would also be for a drive to the south. But, in 1953, China was not strong enough to drive either west or south, nor was there good reason for her to do so in view of continuing Viet Minh gains in Indochina and of the success of various subversion efforts elsewhere.

From the American standpoint, the area could scarcely form a "strategic key" unless the United States wished to invade southern China. In 1953, it did form a "strategic convenience" in that the French presence served to "contain" communism, or, put another way, continued to deny the area to the "enemy."

Had the Eisenhower administration regarded Indochina as a "strategic convenience" and no more, it might have charted a more realistic course. It might have questioned the psychological sacrifice of the United States identifying itself with a colonial power detested throughout Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. It might have questioned the validity of the French effort to retain northern and even southern Vietnam (as George Kennan questioned it in 1950), an effort largely subsidized with American dollars. It might even have questioned the retention of southern Vietnam as essential to American interests, reasoning instead that a "strategic presence," an enclave or two similar to Guantánamo Bay, in Cuba, would suffice (and could be secured in return for continuing aid from the "legitimate" French Government). In answer to those who pleaded the cause of humanity—prevention of Communist "enslavement" of millions—the Administration might have answered that it had no intention of going to war to free the satellite millions of Europe, preferring instead to preserve a world while trying to free people by other means; it might have added that the bulk of peasants in Indochina, as in China, were probably as well if not better off than under former regimes; and it might have recommended that the few thousand prominent Vietnamese Catholics, good healthy Asian-Christian stock who would have suffered under Communist rule, could have been shipped to underpopulated Australia under an American-subsidized scheme.

That the Administration did not think in these terms is all too clear from the record. Nor did Secretary Dulles and his advisers, apparently, appreciate pertinent historical complexities. As Gunnar Myrdal astutely pointed out:

> . . . it is worth bearing in mind a fundamental point that is commonly overlooked. Vietnam has been lumped together with the rest of Southeast Asia by many commentators, including ourselves . . . when by virtue of the political traditions, language, administrative system, and religious and philosophical outlook of its articulate strata, it belongs to East Asia. The Vietnamese have much the same culture, much the same ideals and ideas, and much the same attitudes and abilities as the Chinese. Yet for many centuries Vietnam defended itself against Chinese encroachment and sought a distinct identity. There is no reason to suppose that this tradition would not be kept alive under a Communist regime—unless, of course, people felt that they were the object of a relentless attack from the West.[14]

Failing to appreciate this inhibiting historical factor, the Eisenhower administration could not understand the natural and traditional hegemony exercised by China in this area, even though the United States exercised just such hegemony on another continent.

14. Myrdal, op. cit.

The Rolling Red Horde theory fathered a series of deeds designed to maintain the French "bulwark" against communism. In March 1953, General Mark Clark, commanding in Korea, visited Vietnam and concluded that ". . . the Vietnamese needed rifles, automatic rifles, machine guns, light mortars and transportation facilities that could carry them over the water-soaked rice paddies in the Delta sector. . . ." General Clark recommended that Washington supply these and other arms and equipment; in an attempt to remedy what he believed was a deficient French troop-training program for the Vietnamese, he also arranged the transfer of some American and Korean advisers to Indochina. In addition, he released transport aircraft, Flying Boxcars, to the French command.[15]

Then, in spring of 1953, the American military mission arranged by Acheson and Letourneau in December 1952 arrived in Indochina. Headed by Lieutenant General J. W. (Iron Mike) O'Daniel, it surveyed French military needs and recommended

> . . . that in addition to the four hundred million dollars in aid set aside for Indochina, three hundred eighty-five million more should be made available before the end of 1954. On September 30, 1953, the United States pledged this aid and France promised to do (but did not do) all that we had been asking of her over the past two years.[16]

France, or anyway certain French officials, quickly fell in line with the American desire of saving Indochina. *Time* magazine's cover story of September 25, 1953, on Navarre, quoted him as saying: ". . . A year ago none of us could see victory. There wasn't a prayer. Now we can see it clearly like light at the end of a tunnel."[17] Not to be outdone, Secretary Dulles spoke grandly of "the Navarre Plan," which was designed to ". . . break the organized body of Communist aggression by the end of the 1955 fighting season."[18] In late November, Navarre advised his government that he did not believe the time had come to try to start peace negotiations. At month's end, the French high command in Indochina deigned to reply officially to an offer by Ho Chi Minh ". . . of direct negotiations with France based on a simple battlefield truce. . . ."[19] At the Bermuda conference, in December, the French Foreign Minister, M. Bidault, told President Eisenhower that the situation ". . . was better than it had been for a long time . . . for the first time they were thinking of winning eventually."[20]

15. Mark Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).
16. Acheson, op. cit.
17. *Time,* September 28, 1953.
18. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra.*
19. Fall (*Hell in a Very Small Place*), *supra.*
20. D. D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953–1956* (London: William Heinemann, 1963).

This verbal enthusiasm seemed to imply that, by some *deus ex machina,* France had suddenly reclaimed the military initiative. Nothing was farther from truth. As General Giap later wrote:

> . . . After a careful study of the situation, the Party's Central Committee issued the following slogan to break the "Navarre plan": "Dynamism, initiative, mobility, and rapidity of decision in face of new situations." Keeping the initiative we should concentrate our forces to attack strategic points which were relatively vulnerable. If we succeeded in keeping the initiative, we could achieve successes and compel the enemy to scatter their forces. . . .[21]

While Navarre was rushing slim reserves about trying to plug holes in the "de Lattre Line" and prevent further losses in central Vietnam, Giap began striking at what the French were to call *zones excentriques,* that is, ". . . strategic points which were relatively vulnerable." He chose Laos, at first striking central and southern areas in addition to northern Cambodia, then attacking in greater strength in the North.

Navarre had to react to this new threat—it was a question of *how*. The most prudent tactic, considering his limited resources, would have been a withdrawal from northern Laos in favor of building a strong defensive complex in the South. In a later book, he explained that he rejected this course of action on grounds that the French Government, which had just signed a separate treaty with Laos, would not abandon Luang Prabang, the seat of the royal residence, or Vientiane, the capital.[22] He also rejected a defensive war of movement, which ". . . the nature of the terrain" and ". . . the lack of adaptation of our forces" made impractical. Instead, he decided on a "blocking action" by building a system of fortified camps, ". . . a mediocre solution" but the only possible way, in his mind, of preventing direct invasion.

In late November 1953, Navarre established a series of fortified airheads in the Northwest. He placed the largest of these in Dien Bien Phu, an immense valley of seventy-five square miles surrounded by partially jungle-covered hills. He ordered the French task force, about six thousand troops, to build a series of defenses around the airfield while designated battalions patrolled aggressively as prelude to linking up with French forces in nearby Laos; the base would also support GCMA units, which, the reader may recall, were specially trained guerrilla units operating with friendly tribes in this region.

This was precisely the system that Navarre had inherited from Salan and in part discontinued as an unproductive drain on his relatively meager resources. He nonetheless proceeded with what Wingate had attempted in Burma: building a fortified camp "behind" enemy lines to

21. Giap, op. cit.; see also McCuen, op. cit.
22. Henri Navarre, *Agonie de l'Indochine* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1956).

support active operations against the enemy, a camp that was to be held "at all costs."[23]

In so doing, Navarre ignored three extremely valid arguments. The first already had been discreetly forwarded by President Eisenhower, who later wrote:

. . . the occupation of Dien Bien Phu caused little notice at the time, except to soldiers who were well acquainted with the almost invariable fate of troops invested in an isolated fortress. I instructed both the State and Defense Departments to communicate to their French counterparts my concern as to this move.[24]

Navarre's own commander of ground forces in northern Vietnam, General Cogny, presented a second:

. . . It seems that to the general staff (EMIFT), the occupation of Dien Bien Phu will close the road to Luang-Prabang and deprive the Viet-Minh of the rice of the region.
In that kind of country you can't interdict a road. This is a European-type notion without any value here. The Viets can get through anywhere. We can see this right here in the Red River Delta.
The rice surplus provided by Dien Bien Phu will only feed one division for three months. Therefore, it would only make a fractional contribution to an (enemy) campaign in Laos. . . .
I am persuaded that Dien Bien Phu shall become, whether we like it or not, a battalion meat-grinder, with no possiblity of large-scale radiating out from it as soon as it will be blocked by a single Viet-Minh regiment (see example of Na-San). . . .[25]

French intelligence reports presented the third: the presence in the area of an entire Viet Minh division. As Bernard Fall later wrote:

. . . The 316th Division was not the best of all Communist outfits, but it was excellently suited for operations in the highlands because two of its three infantry regiments . . . were recruited from among tribesmen who spoke the same language as the inhabitants of the T'ai highlands.
In addition to its three infantry regiments, Division 316 also had an artillery battalion, the 980th, equipped with recoilless rifles and heavy mortars. On the basis of this intelligence, it should have been obvious to the French that Dien Bien Phu was an unlikely choice as a mooring point for light, mobile guerrilla forces.[26]

As was his wont, Giap did nothing to stop the French from occupying and defending Dien Bien Phu. Only when the French plan became

23. Lancaster, op. cit.
24. Eisenhower, op. cit.
25. Fall (*Hell in a Very Small Place*), *supra.*
26. Ibid.

clear did Giap postpone his invasion of northern Laos in favor of an attack in strength against the new French position. His decision drew considerable argument from subordinate commanders, who remembered with distaste the cost of earlier Viet Minh attacks against French defensive positions. Giap answered these arguments by promising slow and methodical preparation that included careful training of assault troops and by secretly bringing up over two hundred heavy artillery pieces as well as anti-aircraft guns and ammunition to feed them.[27]

Giap thought he could achieve strategic and tactical surprise at Dien Bien Phu. Once he had made up his mind to attack—and undoubtedly he had to make a hard sell to Politburo comrades—he started concentrating three assault divisions plus a new artillery division equipped in part with pieces captured in Korea by the Chinese. Simultaneously, thousands of coolies went to work improving five hundred miles of road that led from the Chinese border to the target area. Provincial Road 41, which ran from the Red River to Dien Bien Phu,

> . . . required nearly 20,000 coolies and tribesmen impressed from the nearby villages, who slaved for three months to rebuild the shattered remains of Road 41 and to widen its turns to accommodate the artillery pieces and the 800 Russian-built Molotova 2½-ton trucks which were to become the backbone of the conventional supply system.[28]

Meanwhile, French patrols, as called for in Navarre's original orders, began probing the periphery of the valley and beyond, operations that took place in the winter months and, due to repeated skirmishes, soon proved costly to the French. By February 1954, several painful facts had validated General Cogny's arguments against the operation.

The first was the immensity of the operational task in relation to assigned resources. The attempt to base offensive operations on Dien Bien Phu had failed. Costly probes had disclosed extensive Viet Minh positions, artfully camouflaged and defended in strength. Even worse, Navarre meanwhile had launched Opération Atlante, an attempt to clean out Viet Minh Interzone 5, in southern Annam. This effort, which soon came to a standstill, ". . . revealed both the poor quality of the recently raised and summarily trained light battalions and the inability of the Mobile Administrative Groups for Operational Purposes (GAMO) . . . to reorganize the administration of the occupied territory."[29] Like his predecessors, Navarre was trying to do too much with too little.

As for the proposed link-up between Dien Bien Phu and French garrisons in Laos, a road was out of the question: ". . . the 50-mile-long jungle track between Sop Nao and Dien Bien Phu was cut by deep ravines, crossed a 6,000-foot-high mountain range of sheer limestone

27. Giap, op. cit.
28. Fall (*Hell*), *supra*. See also Lancaster, op. cit.
29. Lancaster, op. cit.

cliffs, and was located hundreds of miles away from the nearest French heavy equipment bases."[30] One French commander reported that ". . . the jungle is so thick and the terrain is so fragmented that to establish a straight-line connection between Dien Bien Phu and Sop Nao, for example, would in all likelihood take several months."[31] Equally obvious, a few battalions could hope neither to secure a perimeter of some thirty miles nor, lacking construction materials and engineering know-how, to build adequate internal defenses.

Finally, Paris left little doubt that Navarre would be going it alone. In October and November, the Laniel government had made no secret of its desire to end the Indochina war, which, at home, was causing an extremely serious political riff. Toward the end of 1953, the British Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, had interested the Soviet Union in trying to find a solution to the Southeast Asia problem. Due mainly to Eden's efforts, the Berlin conference of foreign ministers of Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, in late February 1954, agreed to ". . . a conference [at Geneva] to bring about a peaceful settlement in Korea and Indochina."[32] At long last, the big powers were opting for political settlement.

None of these facts seemed to impress General Navarre except to cause him to convert the purpose of Dien Bien Phu from that of supporting offensive operations to that of forming a tactical piece of sugar to attract and finally destroy Viet Minh ants, in others words to the Hoa Binh "meat-grinder" concept of offering the Viet Minh a suitable target and defeating their attacks by superior firepower.

Navarre's disastrous decision was the perhaps inevitable result of his predilection for European-style warfare, of his own ignorance of the Viet Minh and of war in northwestern Vietnam, and of believing what he wanted to believe and not what was variously reported by his staff.

According to an official investigation subsequently conducted by a French commission headed by General Catroux, Navarre seriously underestimated Viet Minh capabilities. He did not believe that the Viet Minh could concentrate more than one division in the area within a month, nor that the enemy could maintain more than a limited siege by two divisions. He discounted the possibility of the Viet Minh bringing up heavy artillery despite indications reported by French intelligence.

Navarre believed that French transport aircraft could supply the garrison while French fighter-bombers supported ground troops and effectively interdicted Giap's lines of communication. He also apparently placed considerable stock in Roger Trinquier's GCMA units, which had been causing the Viet Minh increasing concern and which, in the event,

30. Fall (*Hell*), *supra*.
31. Ibid.
32. Acheson, op. cit.

were supposed to cut Viet Minh supply lines.[33] Perhaps unconsciously, Navarre believed that the French Government would not allow a defeat at Dien Bien Phu—a mentality similar to that displayed by Gordon at Khartoum. Possibly he was unduly impressed by the new American doctrine of instant and massive retaliation against an aggressor—for example, China—announced by Dulles in late January 1954; later events suggest that he might have been promised American air support in case of trouble—in February 1954, the United States supplied B-26 bombers to his command along with 250 U. S. Air Force technicians, vanguard of an eventual twelve hundred men who would keep them flying. Finally, an inhibitive psychological factor in form of a "last-chance" philosophy might have been at work, as suggested by a lecture Navarre delivered four years later:

> . . . We had no policy at all [in Indochina]. . . . After seven years of war we were in a complete imbroglio, and no one, from private to commander in chief, knew just why we were fighting.
>
> Was it to maintain French positions? If so, which ones? Was it simply to participate, under the American umbrella, in the "containment" of Communism in Southeast Asia? Then why did we continue to make such an effort when our interest had practically ceased to exist?
>
> This uncertainty about our political aims kept us from having a continuing and coherent military policy in Indochina. . . . This rift between policy and strategy dominated the entire Indochina war.[34]

33. McCuen, op. cit.: In late 1953, the designation changed to GMI (*Groupement Mixte d'Intervention*); by the end of the war, the GMI numbered 15,000 and ". . . required 300 tons of air-delivered supplies per month"; see also Tanham, op. cit.; Fall (*Hell*), *supra;* Trinquier, op. cit.

34. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.

Chapter 63

Vietnam: French and American estimates • Giap attacks Dien Bien Phu • Viet Minh tactics • The guerrilla effort • Crisis • Question of American military intervention • Dissenting voices • General Ridgway's warning • Eisenhower backs down • The fall of Dien Bien Phu

WHATEVER THE REASONS behind the tactical aberration of Dien Bien Phu, General Navarre was not the only one who erred. Western military conceit carried over to numerous members of his staff and to ranking commanders in Hanoi and Dien Bien Phu. The record does not show that any senior officer dissociated himself from his commander's decision, much less resigning either staff billet or command.

The error also overflowed area lines. In February 1954, the French Minister of National Defense, René Pleven, and the Chief of the French General Staff, General Paul Élу, visited Vietnam, including Dien Bien Phu. Although Pleven was critical of Navarre's "hedgehog" strategy, which, he feared, created "game preserves" for the Viet Minh,[1] Élу described Dien Bien Phu as an ". . . extremely strong position, which could only be attacked by a very powerful force," and, even then, he

1. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.

believed that the advantage would be with the defenders.[2] Also in February, the head of the American military advisory group, Lieutenant General O'Daniel, visited Dien Bien Phu and reported so favorably to Washington that President Eisenhower cabled Secretary of State Dulles, then attending the foreign ministers' conference in Berlin: ". . . General O'Daniel's most recent report is more encouraging than that given to you through French sources."[3]

By March 1954, the Dien Bien Phu garrison numbered some seventeen thousand troops, who occupied a sector system of defense and who were supported by artillery and aircraft. These troops were still digging in when, on March 13, the Viet Minh opened fire to begin a siege action that would last a little longer than two months. At this time, ". . . enemy combat strength in the Dien Bien Phu area was estimated at 49,500 men, with [an additional] 31,500 logistical support personnel. Another 23,000 Communist support troops and personnel were strung out along the communication lines."[4]

The reader will find a blow-by-blow account of this heart-rending battle in Bernard Fall's book *Hell in a Very Small Place*. We can only note that events swiftly disproved all of Navarre's suppositions, to result in tactical defeat that, despite limited proportions, brought resounding military and political repercussions.

Giap's most important success lay in secretly bringing up artillery and other heavy weapons through jungles and over mountains, a fantastic logistics effort that resulted in bombardment of French jerry-built positions by 75-mm. and 105-mm. howitzers, 75-mm. recoilless rifles, 120-mm. mortars, and, toward the end, Soviet multiple-rocket launchers:

> . . . The French artillery specialists inside the fortress later estimated that they had been hit by approximately 30,000 shells of 105-mm artillery and probably by over 100,000 of other calibers . . . thus roughly 1,300 to 1,700 tons of munitions delivered to the valley between December, 1953, and May,

2. Lancaster, op. cit.: Pleven later told Premier Laniel ". . . that he viewed the prospect of such an attack with misgivings, describing the Expeditionary Corps as 'exhausted' and the general military stiuation as essentially 'precarious' "; see also Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.: Ély and two of his fellow generals later reported ". . . that no military solution could be achieved," that France ". . . had already reached the limits of its military effort," and that ". . . the most it could now hope to achieve was the optimum military conditions for a political settlement."

3. Eisenhower, op. cit.

4. Fall (*Hell*), *supra;* see also Lancaster, op. cit.: According to General Navarre, the Chinese provided military advisers to the Viet Minh at both high-command and division-command levels. Chinese soldiers also allegedly drove Soviet-supplied trucks and possibly manned 57-mm. anti-aircraft guns at Dien Bien Phu; P. E. X. Turnbull, "Dien Bien Phu and Sergeant Kubiak," *Army Quarterly*, April 1965.

1954. In addition, about 6,500 tons of other supplies were brought to the valley by the Viet-Minh.[5]

Aided by direct artillery fire (frowned on by Western officers as too simple), Viet Minh assault teams from four secretly concentrated divisions pinched off outer defense sectors until artillery interdicted the vital airstrip to render it inoperable. This disaster forced the French to drop ammunition and supply by parachute, but Giap now unleashed his second surprise, a ring of anti-aircraft guns which produced flak that, according to later testimony of American civil pilots flying C-119s under contract to the French, ". . . exceeded in intensity that met in Korea and 'was as dense as anything allied pilots had encountered over the Ruhr during World War II.'"[6] To evade flak, cargo planes resorted to higher altitudes, which meant widely dispersed cargo drops, with much vital supply falling to the Viet Minh.

Guerrilla activity behind French lines also took a major toll of French resources. In early March, Viet Minh teams struck three French airfields to destroy thirty airplanes and fifty-three thousand gallons of fuel; at heavily fortified Cat Bi Airfield, raiders crawled through sewers to reach and destroy eighteen transport aircraft![7]

French combat air support proved a disappointment. The distance of the target area from French fields gave the B-26s only limited time on target—fighters had only ten minutes!—while uncomfortably accurate flak coupled with extremely effective camouflage discouraged the direct support task. The interdiction task ran into problems also encountered in World War II and in Korea. Poor weather and jungle terrain hindered observation. French planes bombed roads and bridges by day, but Vietnamese coolies either repaired them or built bypasses at night. Interdiction, on occasion, halted the several hundred trucks at Giap's disposal; it almost never stopped thousands of coolies laboriously pushing bicycles loaded with ammunition and supply.[8] As with American air power in Korea, French air power impeded, but never halted, the flow of material.

Trinquier's GCMA teams also proved disappointing. Despite his later assertions to the contrary, they did not "seal off" the target.[9]

All was not smooth sailing for the Viet Minh, however. Giap also faced enormous problems. Early assaults on outer hill positions, carried out in a manner reminiscent of American marines attacking Pacific

5. Fall (*Hell*), *supra*. Some readers will perhaps recall a CBS television documentary, *The End of an Empire,* which recorded the battle of Dien Bien Phu from the Viet Minh side; see also Giap, op. cit.

6. Fall (*Hell*), *supra*.

7. Ibid.; see also McCuen, op. cit.

8. Fall (*Hell*), *supra:* Fall claimed that these specially made bicycles, which coolies pushed, not rode, carried 440 pounds; see also O'Ballance, op. cit., who suggests 150 pounds.

9. Trinquier, op. cit.; see also Fall (*Hell*), *supra;* Tanham, op. cit.

beaches in World War II, but lacking a sophisticated system of artillery and air support, cost so heavily that Giap changed his tactics to a trench warfare reminiscent of World War I. Viet Minh morale sagged, and was revived only with considerable difficulty. Largely untrained replacements were slow in arriving. Medical services were appallingly inadequate.

But transcending these problems was strategic and tactical surprise, which Giap had achieved and which caused the panic-stricken French high command to start thinking in terms of American air support.

The confusing and frightening events of this period were later pieced together by veteran Washington journalist Chalmers Roberts in a superb piece of reporting. According to his account, on March 20, the French army's chief of staff, General Paul Ély,

> . . . arrived in Washington from the Far East to tell the President, Dulles, Radford [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff], and others that unless the United States intervened, Indochina would be lost. This was a shock of earthquake proportions to leaders who had been taken in by their own talk of the Navarre Plan to win the war.[10]

Admiral Radford took the lead. To what extent Arthur Radford was speaking for himself and to what extent for his government was not made clear. At fifty-seven years, the Iowa-born carrier admiral was a man of forceful action: In 1949, he had led the "revolt of the admirals," insisting that the B-36 bomber was a "billion-dollar blunder."[11] He now argued that carrier air strikes—presumably using atomic bombs—were necessary to retrieve the situation at Dien Bien Phu. His words caused a decided flurry in the National Security Council. Supported by Vice-President Nixon and Secretary of State Dulles, Radford argued ". . . that Indochina must not be allowed to fall into Communist hands lest such a fate set in motion a falling row of dominoes."[12]

On March 24, President Eisenhower ominously stated in a press conference that Southeast Asia was of the ". . . most transcendent importance." On March 29,

> . . . Dulles, in a New York speech had called for "united action" even though it might involve "serious risks," and declared that Red China was backing aggression in Indochina with the goal of controlling all of Southeast Asia. He had added that the United States felt that "that possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action."[13]

10. Chalmers M. Roberts, "The Day We Didn't Go to War," *The Reporter*, September 14, 1954.
11. *Time*, May 25, 1953.
12. Roberts, op. cit.
13. Ibid.; see also Anthony Eden, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden—Full Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960): Dulles told the British ambassador in Washington, Sir Roger Makins, that ". . . the United States was thinking in terms of a joint warning to China, by several countries, of naval and air action against the China coast; it would not threaten landing of American troops."

With this prelude, President Eisenhower called Congressional leaders to confer on April 3. He himself was not present. Dulles occupied the chair and was assisted by Admiral Radford and assorted officials and aides. The Secretary of State told the eight members of Congress that he wanted ". . . a joint resolution by Congress to permit the President to use air and naval power in Indochina":

. . . Then Radford took over. He said the Administration was deeply concerned over the rapidly deteriorating situation. He used a map of the Pacific to point out the importance of Indochina. He spoke about the French Union forces then already under siege for three weeks in the fortress of Dienbienphu.

The Admiral explained the urgency of American action by declaring that he was not even sure, because of poor communications, whether, in fact, Dienbienphu was still holding out. (The fortress held out for five weeks more.)[14]

Radford having duly raised hairs on Congressional heads, Dulles carried on:

. . . If Indochina fell and if its fall led to the loss of all of Southeast Asia, he declared, then the United States might eventually be forced back to Hawaii, as it was before the Second World War. And Dulles was not complimentary about the French. He said he feared they might use some disguised means of getting out of Indochina if they did not receive help soon.[15]

What kind of help?

Radford relieved Dulles:

. . . Some two hundred planes from the thirty-one-thousand-ton U. S. Navy carriers *Essex* and *Boxer,* then in the South China Sea ostensibly for "training," plus land-based U. S. Air Force planes from bases a thousand miles away in the Philippines, would be used for a single strike to save Dienbienphu.[16]

The Congressional leaders, Lyndon Johnson among them, determined by astute questioning that such an air strike would mean war, that if it did not succeed in relieving Dien Bien Phu, further action would have to follow, that none of the three service chiefs constituting the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with Radford, that Dulles had not gained allied approval of such a course, and that no one could say whether China or the Soviet Union would also go to war over the issue. Not all questions rang brilliantly; the domestic political factor showed in some. They collectively demonstrated, however, the administration's jerry-built plan that might well have precipitated an atomic war and the end of civilization as we know it.

14. Roberts, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

Democrats and Republicans, congressmen and senators—that raw, windy Saturday—earned their pay:

. . . In the end, all eight members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, were agreed that Dulles had better go shopping for allies. . . .[17]

The Administration was not yet ready to yield. Key figures began to prepare the home front for American intervention. On April 7, President Eisenhower, at a press conference, parroted Radford by speaking of a "row-of-dominoes" to conjure to the American public a black-and-white picture of the conquest of Southeast Asia by "communists." Under the date of April 8, Richard Rovere wrote in a *New Yorker* "Letter from Washington" that ". . . Indo-China has become the most pressing of all problems here. . . ." Having decided that the loss of Indochina would prove a greater calamity than the loss of Korea, Secretary of State Dulles reasoned that

. . . the commitment of American ground forces and the sacrifice of American lives to prevent it would be fully justified. Realizing that public opinion has not up to now shared this view of the matter—in fact, the view seems to be of fairly recent origin in Mr. Dulles's own mind, and is certainly so in the mind of the President, who as late as February 10 told a news conference that he could scarcely imagine a tragedy greater than American intervention—the Secretary in the past couple of weeks has been conducting what must undoubtedly be one of the boldest campaigns of political suasion ever undertaken by an American statesman. Congressmen, political leaders of all shadings of opinion, newspapermen, and radio and television personalities have been rounded up in droves and escorted to lectures and briefings on what the State Department regards as the American stake in Indo-China. The somber word-portraits of the diplomats show Communist influence radiating in a semicircle from Indo-China to Burma, Malaya, and Thailand, and then across the South China Sea to the islands of Indonesia. They show Soviet Russia and Communist China economically and militarily strengthened by the strategic raw materials available to them in that region, and the United States and other anti-Communist powers correspondingly weakened by the loss of those materials. They show Nehru's India impressed more deeply than ever by Communist power and no longer offering any sort of resistance to Communist infiltration, and they concurrently show Pakistan, the Philippine Republic, South Korea, Formosa, and Japan disheartened and discouraged by an American failure to succor a threatened Asiatic people. Even Australia, Mr. Dulles's lieutenants argue, would find its security threatened by a Vietminh victory. Hearing this analysis, one gets the impression that they have grave doubts whether the United States could survive the establishment of Communist power in Indo-China. . . .[18]

17. Ibid.
18. Richard H. Rovere, *The Eisenhower Years* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1956).

In mid-April, Admiral Radford publicly stated that loss of Indochina ". . . would be the prelude to the loss of all Southeast Asia and a threat to a far wider area." On April 16, Vice-President Nixon told a group of newspaper editors: ". . . The United States as a leader of the free world cannot afford further retreat in Asia. It is hoped the United States will not have to send troops there, but if this government cannot avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces."[19]

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Dulles was trying to win the allied approval for intervention demanded by Congressional leaders. Although talks went smoothly with France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, he ran into a brick wall when it came to Great Britain.

In early April, President Eisenhower had written Prime Minister Churchill and asked him to join a coalition that would be prepared to intervene militarily in Indochina.[20] Churchill deferred the proposal until Dulles arrived in London, about a week later. Speaking for Churchill and the British Government, Foreign Minister Anthony Eden voiced three major objections: British military advisers did not believe that air action alone would be effective (it followed that ground troops would have to be committed); direct intervention would torpedo the Geneva Conference, for which Eden held great hopes; in view of the existing Sino-Soviet treaty, direct intervention might well lead to general war.

Despite Dulles' vigorous, heated, and repeatedly expressed arguments for intervention, neither Churchill nor Eden would yield except to agree to some sort of coalition security arrangement, which had been under discussion since 1952.[21]

From Dulles' standpoint, this was better than nothing, and, upon his return to Washington, he called in concerned ambassadors in order ". . . to set up an informal working group to study the collective defense of South East Asia."[22] Dulles' unilateral action ignored Burma and India, and Eden refused to allow his ambassador to attend. The conclusion of Eden's message to the British ambassador, Sir Roger Makins, was particularly significant in view of Dullesian wheeling-dealing peripatetic diplomacy:

. . . Americans may think the time past when they need consider the feelings or difficulties of their allies. It is the conviction that this tendency becomes more pronounced every week that is creating mounting difficulties for anyone in this country who wants to maintain close Anglo-American relations. We, at least, have constantly to bear in mind all our Commonwealth partners, even if the United States does not like some of them; and

19. New York *Times*, April 17, 1954; see also Eisenhower, op. cit.
20. Eisenhower, op. cit.
21. Eden, op. cit.
22. Ibid.

I must ask you to keep close watch on this aspect of our affairs, and not hesitate to press it on the United States.[23]

Dulles next flew to Paris for a NATO conference prior to the Geneva meeting. On April 23, the French foreign minister, Georges Bidault, showed him a cable from General Navarre: In Navarre's opinion, only a massive American air attack could save Dien Bien Phu. Dulles passed this information to Eden, explaining that, if Britain agreed, he, Dulles, would ask President Eisenhower to gain Congressional authorization for direct intervention. Eden had not changed his mind since the earlier talks: He doubted if intervention at this late stage would materially affect the situation; as palliative, he broached the notion of an Anglo-American guarantee of Thailand's frontier.[24]

Dulles tried once more. Bolstered by Admiral Radford's presence on the following day, he again put the issue to Eden. When Eden further demurred, Dulles handed Bidault an official letter that promised American intervention, including ground forces, should France and Western allies so desire. Eden, for his part, took the issue to Prime Minister Churchill, who, along with the Cabinet, refused to countenance direct intervention, preferring instead to attain a political settlement —some form of partition—at Geneva.

The British provided only one stumbling block. The reader may recall that, at the famous March conference, the three American service chiefs disagreed with Admiral Radford's tactical plan to launch an air strike at Dien Bien Phu. We know the feelings of one of these officers, General Matthew B. Ridgway, surely one of the most capable generals in history. Ridgway had never been impressed with the French defense of Dien Bien Phu, a fight, he believed, that ". . . could end in but one way—in death or capture for the defenders. . . ." But, in spring of 1954, the army's chief of staff was more alarmed

. . . to hear individuals of great influence, both in and out of government, raising the cry that now was the time, and here, in Indo-China, was the place to "test the New Look" [i.e., in American air-oriented military forces], for us to intervene, to come to the aid of France with arms. At the same time that same old delusive idea was advanced—that we could do things the cheap and easy way, by going into Indo-China with air and naval forces alone. To me this had an ominous ring. For I felt sure that if we committed air and naval power to that area, we would have to follow them immediately with ground forces in support.[25]

Ridgway had commanded in Korea, where he had extricated UN forces from MacArthur's catastrophic strategy, an experience that left

23. Ibid.
24. Eisenhower, op. cit.
25. Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956).

him with few illusions. War in Asia, he knew, was not a pinchpenny business:

. . . I also knew that none of those advocating such a step [intervention at Dien Bien Phu] had any accurate idea what such an operation would cost us in blood and money and national effort. I felt that it was essential therefore that all who had any influence in making the decision on this grave matter should be fully aware of all the factors involved. To provide these facts, I sent out to Indo-China an Army team of experts in every field: engineers, signal and communications specialists, medical officers, and experienced combat leaders who knew how to evaluate terrain in terms of battle tactics. . . .

Their report was complete. The area, they found, was practically devoid of those facilities which modern forces such as ours find essential to the waging of war. Its telecommunications, highways, railways—all the things that make possible the operation of a modern combat force on land—were almost non-existent. Its port facilities and airfields were totally inadequate, and to provide the facilities we would need would require a tremendous engineering and logistical effort.

The land was a land of rice paddy and jungle—particularly adapted to the guerrilla-type warfare at which the Chinese soldier is a master. . . .[26]

Neither Ridgway nor his army was afraid of a war in Indochina; his point was the immensity of the effort, for, ". . . if we did go into Indo-China, we would have to win. . . ."

. . . We could have fought in Indo-China. We could have won, if we had been willing to pay the tremendous cost in men and money that such intervention would have required—a cost that in my opinion would have eventually been as great, or greater than, that we paid in Korea. In Korea, we had learned that air and naval power alone cannot win a war and that inadequate ground forces cannot win one either. It was incredible to me that we had forgotten that bitter lesson so soon—that we were on the verge of making that same tragic error.[27]

The Ridgway report reached President Eisenhower, probably in late May, about the same time General Ridgway personally briefed him.[28] Eisenhower mentioned nothing of it in his memoirs, which are particularly ambiguous for this crucial period. So far as one can gather, the President was not steering a firm course toward intervention but, rather, was allowing his ship of state to be blown into it by Dullesian-Radford war winds. Eisenhower, all along, had objected to tactical aspects of the French stand at Dien Bien Phu; as an old soldier, he must have raised a tired eyebrow when still another airman claimed he could

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Letter from General Ridgway to the author.

win a war with bombs alone. The Ridgway report must have made a considerable impact; as General Ridgway later wrote, ". . . to a man of his military experience its implications were immediately clear." It is probably safe to say that the report and its author steered Eisenhower to a more cautious course at an incautious time of government.[29]

While international diplomacy so ran the course, the plight of the Dien Bien Phu defenders grew steadily worse. On May 8, 1954, the beleaguered garrison surrendered to the Viet Minh. Over two thousand defenders had died; the remainder, including some five thousand wounded, marched forlornly into captivity.[30]

Here was a crushing defeat too great for the French to accept and still fight on. The Paris and Saigon governments fell; in June, General Élу replaced General Navarre. Although the French army in Indochina remained a cohesive unit, with 95 per cent of its strength intact, government and country had suffered enough. The Expeditionary Corps, since 1945, had suffered over 170,000 casualties including nearly seventy-five thousand missing (of whom nearly twenty-seven thousand were Vietnamese); the war had cost France nearly $7.5 billion (plus another $4 billion in U.S. aid).[31]

Despite American pressure, the new prime minister of France, Pierre Mendès-France, hastened to a political settlement that, had it been made in a yesterday, would have solved many problems of the morrow.

29. Ridgway (*Soldier*); *supra:* ". . . when the day comes for me to face my maker and account for my actions, the thing I would be most humbly proud of was the fact that I fought against, and perhaps contributed to preventing, the carrying out of some hare-brained tactical schemes which would have cost the lives of thousands of men. To that list of tragic accidents that fortunately never happened I would add the Indo-China intervention. . . ."

30. Jean Lartéguy, *The Centurions* (London: Hutchinson, 1961). Tr. Xan Fielding. The author offers a gripping account of subsequent treatment of prisoners; see also Giap, op. cit.; Fall (*Hell*), *supra.*

31. Fall (*Hell*), *supra;* see also Lancaster, op. cit.; O'Ballance, op. cit.

Chapter 64

The Geneva Conference • The American position • Dulles' defeat • The agreements • SEATO • Ngo Dinh Diem • His background • The refugee problem • American support • Eisenhower's letter • The Collins mission • Diem takes over

IN SEPTEMBER 1953, sixty-five-year-old Secretary of State John Foster Dulles told listening representatives at the United Nations that U.S. leaders

> . . . are ready to learn from others. Also we recognize that our views may not always prevail. When that happens, we shall regret it, but we shall not sulk. We shall try to accept the result philosophically. We know that we have no monopoly of wisdom and virtue. Also we know that sometimes time alone proves the final verdict.[1]

Dulles of that speech and Dulles at Geneva seven months later seemed to be different persons. Arriving in the old Swiss city in a state of near funk, his mood darkened when Anthony Eden reported the British Government's final decision against direct intervention at Dien Bien Phu. When Dulles, backed by Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary of

1. *Time*, September 28, 1953.

State for Far Eastern Affairs, continued to plead for military intervention, Eden argued that the problem was as much political as military, and thus would hinge on Asian support which was not forthcoming.

On May 1, Eden notified Churchill that ". . . only Mr. Bedell Smith [U. S. Under Secretary of State] seemed to have any real comprehension of the reasons which had led us to take up our present position." Robertson, he told Churchill,

> . . . whose approach to these questions is so emotional as to be impervious to argument or indeed to facts, was keeping up a sort of "theme-song" to the effect that there were in Indo-China some three hundred thousand men who were anxious to fight against the Vietminh and were looking to us for support and encouragement. I said that if they were so anxious to fight I could not understand why they did not do so. The Americans had put in nine times more supplies of material than the Chinese, and plenty must be available for their use. I had no faith in this eagerness of the Vietnamese to fight for Bao Dai.[2]

Walter Bedell Smith provided the greatest surprise, however. In opposition to the administration's domino theory, so favored by Dulles, Smith thought

> . . . that though it would be quite impossible to attempt to stop a communist advance on the border of Malaya, it was possible to find a position from which Thailand, Burma and Malaya could be defended. One of the difficulties was that they had never been able to sit down with the French over a map and examine the military possibilities of the situation.[3]

Coming from Eisenhower's wartime chief of staff and former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, Smith's opinion, along with those of Ridgway and the other service chiefs, undoubtedly helped President Eisenhower to decide against direct American military intervention.

Dulles' views having prevailed neither with allies nor Eisenhower, he went into a diplomatic sulk far removed from philosophical acceptance of recent events. He could not withdraw the American delegation from the conference, but he could pretend that the conference did not exist, just as he pretended, in refusing to acknowledge the presence of Chou En-lai, the Communist Chinese foreign minister, that Red China did not exist. Even before Vietnam appeared on the agenda, Dulles returned to the United States, leaving Walter Bedell Smith in charge of American representation.

Dulles did not lack supporters in the United States. Despite the unfavorable military situation—Dien Bien Phu had fallen and the French had made it clear that they would not continue the war—a good many Americans including some extremely influential Republican congress-

2. Eden, op. cit.
3. Ibid.

men were appalled at the thought of granting territorial and political concessions to the Communists. For five years, the Republicans had made political capital by accusing Democrats of responsibility for the fall of Chiang Kai-shek. Now, suddenly, a similar disaster loomed on their own political horizon. As one result, American diplomacy, in Joseph Buttinger's splendid phrase, became "wildly incoherent":

> . . . Dulles was still interested only in united action. Not discouraged by growing British irritation with his concept, he stubbornly continued to propagate the need for a Western alliance against the Communist threat to Southeast Asia, insisting that united action would become "imperative" if the Communists did not halt their aggression. A few days later, both Dulles and Eisenhower indirectly admitted that Washington had become reconciled to a compromise settlement of the Indochina War. In a radio conference on May 11 [three days after the fall of Dien Bien Phu], Dulles said that the whole situation would not be hopeless if "certain events" occurred, meaning a compromise situation in Indochina. That same day, President Eisenhower discarded the domino theory, which had been an article of faith as long as Washington had played with the idea of direct military intervention. The domino theory could be "counteracted," he said, "if collective defense came about," or, as Dulles put it: The rest of Asia could be held even if Indochina fell. Had the American people been truly concerned with the manner in which the foreign policy was conducted by Eisenhower and Dulles, it would have been no less upset during these weeks than were Washington's European allies. On April 9, Eisenhower said that "the loss of Indochina will cause the fall of Southeast Asia like a set of dominoes," and less than five weeks later both he and his Secretary of State stated flatly that the retention of Indochina was not essential for the defense of Southeast Asia. When were they right? In April or in May?[4]

Dullesian boycott of the Geneva Conference changed neither the fact of the conference nor the awkward situation faced there by Western powers. Eisenhower's change of posture did not help matters, in that it seemed to abandon Indochina to the Viet Minh, who, at this stage, were riding high. Despite severe casualties, they correctly hailed the fall of Dien Bien Phu as a decisive victory: They already controlled over three fourths of Vietnam, and they now left no doubt in anyone's mind that they believed themselves capable of totally evicting the French from Indochina. So determined were Viet Minh representatives to continue the war, that the Soviet Union and China, each wanting a settlement for its own political purposes, restrained their ally only with considerable difficulty. Tired though they were, high though their casualties, the Viet Minh at Geneva were negotiating from strength, and they knew it. As Professors Kahin and Lewis, among other observers, have pointed out, the Viet Minh agreed to a settlement mainly because it transferred the

4. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Gurtov, op. cit.

situation to the political plane, where they felt equally confident of victory.

The Geneva Conference produced two agreements, the first a bilateral armistice between Ho Chi Minh's DRV and France, the second a "Final Declaration." The armistice called for a general cease-fire in Indochina; in Vietnam, it established a ". . . provisional military demarcation line," the 17th parallel. Article 14 stated in part: ". . . pending the general elections which will bring about the unification of Viet Nam, the conduct of civil administration in each regrouping zone shall be in the hands of the party whose forces are to be regrouped there in virtue of the present Agreement." In other words, the document assigned administrative jurisdiction north of the line to Ho Chi Minh's DRV Government and jurisdiction south of the line to France during the interim period preceding country-wide elections. The agreement provided a three-hundred-day period in which military forces and any civilians who wished would regroup as appropriate in North and South. It also prohibited any form of external military reinforcements and established an International Control Commission to insure that neither side violated these provisions. Finally, ". . . the Vietminh's interests were further safeguarded by the provision that any administration succeeding the French prior to the 1956 elections would legally assume France's obligations and 'be responsible for ensuring the observance and enforcement of the terms and provisions' of the agreements entered into between the Vietminh and France."[5]

France and the DRV signed this agreement on July 20. On the following day, conference participants produced a "Final Declaration," a thirteen-point document that, in part, "took note" of the various articles and, in part, amplified them. Point 6, for example,

> . . . recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet Nam.

Point 7 called for general elections, in July 1956 ". . . under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission. . . . Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955, onwards."[6]

5. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

6. Ibid.; see also Douglas Pike, *Vietcong—The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967).

The "Final Declaration" evoked two important dissenting voices. The first belonged to Dr. Tran Van Do, who represented the Associated State of Vietnam. Titularly headed by Bao Dai, early in July its premier had become the redoubtable nationalist Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem now instructed Dr. Do

> . . . to disassociate South Vietnam from the agreements that were signed, thereby laying the legal groundwork for his subsequent refusal to abide by them. He considered the division of Vietnam a personal betrayal and echoed Dr. Do's final Geneva declaration that South Vietnam "reserved to itself entire freedom of action to safeguard the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to territorial unity, national independence, and freedom."[7]

The second voice belonged to the American delegate, Walter Bedell Smith, who, instructed by Dulles, refused to sign.

Other participating governments—Great Britain, Communist China, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, Laos, DRV, and France—circumvented this contretemps by awarding the document "oral assent," the United States and Vietnam refusing. Smith "took note" of the Agreements and declared that the United States would ". . . refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them" and that it ". . . would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security"—an attempted face-saving declaration not unlike the "non-injury oath" familiar to the feudal period of history.[8]

The results of the Geneva Conference almost immediately drew American Congressional criticism, answered by, among others, Under Secretary of State Smith with a reasoned protest which concluded: ". . . I would like to point out, too, that when we analyze and discuss the results of Geneva it will be well to remember that diplomacy has rarely been able to gain at the conference table what cannot be gained or held on the battlefield."[9]

To dispute this truism is difficult, and further discussion is probably futile until concerned governments release pertinent documents. Even

7. Shaplen, op. cit.

8. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.: Smith stated further that United States policy in the case of divided nations was ". . . to seek to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United States to ensure that they are conducted fairly"; he also reiterated America's traditional position ". . . that peoples are entitled to determine their own future"; see also S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 3 vols.: In the First Crusade, Raymond of St. Gilles, count of Toulouse, refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Byzantine emperor, Alexius. Under pressure from other crusader leaders, Raymond eventually ". . . swore a modified oath promising to respect the life and honor of the emperor and to see that nothing was done, by himself or his men, to the emperor's hurt. Such an oath of non-injury was often taken by vassals to their overlord in southern France; and Alexius was satisfied with it."

9. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

these may not totally clarify the American position, particularly since Dulles was an exponent of vest-pocket diplomacy.

But it does seem reasonable to suggest that a more determined Dulles practicing first-rate diplomacy could have come closer to a partition arrangement similar to that of Korea, indeed similar to that contained in a seven-point proposal sent to the French during negotiations.[10] Even as drawn, the Agreement and Final Declaration smack of partition, and it is difficult to believe that the representatives of the major powers did not foresee such an eventuality. Although Eden later upheld the necessity for a general election, he admitted that the two-year period allotted to prepare for it was inadequate. A British student of Southeast Asia, P. J. Honey, later wrote that the Viet Minh representatives at Geneva ". . . privately expressed the opinion that the plebiscite would never be held."[11]

Perhaps Dulles knew that neither the DRV nor the State of Vietnam could accede publicly to a partition arrangement, or perhaps, in his opinion, the concerned documents contained enough legal holes to justify further partition action. Whatever the case, Dulles seemed to regard the 17th parallel as a political boundary between two states. It remained for him to pick up as many pieces as possible in the South, and he attempted to do so in two ways: internal and external.

Dulles' external answer to the diplomatic defeat at Geneva was the South-east Asia Collective Defense Treaty and Protocol, signed by the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan, in early September 1954. The South-east Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO, bound its members to a "security" pact which meant so many things to so many people as almost to vitiate logical meaning. The nub of the document occurs early in Article IV:

> . . . Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. . . .

10. Eden, op. cit.

11. Shaplen, op. cit.; see also, Donald S. Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle—Moscow, Peking, Hanoi* (New York: Pegasus, 1967). Professor Zagoria points out that ". . . in early 1957, Moscow proposed the admittance to the United Nations of both North and South Vietnam, thus tacitly accepting the position"; *The Times* (London), Hong Kong, July 28, 1971. Chou En-lai told American students ". . . that inexperience in matters of international diplomacy had allowed him to permit the United States to avoid formally signing the 1954 Geneva agreement ending the war in Indo-China."

An additional protocol extended the provisions of this article to Cambodia, Laos, and ". . . the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam."[12]

In short, SEATO was Dulles' jury-rigged answer to diplomatic defeat at Geneva. In Dulles' mind, SEATO existed to halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, and particularly in Vietnam:

> . . . In presenting the treaty to the United States Senate in late 1954, he argued that the treaty was designed to meet subversion, which was "most acute at the moment in Vietnam," and to build up in that country "a strong government which commands the loyalty of the people, and which has an effective police and constabulary at its command to detect and run down subversive activities.[13]

Even had signatories stood solidly behind SEATO, it would have had difficulty functioning as an effective regional security organization. Unlike NATO, no combined command existed, no country committed military forces to SEATO, and no country had to respond in case another was attacked.[14] The Geneva Agreements, at least for some time, prevented overt military action—but not covert political preparation—by the Viet Minh in Indochina, the area Dulles was most concerned about. As a psychological force, SEATO suffered from failure of major neutralist states, Burma, India, and Indonesia, to join. Still, it represented a common voice of sorts and, judging from the flood of counterpropaganda it loosed from DRV and from China and the Soviet Union, it obviously hit a Communist nerve.[15]

Simultaneously with organizing SEATO, Dulles and the State Department concerned themselves directly with developments inside Vietnam. This meant dealing with the new premier, Ngo Dinh Diem.

In 1954, the prime minister of Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, was fifty-three years old. Robert Shaplen, who later knew him, described him as ". . . a short, broadly built man with a round face and a shock of black hair, who walked and moved jerkily, as if on strings. He always dressed in white and looked as if he were made out of ivory. . . ."[16] A bachelor and ascetic, he lived remote from his world. Surrounded by sycophants, he saw few strangers. Those received into his presence generally found themselves subject to a monologue that betrayed extreme egocentricity.

12. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
13. Ibid.
14. Rostow, op. cit., discusses this in detail.
15. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.: Psychologically, Ho Chi Minh was probably not far removed from Frederick William, the great Elector of Brandenburg, who deeply resented the treaty of Westphalia (1648), which robbed him of his gains—a fact duly respected by Frederick the Great.
16. Shaplen, op. cit.

Diem was the third child in an ancient family of Catholic aristocrats. His father served as court chamberlain to Emperor Thanh Thai at Hué; when the French deposed Thanh Thai, the elder Diem became a reasonably prosperous rice farmer. After elementary schooling, young Diem entered a monastery but later gave up the idea of the priesthood and graduated from the School of Public Administration and Law at Hanoi. Beginning imperial service as a mandarin, or court official, he rose to provincial-governor level and spent much of his time effectively countering Communist activities in his province.

In 1933, the French appointed him Minister of Interior in young Emperor Bao Dai's Annam Government. Unable to persuade French overlords to reforms he felt essential to combating communism, Diem resigned. For ten years he lived quietly, mostly in Hué, ". . . the reflective life of a scholar-revolutionist," but with little contact with the people. In 1942, he tried to interest the Japanese in establishing a free Vietnam, and when that failed, he remained in political limbo along with other nationalists. In September 1945, Viet Minh Communist agents arrested and imprisoned him. At about the same time, the Communists killed his older brother Ngo Dinh Khoi, who was governor of a northern province.[17]

In February 1946, Ho Chi Minh ordered Diem's release and brought him to Hanoi. Trying to corral nationalist figures, Ho offered him an important position in the new government. Diem refused, mainly because of his brother's death. He next tried to organize anti-Communist guerrilla activity but without success. After a short stay in a Hanoi monastery, he disguised himself as a monk and wandered around the country trying to work up anti-Communist activity among his contacts. Finally forced into complete hiding, he eventually went south and lived with his brother Thuc near Saigon.

In spring of 1947, Diem became a founding father of the National Union Front, a nationalist movement quickly and efficiently sabotaged by the French. Diem gained considerable prominence, however, and became go-between with the French in Saigon and Bao Dai in Hong Kong. The French wanted Bao Dai to return to Saigon and head a new government; Diem wanted him to hold out for a promise of Vietnamese independence. When Bao Dai chose to become puppet ruler, Diem dissociated himself from the new regime. Subsequent efforts to enlist him in the government failed because of French refusal to promise what Diem believed were essential reforms. Diem himself was unable to form a genuine nationalist movement to force these reforms. In 1950, the Viet Minh sentenced him to death *in absentia,* the French refused him police protection, and he wisely left for a trip that ended in the United States.

17. Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964); see also Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra.*

Diem lived for two years at Maryknoll Seminary, in Lakewood, New Jersey. In addition to lecturing at universities and writing articles pleading for an independent Vietnam, he won the ear of a number of influential Americans, including Francis Cardinal Spellman, Supreme Court Justice William Douglas, and various congressmen, among them Mike Mansfield, John F. Kennedy, and Walter Judd.[18] From time to time, Bao Dai tried to persuade him to return to Saigon and participate in his government. In mid-1953, when Diem was living in Europe, Bao Dai promised him full political powers if he would return to Vietnam, but the French would not agree to Diem's demand that ". . . the Vietnamese be allowed to conduct the war." Finally, in early July 1954, toward the final stages of the Geneva Conference, Diem accepted the premiership.

Although Diem had dissociated Vietnam from the Geneva Agreements, he was nonetheless compelled to work with the French in carrying out cease-fire provisions and trying to bring some order into the country south of the 17th parallel.

Neither task proved easy:

> . . . The country was in ruins. Most bridges had been blown up. Canals, roads, railways, telephone and telegraph services had been either destroyed or were in disrepair. Dykes, too, were destroyed; vast regions of rice land were uncultivated; countless peasants who had fled the countryside found themselves unemployed in the cities. And Diem's administration, run by an incompetent civil service, politically hostile and disintegrating, had to provide the human and material resources for receiving, feeding, and temporarily settling hundreds of thousands of refugees. . . .[19]

In the months following the Geneva Conference, the armed forces of both sides had to be evacuated. About fifty thousand Viet Minh troops and twenty thousand Communist sympathizers went North. Following French evacuation of the Red River Delta, Vietnamese civilians, mostly Roman Catholics, began flooding South. With the help of American ships and planes, some 860,000 refugees eventually arrived; another four hundred thousand who wanted to come were prevented by the Viet Minh (in contravention of the Geneva Agreements).[20]

This influx of population would have taxed the resources of an efficient government. In Diem's case, it nearly brought ruin. He not only lacked experienced administrators and personal advisers, but he soon found himself in active opposition to Bao Dai, to Bao's army chief, General Nguyen Van Hinh, to many French officials and most French civilians, to powerful political-religious sects in the South, and to Viet Minh cadres that, at Ho Chi Minh's behest, remained in the South.[21]

18. Buttinger, op. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. Shaplen, op. cit.
21. Scigliano, op. cit., discusses the political situation of this period in detail.

About the only bright note at this critical time was American support. Diem found help both in Saigon and Washington, where President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles had determined on a "security and reform" policy:

> . . . With Diem as a nationalist fulcrum, the Americans wanted to build up a single army that would be trained by American officers and could serve as the instrument for pacification in the countryside, where a land distribution program and other social-economic reforms would be introduced.[22]

Such a policy conflicted with French desire to dump Diem in favor of a ruler more sympathetic to French interests. The French now turned to General Nguyen Van Hinh, in Saigon, who, in September, was ready to attempt a military coup. An American counterinsurgency expert from the Philippines, a forty-six-year-old Air Force officer on loan to Central Intelligence Agency, Colonel Edward Lansdale, deftly parried this threat with a counterthreat of having American aid stopped. Diem gained further strength from a U. S. Senate report of mid-October prepared by Senator Mike Mansfield, who praised him and called for total American support of his government.

In case anyone still doubted the Administration's intention, President Eisenhower wrote President Diem a cordial letter delivered in late October. This has subsequently become famous as the letter that "morally" committed successive American administrations to Diem's and South Vietnam's support. It did no such thing. It authorized the American ambassador to Vietnam, Donald R. Heath,

> . . . to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your Government can serve to assist Vietnam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurance as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied.
>
> The purpose of this offer is to assist the Government of Vietnam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means. The Government of the United States expects that this aid will be met by performance on the part of the Government of Vietnam in undertaking needed reforms. It hopes that such aid, combined with your own continuing efforts, will contribute effectively toward an independent Vietnam endowed with a strong government. Such a government would, I hope, be so responsive to the nationalist aspirations of its people, so enlightened in purpose and effective in performance, that it will be respected both at home and abroad and discourage any who might wish to impose a foreign ideology on your free people.[23]

22. Shaplen, op. cit.
23. U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967).

These words represented challenge more than commitment. American moral involvement derived from an attempt to convert a political zombie into a rational human being. At no time was the involvement such in the eyes of the world that it could not have been abrogated with impunity.

Eisenhower followed his frank statement of American intentions by dispatching General J. Lawton Collins as ambassador. Upon arriving in Saigon, Collins stated: ". . . I have come to Vietnam to bring every possible aid to the government of Diem and to his government alone."[24]

Diem's immediate internal-security problem centered not on the Viet Minh who had remained in the South, but, rather, on the Vietnamese army first, the neo-military Binh Xuyên second, and the political-religious sects third.

Diem was relieved of the first problem by Collins' stated policy. The United States would not consider ". . . training or otherwise aiding a Vietnamese army that does not give complete and implicit obedience to its premier."[25] This effectively pulled the power rug from beneath the feet of Diem's main rival, General Hinh. There remained Hinh's fall: the American Government persuaded Bao Dai to order him to Paris and dismiss him as army head.

Collins, meanwhile, set up a combined American-French training command headed by General O'Daniel, who was also chief of MAAG. O'Daniel undertook the task of organizing and training an indigenous Vietnamese army. One of his four division heads, Colonel Lansdale, commanded the National Security division, ". . . the only one actually advising the Vietnamese on operations."[26]

The second and third problems were not so simple. The Binh Xuyên, a sort of oriental Mafia that controlled the vice and police in Saigon-Cholon, was a well-entrenched organization protected both by Bao Dai and by a private army of some twenty-five hundred thugs. As in any gangster activity, millions of dollars went into local payoffs that benefited numerous officials—French, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao were something else again. Offshoots of the Buddhist religion, they formed virtually separate states, the Cao Dai northwest of Saigon, the Hoa Hao southwest. The Cao Dai supposedly maintained twenty thousand men under arms, the Hoa Hao fifty thousand, but each sect claimed over a million supporters in its particular area.[27]

Diem moved very carefully against the sects. In September 1954, he appointed four leaders from the Cao Dai and four from the Hoa Hao to his Saigon cabinet. He then spent $12 million of American taxpayers' money in bribing these and other leaders to assimilate at least

24. Buttinger, op. cit.
25. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
26. Shaplen, op. cit.
27. Ibid.; see also Hammer, op. cit.; Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra*.

some of their armed forces into the Vietnamese army. Thus prepared, he challenged the Binh Xuyên, in January 1955, by closing down gambling casinos.

This reads more smoothly than it happened. The confusion and intrigue of the day would have furnished Milton Caniff enough plots for fifty years—and should have furnished concerned American officials a caution sign in future relationships in South Vietnam. For, while Diem was attempting to consolidate his power, a great number of people, including Bao Dai and local French and Vietnamese officials, not to mention Viet Minh cadres, were doing their best to sabotage his every effort.[28]

Moreover, the important and powerful General Collins was becoming increasingly disillusioned with Diem, as were various sects that felt their powers slipping away. Diem, however, retained Lansdale's support in Saigon and that of the Dulles brothers, important State Department officials, and Congressional leaders in Washington.

The situation exploded in late March 1955, when Diem refused to give the sects more power in his government. Hoa Hao and Cao Dai cabinet members resigned, and the two sects joined with the Binh Xuyên to form the United Front of Nationalist Forces. A few days later, Binh Xuyên forces attacked the presidential palace.

Although the French arranged an uneasy truce, the new war widened the breach between Diem and Collins. Collins returned to Washington in mid-April determined to dump Diem. Backed by President Eisenhower, he had set the wheels in motion when, to the surprise of all, excepting possibly Colonel Lansdale, important units of Diem's army remained loyal and thrashed the Binh Xuyên. A month late, Diem had driven the Binh Xuyên out of Saigon (they eventually disintegrated) and had the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao forces either on the run or coming over to his side.

Diem's victory deflated Collins' effort to unseat him. But, far worse, Diem suddenly appeared to be the strong leader so desired by the American Government. Not only Senator Mansfield now reiterated his belief in Diem, but such as Hubert Humphrey joined the chorus:

> . . . Premier Diem is the best hope that we have in South Vietnam. He is the leader of his people. He deserves and must have the wholehearted support of the American Government and our foreign policy. This is no time for uncertainty or half-hearted measures. . . . He is the only man on the political horizon of Vietnam who can rally a substantial degree of support of his people. . . . If we have any comments to make about the leadership in Vietnam let it [sic] be directed against Bao Dai. It is time we broke

28. Buttinger, op. cit., offers interesting details on the infighting; see also Scigliano, op. cit.

our ties with him and not with Diem. If the Government of South Vietnam has not room for both of these men, it is Bao Dai who must go.[29]

In Paris, during a NATO meeting in May,

. . . the French called Diem an American puppet and threatened that unless Diem was removed they would pull out their troops and cancel other forms of assistance they were still rendering Vietnam. Dulles called their bluff and told them to go ahead, and at one point threatened that if the French did leave, the Americans would get out, too. This upset the French so much that they subsided.[30]

Dulles unknowingly was touching on a solution that perhaps would better have served his own country's and Vietnam's best interests. At this time, Diem already was exhibiting those administrative traits that contrasted so strongly with promises made to President Eisenhower in return for American aid. This was the time for the President's ambassador—Collins or anyone else—to inform Diem that he either would rule as promised or he would rule alone until deposed by a more popular choice, Buu Hoi, for example, or another nationalist leader.

Unfortunately, powerful American voices, absurdly strengthened by a pathological fear of communism, already had elevated Ngo Dinh Diem as savior of Southeast Asia, an incorruptible Christian patriot who alone could guard his country from the Red Menace. Here was a peculiar concept well suited to the black-and-white thinking of that American day: Here was GOOD challenged by EVIL, the hero facing the villain.

In mid-May, Eisenhower relieved Collins in favor of Ambassador G. Frederick Reinhardt, who stated upon his arrival in Saigon: ". . . I come here under instructions to carry out United States policy in support of the legal government of Vietnam under Premier Ngo Dinh Diem."[31]

The stage was now set for old-fashioned melodrama. It remained for the United States cavalry, banners flying, bugles blowing, and hoofs thumping, to charge across the plain. Figuratively, this is what happened —and hereby melodrama changed to tragedy.

29. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
30. Shaplen, op. cit.
31. Buttinger, op. cit.

Chapter 65

Diem's early government • The Fishel mission • Diem's house of power • "Communist"-suppression campaigns • The Diem dictatorship • Failure of Diem's reforms • The Montagnard problem • Question of general election • The American role • ARVN • MAAG's influence • The result

WITH THE TROUBLESOME SECT PROBLEM temporarily under control, with the army temporarily loyal and daily being strengthened by American arms and equipment, Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem should have turned with a will to the major task of broadening his base of support by instituting greatly needed political, social, and economic reforms, particularly in the countryside.

Despite the turbulent events surrounding him, he had made a reasonable start in areas evacuated by the Viet Minh. Early civic-action programs had worked quite well, and by spring of 1955, local Self-Defense Corps and Civil Guards were coming into existence. The viability of these and other measures depended almost entirely on peasant co-operation, and this, in turn, depended on the validity of Diem's promised reforms.

Diem pretended to want these reforms. Shortly after becoming premier, he had named as civil adviser a young assistant professor of political science, Wesley Fishel, of Michigan State University, who had

earlier befriended him in Tokyo and helped him in America. At Diem's request, Fishel, supported somewhat grudgingly by the U. S. Operations Mission in Saigon, was collecting a team of specialists to provide the Diem government with ". . . a massive program of technical assistance in four areas: public administration, police administration, public information, and economics and finance."[1]

Here was an ambitious program that, carried out effectively, might have resulted in a viable government. Unfortunately, almost from the outset of operations—Fishel's staff began arriving in spring of 1955—the effort faced major and often insurmountable obstacles. In a sense, the eighty-eight academicians, police experts, administrators (and a sprinkling of CIA types) who descended on Siagon in the first year resembled the experts who had arrived in Washington twenty years earlier to help Franklin Roosevelt implement the New Deal. Their intentions were honorable and their theories beautiful, but, alas, the theories too often failed to work, or, if they worked, they alienated the people concerned and were quickly sabotaged.

The almost inconceivable operational independence granted to the Fishel mission automatically brought it into conflict with other American civil and military missions. This could have been suffered in view of the importance of its task, but what neither Fishel nor his sponsors seemed to realize was that Diem did not want a democratic government. In spring of 1955, Diem eliminated the public-information mission and sharply curtailed the economics and finance effort. The mission subsequently did some good work in training civil administrators and policemen—but with results considerably different from those envisaged. In almost every respect, the group encountered obstructionism, with Diem's entrenched bureaucracy proving more than a match for the newcomers, the majority of whom were unfamiliar with the country, its peoples—and their language.[2]

Similar difficulties plagued other American aid programs. By spring of 1955, Diem was already dragging his feet when it came to devising and implementing economic and agrarian reforms, an attitude that brought him into continuing conflict with American officials in Saigon, particularly with General Collins.

The difficulty stemmed first from Diem himself, a mandarin born and raised, a man who had become incapable of recognizing a grass root, much less its importance to the garden of state. But, more than Diem, the problem stemmed from his family. A disgusted American diplomat once told the writer: "Half of our troubles in Vietnam would have vanished if Diem had been an orphan."

Diem's family shared his power. One brother, Monsignor Ngo Dinh

1. Robert Scigliano and Guy Fox, *Technical Assistance in Vietnam—The Michigan State University Experience* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).
2. Ibid.

Thuc, a Roman Catholic bishop, had long been prominent in central Vietnam and, with Diem's rise, grew increasingly powerful and rich. Another brother, Ngo Dinh Luyên, a mechanical engineer and the least troublesome, became Diem's ambassador to England. A third brother, Ngo Dinh Can, became virtual ruler of central Vietnam. A fourth, but scarcely runt of the litter, Ngo Dinh Nhu, a trained librarian-archivist, became Diem's "personal adviser." To the discomfiture of all concerned, Nhu's advice included that of his ambitious and venal wife, Tran Le Xuan (Beautiful Spring)—as early as February 1955, Mme. Nhu was accused in a Saigon court of extensive corruption resulting from official connections.[3]

After occupying the choice suites in Diem's house of power, this oligarchy rented remaining rooms to men of their own breed hastily appointed to important key civil and military posts in Saigon and in the provinces. A considerable number of appointees were Catholic Northerners whom Diem and Company felt they could "trust"—and who trampled over regional and Buddhist customs to disrupt further an already disrupted country.

Diem's first task was to consolidate his newly won control. His most important target consisted of Viet Minh cadres who had remained in the South—an incubus estimated by Professor Fishel to have numbered ten thousand persons, most of whom were militant Communists, albeit with a strong nationalist bias.[4] These cadres had been working among the people for years, and had won an impressive number of supporters. Viet Minh control, as Joseph Buttinger later wrote,

> . . . remained unchallenged in vast regions of the South, and was near total in such provinces as Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, in the so-called Zone D, between Saigon and the Cambodian border, in the Plain of Reeds, on the Camau Peninsula, and in numerous other districts, both in the highlands and the Mekong Delta.[5]

In spring of 1955, Diem opened war on his opponents, a determined effort aimed not only at Communist cadres and Viet Minh sympathizers, but also at non-Communist nationalists whom Diem and his cohorts feared politically. Professor Scigliano later described the slapdash methods employed by the Department of Information and Youth, whose chief, Tran Chanh Thanh, had learned political propaganda methods from service with the Viet Minh:

> . . . As government troops occupied Viet Minh and sect-controlled areas in the spring and summer of 1955, Information agents swarmed in their wake denouncing the triple evils of Communism, colonisation, and

3. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra.*
4. Pike, op. cit.
5. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966). Tr. K. Kellen and J. Carmichael.

feudalism, and extolling the Ngo Dinh Diem government. Those themes were pounded home in posters, banners, leaflets, radio messages, and rallies. . . .[6]

In mid-1955, Tran Chanh Thanh launched the first Denunciation of Communism campaign:

. . . In a typical denunciation ceremony, Viet Minh cadres and sympathizers would swear their disavowal of Communism before a large audience; the repentants would recount the atrocities of the Viet Minh and, as a climax to their performance, would rip or trample upon the Viet Minh flag and pledge their loyalty to Ngo Dinh Diem.[7]

In May 1956, Thanh claimed that the campaign had ". . . entirely destroyed the predominant Communist influence of the previous nine years."

. . . According to Thanh, in this short period 94,041 former Communist cadres had rallied to the government, 5,613 other cadres had surrendered to government forces, 119,954 weapons had been captured, and 75 tons of documents and 707 underground arms caches had been discovered.[8]

Had these figures been accurate, Diem's problems would have been largely solved. They were not accurate, and neither this attempt nor others launched by the National Revolutionary Movement and various youth and group movements could claim notable success. The most valid effort, a government-sponsored community-action program that brought young volunteers to the countryside to work with peasants, died an early death, presumably because of jealousies it aroused in other government agencies.[9]

Thanh's propaganda efforts might not have been wasted had Ngo Dinh Diem carried out political reforms and given his people something to be thankful for. Unfortunately, he held no intention of rebuilding South Vietnam in the image desired by Washington. In October 1955, Diem, strongly influenced by brother Nhu, proclaimed a referendum between himself and Bao Dai. After a campaign ". . . conducted with such a special disregard for decency and democratic principles that even the Viet Minh professed to be shocked,"[10] a limited electorate returned an improbable 98.2 per cent in favor of Diem, who became the new President of Vietnam. Brother Nhu followed this victory by expanding his personal political party, the Can Lao,

. . . that served primarily as a political intelligence agency for Nhu; he used it to detect Communists or anyone he suspected of Communist or other op-

6. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.; see also Pike, op. cit.
9. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*
10. Lancaster, op. cit.

positionist tendencies, and it was thus a powerful weapon in obtaining and maintaining loyalty to the Ngo family.[11]

Max Clos, a veteran French observer of the Vietnam scene who was expelled from Saigon in November, wrote in *Le Monde:*

. . . Oddly enough . . . M. Diem has borrowed from his enemies what is most reprehensible in their methods: the denial of freedom of opinion, the deification of the man who incarnates the regime and also that form of hypocrisy which attributes to the "people's will" measures taken against those whom one considers as political opponents. . . . The Viet Minh dictatorship is at least as odious as that of M. Diem. But it can show results in the political and economic fields. It is up to Diemism to show concrete achievements. That has not yet been done in South Vietnam.[12]

This insidious beginning of dynasty rule expanded during 1956. But, as opposed to decentralized rule practiced both by early emperors and by the French, Diem insisted on centralized rule:

. . . In place of the colonial regional system of government, whereby the central and southern parts of the country had been administered more or less separately, forty-one provinces were created, with a chief in each directly responsible to the President; in theory, the province chief controlled district and village officials below him, but in practice, especially under the watchful eye of Nhu, the central government dominated them, too, and sent direct orders down to them on virtually all matters.[13]

In spring of 1956, Diem took this a step further by eliminating village elections in favor of appointment by province chiefs—a disastrous error that installed many northern Catholic officials in the South, to alienate the peasant further from the new government.[14] The following October, he completed political carnage by forcing through a constitution in a vain attempt to legalize what already was a dictatorship. By the end of 1956, one observer concluded,

. . . South Viet Nam is today a quasi-police state characterized by arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, strict censorship of the press and the absence of an effective political opposition. . . . All the techniques of political and psychological warfare, as well as pacification campaigns involving extensive military operations, have been brought to bear against the underground.[15]

11. Shaplen, op. cit.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.; Duncanson, op. cit.
12. Lancaster, op. cit.
13. Shaplen, op. cit.
14. Buttinger, op. cit.: ". . . Village autonomy was one of the strongest Vietnamese political traditions, dating back to the fifteenth century and sanctioned both by tradition and precolonial law."
15. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit., quoting from William Henderson's "South Viet Nam Finds Itself," *Foreign Affairs,* January 1957.

In dictatorial tradition, Diem meanwhile was filling jails and concentration camps not alone with "communists" but with communist "sympathizers," which meant anyone seriously at odds with the regime. Philippe Devillers estimated that the Diem government was holding fifty thousand political prisoners by the end of 1956. Official figures listed between twenty and thirty thousand former Viet Minh cadres, but a British observer, P. J. Honey, himself no liberal, visited these concentration camps and reported that ". . . the majority of the detainees are neither Communist nor pro-Communist."[16]

As opposed to wiping out the Communist threat, Diem's promiscuous policy of repression destroyed an important bulwark against communism. In Ellen Hammer's prescient words,

> . . . Nationalists who had once worked with the Viet Minh were evidently best equipped to rally the people against it. They understood both its mechanism of action and its popular strength as no outsider could and were able to turn its techniques and its professed principles against it; they had also come closer to the people than had most of the intellectual and middle-class Nationalists who had no experience of mass movements and whose sole contribution to the Nationalist cause was their insistence, especially among foreigners, that they were anti-French; and further, these men who had at one time worked with the Viet Minh benefited from the very real and favorable prejudice in their favor on the part of the majority of the population because they had participated actively in the struggle for independence.[17]

In the crucial years 1957–60, the Diem regime followed its earlier pattern with but few variations. By continuing dynasty rule, a cabal within a clique, a totalitarian regime cloaked with brother Nhu's mystique of Personalism,[18] Diem continued to alienate important nationalist elements that should have provided political leaders and administrators essential to stable government. He erred not only in ignoring these voices but by constantly suppressing them, by imprisoning or exiling or otherwise silencing them. He attempted to suppress all criticism by rigorous censorship and by a wide-ranging network of secret police. In early 1958, an official of one province reported that ". . . a five-week campaign . . . had resulted in the surrender of 8,125 communist agents and the 'denunciation' of 9,806 other agents, and 29,978 'sympathizers,'" surely a haul that would have won even Senator Joseph McCarthy's approval. In spring of 1959, the regime enacted legislation that gave special military courts the right to pass death sentences without

16. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*
17. Hammer, op. cit.
18. Lacouture, op. cit.

right of appeal for a host of political crimes including the spreading of anti-government rumors.[19]

The cumulative effects were disastrous, not alone in depriving the new state of both intelligent support and intelligent dissent, but in setting up brooding centers of dissension that eventually would lead to open rebellion, for example among students and Buddhists.

The full significance of Diem's strong-arm methods has been dulled in too many Western minds, whose pathological fear of communism has admitted the Communist philosophy of the end sanctioning almost any means. At a 1969 seminar of prominent British experts on insurgency warfare, this writer mentioned as a Western failure the lack of encouraging indigenous leadership in South Vietnam. Mr. P. J. Honey, who has written extensively on the country, replied:

> . . . In 1945–46 when the Communists took over in North Viet-Nam, they systematically killed every nationalist non-communist leader, and the leadership of a whole generation went. There has been a big gap in the interval, and only now are we seeing young men from the next generation coming up.[20]

Mr. Honey's exaggerated explanation is only a half truth. Many nationalist non-Communist leaders and, far more important, many such *potential* leaders, as Mr. Honey was well aware, survived to languish later either in South Vietnamese jails or to lead precarious and embittered lives either underground or abroad. Nor was the repressive air conducive to education and emergence of younger leaders.

Neither did Diem's alleged reforms mollify the effect of these harsh measures. Particularly wanting were his land-reform laws. When Diem came to power in 1954, ". . . forty per cent of the nation's 2,300,000 hectares of riceland was owned by *a quarter of one per cent of the rural population;* about a fourth of the large landholdings were French, and the rest were owned by wealthy Vietnamese or by the Catholic Church."[21] The peasant farmed land under a short-contract, share-crop system whereby he paid the landlord about 50 per cent of the crop in rent.

19. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.; see also Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra;* Lacouture, op. cit.: Special military tribunals could sentence to death ". . . anyone who intentionally proclaimed or propagated, by no matter what means, unfounded news on prices, or rumor contrary to the truth, or distorting the truth, on the actual or future economic situation in the country or outside, likely to provoke economic or financial disturbance in the country . . . anyone who committed or tried to commit the crime of sabotage or made an attempt against the security of the State or an attempt on the life or property of the population . . . anyone who adhered to an organization in order to aid in the preparation or execution of these crimes . . . etc."

20. Royal United Service Institution Seminar, *Lessons from the Vietnam War,* London: RUSI, 1969. (Hereafter cited as RUSI seminar.)

21. Shaplen, op. cit.

Diem's reform laws extended length of contract and brought rent down to a more reasonable 25 per cent of the crop. Unfortunately, the most liberal reform laws would have been unpopular in many areas because landlords had abandoned almost a third of the riceland—land sequestered by the Viet Minh and given to peasants rent free. The Diem government now allowed absentee landlords to begin collecting rent, and, if this was reduced to 25 per cent of crop value, it did not make the peasant any happier; neither did taxes freshly imposed from Saigon. In areas under strong Viet Minh influence, if not control, the peasant sometimes found himself paying two sets of taxes, one to the Viet Minh and one to Saigon. Moreover, some landlords continued to collect more than 25 per cent of the crop in rent, violations often overlooked by agrarian courts controlled by landowning officials.

In 1956, Diem's government introduced a land-purchase plan whereby the government purchased riceland and sold it to the peasant. Landlords were allowed to retain a hundred hectares, or nearly two hundred fifty acres; nevertheless, ". . . some seven hundred thousand hectares belonging to twenty-five hundred owners were declared subject to transfer."[22] The peasant could buy this land at an average price of two hundred dollars per hectare, an enormous sum to a peasant but one that he could pay off in six annual installments without interest, each installment being the estimated rough equivalent of 25 per cent of the crop value.[23]

This program encountered difficulties familiar to the rent-reform laws. First, it applied only to ricelands, and, as numerous observers have pointed out, the amount of land reserved to former landowners, two hundred fifty acres, was a tremendous area under the circumstances.[24] Other observers have criticized the limited time given the peasant to pay. Peasants who, in some instances, had already been "given" land by the Viet Minh naturally resented now having to pay for it. Finally, the government again dragged its heels while indulging corruption:

> . . . Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the land redistribution program was the manner in which influential politicians and members of Diem's family obtained huge amounts of land that had been taken over by the government from French or Vietnamese landlords but had not been distributed to the peasants. . . .[25]

Landowning officials found numerous ways to sabotage this not overly generous program.[26] When rural cadres of the powerful Confederation

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.; see also Buttinger, op. cit.
24. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
25. Shaplen, op. cit.
26. Pike, op. cit.

of Vietnamese Labor attempted to explain the program to the peasants, they

> . . . frequently found themselves in a hostile atmosphere because of the alliance that had grown up between the landlords and many government officials against the plan. In numerous places, union representatives were arrested; in one area, south of Saigon, where many of the farmers were union members, Buu [Tran Quoc Buu, who headed the union] later told me that the wife of the province chief had originally owned three-quarters of the land and that the chief had tossed all the union cadres into prison.[27]

Similarly, farmers' associations, which were supposed to help the peasant with credit and other aids, too quickly ". . . came to be dominated by local officials and landlords, and consequently were more paternalistic than progressive."[28]

Subsequent government measures did little or nothing to ameliorate these difficulties. In a situation demanding drastic action, the government refused to act—an intentional sabotage of a program the Diem regime never believed in and adopted only as a sop to American officials. Some evidence exists that the Eisenhower administration did not fully sympathize with proposed reforms, in that the American Government ". . . refused to provide the $30,000,000 needed to pay off the landowners. . . . It appears that the United States was unwilling to support the appropriation of private property openly. Similarly, the American government was long opposed to aiding public-controlled industrial development. . . ."[29]

Diem also alienated primitive Montagnard tribes of the central highlands. Unlike the Viet Minh, which had allowed Montagnards considerable autonomy, Diem incorporated their lands into the South Vietnamese state and also tried to assimilate what he held to be inferior peoples into the southern culture. In 1957, he worked further hardship on the primitives by transferring over two hundred thousand northern refugees to Montagnard areas, which made eventual conflict with the nomads almost inevitable. Moreover, by awarding security priority over other factors, he did much to defeat success of the highlands development program:

> . . . the American economic aid mission was dismayed by the lack of careful planning by the Vietnamese authorities. Settlement sites were selected with little regard to soil fertility or water resources; the land allotments seemed too small to sustain the settlers; and the whole program was pushed with alarming speed while the Americans were still wondering whether it was economically feasible. The Vietnamese, however, saw the program primarily in military, not economic, terms. The development centers were de-

27. Shaplen, op. cit.
28. Ibid.
29. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*

signed to form a human wall against Communist North Vietnam, and President Diem himself selected many of the sites in flights over the area or from military maps.[30]

Diem's penchant for security, and the inefficiency of his administrators, similarly ruined the government's later attempts to create fortified hamlets and villages. By mid-1959, Viet Minh attacks forced the government to undertake the "agroville program," an attempt to regroup whole villages into "protected" settlements called *agrovilles,* both to offer the peasant security and to prevent him from supporting the guerrilla effort.

Directed by Diem's brother Nhu, the plan called for eighty to a hundred *agrovilles* of two to four thousand persons each, besides several hundred smaller communities. Each peasant was supposed to tear down his present house and carry the materials to the new area, where the government loaned him money to buy an acre and a half of new land.[31]

This scheme resembled one that the British imposed on Chinese villages in Malaya with considerable success. But a world of difference separated the two situations. In Malaya, the British were dealing with a largely "squatter" population, who attached little importance to a particular area. In Vietnam, the Diem government was dealing with centuries-old villages. Forsaking village graveyards, and thus abandoning one's ancestors, struck many peasants as a heinous crime. The government's arbitrary orders and pitiful resettlement allowances infuriated others, nor was the concentration-camp aspect popular. Diem's insistence on siting *agrovilles* along tactically important lines of communications brought immediate and destructive Viet Minh attacks.[32] Finally, corruption and inefficiency ruled the program from the beginning. Only about a score of *agrovilles* were built in a year and a half, before the government abandoned the effort.

Diem's concept of government would have been awkward enough for his American sponsors to justify, even had he neutralized the Communist threat. Not only did his dictatorial measures fail internally in this respect, but his diplomatic intransigence opened South Vietnam to reprisals from the North.

The reader will perhaps remember that the Geneva Agreements called for a cease-fire and regroupment of forces pending a country-wide general election to be held by July 1956. In mid-1955, as provided for in the agreements, the DRV sought to open talks with South Vietnam concerning arrangements for these elections. Diem categorically refused to discuss the matter. In July, he told the South Vietnamese people that his government was not bound by the Geneva Agreements. In August,

30. Ibid.; see also Pike, op. cit.

31. Shaplen, op. cit.; see also Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra,* whose figures slightly differ.

32. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*

he denied that fair elections could be held in North Vietnam, an objection publicly sustained by Mr. Dulles. In September, Diem stated that ". . . there can be no question of a conference, even less of negotiations."[33]

The DRV continued to press for talks, and Diem, despite prodding by a few far-sighted American and South Vietnamese officials and by the governments of England and the Soviet Union—the cochairmen countries of the Geneva Conference—continued to refuse right through the July 1956 deadline. He did not act unilaterally: ". . . in this stand he continued to receive warm American encouragement and the fullest American diplomatic backing."[34]

This was a very serious action.

We have discussed earlier the ambivalent air that surrounded the Geneva Agreements and the principle of a general election. But that air did not hide the fact of the provisions from an interested world. As written, the provisions gave both sides option to insist on an election; perhaps neither side took this seriously, but, nonetheless, each side held the option. If either the DRV or France or a replacement government in the South refused to hold such an election, the other side could claim that the cease-fire, what was in effect an armistice, was null and void.

This was not so much legal mumbo-jumbo. Some of the staunchest allies of the United States so interpreted the situation. According to a British observer, Brian Crozier, at a SEATO meeting in February 1955, ". . . the United States was cautioned by its allies that SEATO would not function if a South Vietnamese refusal to hold the required elections resulted in an attack from the North."[35]

Nor did Diem's refusal to countenance the Geneva Agreements change matters. The reader may remember that France had guaranteed the election and ". . . that any administration succeeding the French prior to the 1956 elections would legally assume France's obligations. . . ." France turned the government over to Bao Dai in early 1955, Diem eliminated Bao Dai that autumn, and, in spring of 1956, the last formal vestige of French power, her troops, left South Vietnam. Two students of the area, Professors Kahin and Lewis, argued subsequently that Diem was now legally obliged to co-operate in holding a country-wide election.

Their conclusion seems specious to this writer. As head of a government that had refused to sanction the Geneva Agreements, Diem surely was within his rights to abstain from carrying out the provisions. *However,* in so doing he opened himself to punitive action from two sources. One was France, which, in the event, did not choose to alienate the United States by pressing the matter. The other was the DRV, which,

33. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.; Lancaster, op. cit.
34. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
35. Ibid.

quite legally and certainly logically, broadcast Diem's action to the world as a *casus belli,* meanwhile making capital propaganda from it at home and abroad, including the hamlets of South Vietnam.

Diem would have been far more clever had he paid lip service to the DRV proposals, which good diplomacy could have spun out for years while simultaneously deriving excellent propaganda. Indeed, had Diem held proper confidence in his own government-making ability, he should have wanted an election eventually if somehow machinery could have been arranged to insure a fair and secret procedure in the North—admittedly doubtful. Considering Ho's economic and agrarian difficulties in 1956, he was not prepared to push the issue too hard—fertile ground here for an impressive victory had Diem correctly played his cards.

The American Government, or those officials who encouraged Diem in perversity, did him a great disservice. No matter how well-intentioned the advice, it was contrary to common sense. And not alone from the propaganda standpoint or the friction caused between allies. Far more important, it opened the way for renewed Viet Minh activity in the South at a time when the Diem government was particularly vulnerable.

Diem and his advisers, both Vietnamese and American, were also erring in another, but related, direction: South Vietnam's police and armed forces.

Here again the original American intention can scarcely be faulted. As Secretary of State Dulles explained to Mendès-France in November 1954, the United States wanted an autonomous Vietnamese army with about ninety thousand troops:

> . . . the Vietnamese forces were not intended for the defense of South Vietnam against external aggression; their sole purpose was to preserve public order and suppress any attempts of subversion. There could be no question of raising funds sufficient to enable the Vietnamese Army to oppose a Vietminh attack that might well be supported by China. Only the Manila Pact (that is, SEATO) could provide the requisite deterrent against such an act of aggression.[36]

In late December 1954, Homer Bigart, of the New York *Times,* reported that a secret plan called for an army on the Philippine model, that is, one that would emphasize civil improvements in the countryside in an attempt to convert Viet Minh followers to the new regime.[37] General O'Daniel, who headed the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Saigon, stated:

> . . . The [Vietnamese] Army will be, above all, according to American ideas on the subject, a police force capable of spotting Communist guerrillas and Communist efforts at infiltration.[38]

36. Devillers and Lacouture, op. cit.
37. Ibid.
38. Trager, op. cit.

O'Daniel reckoned without political aspects of the Vietnamese army, which Diem turned into the major prop of his regime and which offered his supporters lucrative and powerful roles; nor did O'Daniel appreciate the inability of French and many American military advisers to understand the essence of guerrilla warfare and train troops to counter the threat. During 1955, he had to put up with the incubus of the old French Expeditionary Corps, which influenced the Vietnamese army to a considerable degree. At the end of 1955, Lieutenant General Samuel ("Hanging Sam") Williams replaced O'Daniel, and MAAG received several hundred U.S. officers, who began reorganizing and training Diem's army. Although the Americans managed to reduce its bulk of some 270,000 men, they probably did not trim it to much below 150,000. Influenced by Diem's wishes and by the Korean war, they soon began converting the police role originally envisaged into more conventional terms: an army ". . . organized for conventional warfare in regiments, divisions, and corps. This military force was mechanized, motorized, and road-conscious. . . ."[39] While MAAG supplied American arms, including artillery, tanks, and aircraft, hundreds of young Vietnamese officers attended training courses at American bases in the Philippines, Okinawa, and the United States, where they learned conventional Western military doctrine.[40]

Concurrent with this shift to a more conventional, or "heavy," organization, the Diem government relieved the army of what O'Daniel had believed was its most important mission, that ". . . of spotting Communist guerrillas and Communist efforts at infiltration." Diem turned these functions over to the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps, neither of which could conceivably carry them out.

This fundamental error was not altogether the fault of General Williams. At the time, Diem was the fair-haired boy of some very powerful American officials, notably Dulles and Dulles, and it would have taken someone as forceful as "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell to withstand his assault on logic. It would also have taken someone exceedingly knowledgeable in insurgency warfare, and here the American military plant suffered a surfeit of orthodoxy. Oblivious to lessons offered by history, they seemed unaware even of those inherent in such recent campaigns as China, the Philippines, Malaya, Greece, and, most importantly, Indochina itself.

In American military minds, the "communists," or "reds," having attacked overtly in Korea, would attack similarly in Vietnam. Thus Pentagon and Saigon planners deemed the problem that of defense against a conventional army spilling across the 17th parallel. The new Vietnamese army supported by its proud artillery, armor, and air units would rush forward to hold the breech until SEATO powers, or at least American forces, would land and "win" the war. General Williams' own think-

39. Ibid.
40. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*

ing is obvious from a statement made when he retired, in 1960, after five years as chief of MAAG: ". . . In 1954, the Communist army of North Vietnam could have crossed the seventeenth parallel and walked into Saigon standing up. Today if they tried it, they would have one nasty fight on their hands."[41]

This political-strategic-tactical concept stood at odds with the political-strategic-tactical problem. Direct invasion from the North was highly unlikely at this time: Korea had demonstrated to Moscow and Peking alike that the U.S.A. and her allies would respond to any such action with armed force, and Secretary of State Dulles quite recently had warned that this could include atomic weapons; the Soviet Union and China had shown reluctance to test American patience further by restraining North Vietnam at the Geneva Conference. Always a realist, Ho Chi Minh remained well aware of the international situation, but, discounting that, he was facing severe internal problems, problems undoubtedly known to Western intelligence agencies but evidently not appreciated by either Diem or his Western military advisers.

To build large and heavy units in South Vietnam worked a three-fold disaster: First, they were useless in that they deterred nothing, because the northern enemy had no intention of direct military invasion. They were also extremely expensive, and to build and maintain them, totally at American cost, necessarily reduced the amount of American funds available for essential civil projects. They were also destructive, in that, wherever based, they took without giving, whereas the original concept had called for them to work alongside civilians in the country's reconstruction. Generally commanded by inept and corrupt officers, they became a drain on the state, a monster exercising "squeeze" in a thousand forms on already disgruntled peasants. Flying the Saigon flag, they turned it in short order into a symbol as repressive as the old French tricolor.

Second, the new army contained the seeds of state destruction, an indirect objection that apparently escaped American civil and military minds. By creating regiments and divisions instead of light, mobile battalions, Diem brought into being an armed force that could either bolster or threaten his regime. To make it an ally meant installing politically safe senior officers in top-command and staff billets, a pernicious practice that reminded some observers of Chiang Kai-shek and the old war-lord concept. Senior commanders perforce demanded and received command autonomy, which too often meant flagrant failure to correct military deficiencies and widespread corruption in the military body itself. Diem thus created and condoned a disaster-prone army not far removed, despite Western window dressing of snappy uniforms, shiny weapons, and American quantitative tactics, from the old mainland armies of Chiang Kai-shek.

41. Ibid.

But, worse by far, army power soon spilled over into civil areas. Corps, division, and regimental commanders virtually ruled command areas and, almost without exception, refused to implement necessary civil reforms. Regular army officers had always occupied powerful positions, but with the growth of Viet Minh activity, Diem entrusted civil administration more and more to them. In 1958, according to Robert Scigliano's interesting analysis, ". . . 13 of 36 province chiefs were military officers and it was planned shortly to replace them with civilians. . . ." By autumn of 1960, however, regular officers ruled twenty-one provinces, with younger officers holding numerous interprovince positions, a disturbing trend that, by 1962, would result in total military administration.[42]

Third, Diem's military task was essentially pacification: securing the countryside under his control and extending that control to peripheral areas. The first steps in the process were to provide his peoples with security while rooting out Viet Minh cadres, an onerous and difficult task that would have taxed the efforts of a small army trained along lines recommended by O'Daniel. By assigning the all-important functions to the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps, Diem virtually assured their non-fulfillment.

Diem's Department of National Defense administered the forty-thousand-man Self-Defense Corps. MAAG paid its members and furnished a few arms, but the Vietnamese regular army provided most of the officers and was responsible for training. In the event, this proved rudimentary, and many of its members were armed with ". . . sticks, clubs and other such makeshifts."[43]

The fifty-thousand-man Civil Guard, administered by Diem's Department of the Interior, became the responsibility of the Michigan State University group, to the extent of training and equipping its units. An operational dichotomy resulted almost at once. Police advisers of the group wanted to halve the Guard's size and equip and train it as a rural police organization, ". . . which should not live apart in military posts but among the villages it would protect."[44] Here was a key concept, ranking in importance only under political reforms. Had it been carried out effectively, as in Malaya and Kenya, had a rural police organization emerged to work in conjunction with national police and army units, many of Diem's security problems would have vanished.

Instead, the Diem government and MAAG rejected the group's recommendation, insisting that the Civil Guard become a paramilitary adjunct to the regular army. This led to conflict so bitter that, in 1957, the Michigan group began withholding considerable aid:

. . . In addition, the Vietnamese government did little to improve the efficiency or morale of the Guard during this period, using it as a dumping

42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.

ground for inferior army officers. The organization—poorly trained, poorly led, and lacking needed armament, transport and communications—was faced with the increasingly difficult job of maintaining security in an increasingly insecure countryside.[45]

In mid-1959, increased American aid somewhat improved the organization, but now the group abandoned this particular mission. MAAG eventually took it over, and, with that, any hope of a rural police force vanished.

By this time, the group's efforts to organize a viable national police force had also backfired. Instead of the organization envisaged—a country-wide network to aid the rural police force—a variety of police forces existed. Regular police operated under Department of Interior, but the Civic Action, Information, and Defense departments also supported police networks. The key agency was secret. Called the Social and Political Research Service, it was run by Doctor Tran Kim Tuyen, ". . . an able Catholic intellectual from Central Vietnam"—and a chum of Nhu's. Tuyen's American-trained agents, rather than ferreting out Viet Minh cadres, concentrated on collecting information ". . . on government officials, military officers, businessmen, intellectuals, students, and others," and preventing them from upsetting Diem's political applecart.[46]

Few, if any, of these failures caused an outcry from concerned officials. Persons who had promoted Diem continued to congratulate themselves on soundness of judgment. Yet, by the end of the decade, the Diem regime, aided by American advisers and vast American expenditures, had laid the groundwork for disaster. It remained for the Communists to exploit the target.

45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.

Chapter 66

Revolution in the South • Ho Chi Minh's problems • His attitude toward the South • Viet Minh tactics in the South • The National Liberation Front (NLF) • Non-Communist opposition to Diem • The 1960 revolt • Diem's refusal to effect reforms • His civil and military weaknesses • The American contribution

IMMENSE DEBATES in the West have centered on the extent of Ho Chi Minh's collusion with the Viet Minh in the South from 1954 onward. The American Government's position was a simple black-and-white insistence that the DRV, aided by China and the Soviet Union, totally controlled the Viet Minh movement in the South and concentrated almost exclusively in this period on fomenting revolution from within. Once subversive tactics succeeded, the official thesis argued, Hanoi called into being the National Liberation Front (NLF) and, later, the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) to prepare the country for the forces of "external aggression" from the North that would bring about a general "people's uprising."

A number of qualified observers have taken vigorous exception to this position. Prominent are Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, George Kahin and John Lewis, Bernard Fall, and Joseph Buttinger, whose reasoned arguments, buttressed by cited evidence, should not be ignored. These observers have argued that the revolutionary impetus

derived from southern elements almost in spite of Ho Chi Minh and the DRV, that, indeed, on occasion, they were embarrassing to the North. Although Ho aided the movement in the South, the argument continued, it retained a distinctly regional independence throughout formative years.

The argument is important mainly because the simplistic position adopted by the American Government was fundamental to official performance. In maintaining its position, the American Government was indulging in deductive thinking in a situation demanding skillful appreciation of complex political factors. The use of the term *Viet Cong* (Vietnamese Communists) in the South from 1956 onward was significant: the abbreviation of *Cong-san,* or "Communists," it was (and is) used to describe any opponents to the regime and reminds one of Chiang Kai-shek's contemptuous term "Communist bandits." That the enemy did not use the term was apparently beside the point, as was its inaccuracy; Douglas Pike noted in his carefully documented work, *Viet Cong,* a book that in large part attempts to vindicate the official position:

> . . . For Americans Vietnam has grown steadily as a crisis in perception, one that began with a failure in definition. It is both symbolic and significant that no appellation coined for the opposing insurgent forces was acceptable to all parties, including the insurgents themselves.[1]

Another astute observer, Professor Donald Zagoria, has emphasized the complexity of the situation in his most-interesting book *Vietnam Triangle—Moscow, Peking, Hanoi,* published in 1967:

> . . . The idea that Hanoi set out, in the late 1950s or early 1960s, with a plan for the conquest of South Vietnam which they have been following ever since is a myth. Indeed, there is good evidence to suggest that Hanoi initially strove to restrain the Southern resistance fighters. The truth of the matter seems rather that as the anti-Diemist struggle in the South gained intensity, and as the North came to believe that the risks of outright intervention were minimal, it increasingly dropped its restraint. But throughout the period from 1959 to 1965, there were a number of signs of debate within the Hanoi leadership and between Hanoi and the NLF over the proper course of action to pursue in the South.

To this writer, it seems as absurd for the American Government to insist that either the NLF or the later PRP is a completely Hanoi-inspired and Hanoi-imposed organization (ultimately controlled from Peking and Moscow) as it does for more-liberal thinkers to argue that both the NLF and the PRP are totally home-grown in the South and practically had to blackmail Hanoi for support. The truth lies somewhere between, and it is regrettable that responsible American officials, civil and military, did not attempt to more closely determine the facts instead of basing a

1. Pike, op. cit.

position on the convenient but, in part, erroneous accusation of "external aggression."

The end of the war with the French left the DRV in an awkward position. The fighting had destroyed large areas in the North, which always depended on rice imports from the South in return for coal and electricity. Diem's refusal to commence limited trade with the North forced Ho to almost total dependence on Peking and Moscow. In 1954, they supplied economic relief, mostly food. A visit to the two capitals in summer of 1955 yielded Ho $350 million in economic credits—a considerable sum, but one not nearly sufficient to turn the North into an industrial-socialist state.

To further this aim, Ho embarked on "agrarian reforms" based on the Chinese model of collectivization and communal farming. Apparently the work of Truong Chinh, the Communist Party's secretary-general, the radical program caused widespread resentment in the countryside. Government officials summarily executed numerous "middle" and "rich" peasants and dispossessed thousands of hapless farmers of already marginal holdings. So ruthless were the reforms that, in 1956, peasants began organized uprisings. Ho put these down sharply with troops—all together, the regime probably executed between ten thousand and fifteen thousand peasants and deported and imprisoned between fifty thousand and a hundred thousand.[2] But Ho also dismissed concerned officials (including the powerful Truong Chinh), modified the program, and eventually restored order in the countryside. Ho's confidence in his remedial measures showed in late 1956, when he lifted press censorship only to find his regime inundated by complaints. As in China following the "Hundred Flowers Movement," the new freedom quickly gave way to an even more repressive air than existed formerly.

Internal difficulties notwithstanding, Ho began in mid-1955 to press Diem and the South Vietnam Government for a general election in accordance with the Geneva Agreements. Diem's refusal to even discuss elections placed Ho in a difficult position. Neither Moscow nor Peking seemed inclined to push the matter (other than, in the case of the Soviet Union, as one of the cochairmen of the Geneva Conference). Not only militant elements in Ho's government objected to the delay, but thousands of cadres and Viet Minh sympathizers in the South, who daily were losing ground to Diem's government, vociferously clamored for action from the DRV.

Despite the opening given him by Diem's refusal, Ho could not consider overt military action, for a variety of reasons. He was not strong enough, and in 1956 a drought further complicated the restive peasant

2. Buttinger, op. cit.: ". . . Many regained their freedom, though perhaps not their former rights and possessions"; see also Lancaster, op. cit.; Hammer, op. cit., states, ". . . at least 50,000 people were killed."

situation. But, more than this, he was intent on building an industrial-socialist state, a priority he made clear in a letter of mid-June 1956 to southern cadres:

> . . . Our policy is: to consolidate the North and to keep in mind the South. To build a good house we must build a good foundation. . . . The North is the foundation, the root of the struggle for complete national liberation and the reunification of the country. That is why everything we are doing in the North is aimed at strengthening both the North and the South. Therefore, to work here is the same as struggling in the South, to struggle for the South and the whole of Vietnam.[3]

Ho emphasized his intention when he later announced a Three Year Plan which, from 1958 to 1960, was to concentrate on agrarian and industrial growth in the North. Joseph Buttinger has cited some of Ho's impressive gains during these years and concluded that ". . . even before the Soviet Union in 1960 gave Hanoi a long-term loan for forty-three new industrial plants, North Viet-Nam was well on the road toward becoming the most industrialized country of Southeast Asia."[4] The DRV may not have won any awards as a model state, but, by 1960, as Bernard Fall has pointed out, foreign aid, principally from China and the Soviet Union, represented 21 per cent of the 1960 budget, as opposed to 65.3 per cent of the 1955 budget.[5]

Several other factors probably influenced Ho into soft-pedaling the situation in the South. One was training. Ho was Moscow-trained, and Moscow preferred the technique of self-sustaining revolution, as the Communist effort in Yugoslavia and Greece so well illustrated. This was common sense. As the Soviets knew from experience in World War II, central direction of guerrilla warfare is always difficult and sometimes impossible (see Chapters 34–35, Volume I). Regional revolution, further, brings immense problems in leadership, with only grudging acceptance of outsiders, as, for example, Zapata demonstrated in the Mexican revolution (see Chapter 18, Volume I).

Ho Chi Minh also faced a delicate and complex international situation. Chinese and Russian reluctance to stir up trouble overtly in Indochina grew rather than diminished, the inevitable result of basic differences that were emerging in late 1957,[6] but also the result of Dulles' announced intention to intercede in case of enemy invasion of the South.

Another factor was the increasingly turbulent situation in South Viet-

3. Ho Chi Minh (*Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*), *supra.*

4. Buttinger: ". . . For each factory built under Diem—there were less than two dozen—the Communist regime in the north built fifty"; See also Zagoria, op. cit.

5. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra.*

6. Richard Lowenthal, "Russia and China: Controlled Conflict," *Foreign Affairs,* April 1971.

nam. Despite massive injections of American aid, Diem was failing to build a viable state, a failure that not only opened the way to increased Viet Minh activity but also increased Viet Minh popularity, particularly in the countryside. In this respect, Diem, his imperial court, and his senior American advisers were doing Ho's job for him, rather like the earlier situation in China, in which Chiang Kai-shek & Company had so ably prepared the soil for Mao Tse-tung's destructive seeds.

Ho, perforce, concentrated on wringing a great deal of propaganda value from Diem's continued refusals while mollifying the South and continuing to build in the North. Like a good Communist, he encouraged southern dissidence where he could—for example, in the central highlands, where his agents were working actively with the Montagnards, and by allowing some Communist cadres that had returned North to go back South to help organize the revolutionary movement. In time, success of Viet Minh cadres would cause him, or perhaps force him, to lend a more forceful hand. Meanwhile, he seemed content to let Diem go his destructive way.

Diem's repressive measures in both city and countryside, without doubt, severely damaged the organization of Viet Minh cadres that had remained in the South in 1954. Enough of them survived, however, to instigate a campaign of propaganda and subversion that, in places, prospered as the inevitable result of Diem's inept government.

In the early years, the Viet Minh used mainly agitation-propaganda tactics to accomplish their purpose. As their strength grew and after Diem refused to consider elections called for by the Geneva Conference, the hard-core Viet Minh turned to more-violent tactics, which appeared as early as 1956. A year later:

> . . . A campaign of terror, extortion, assassination, and guerrilla action was used to undermine village security. Targets of such activities always include local village officials, civil guards, the members of the Self-Defense Corps, teachers, and, especially, officials sent out from the capital as local administrators of one kind or another. Sometimes these officials were "put on trial" by the Communists, then "sentenced" to death; after execution the bodies were left exposed with a notice pinned on them to indicate that the sentence had been carried out by the "liberation Forces."[7]

Viet Minh terrorism was not as haphazard as some commentators have suggested. It was and remained subordinate to the propaganda effort. With few exceptions, the Viet Minh indulged in selective terrorism, that is, killing for a specific political purpose. The picture of a disemboweled body of a village headman or government official aroused deepest feelings in the West, but, all too often, local peasantry welcomed the killing in that it offered relief, if only temporary, from repressive gov-

7. Trager, op. cit.

ernment. At very least, the killing impressed the peasantry with Viet Minh power, and it often frightened other headmen and officials into accommodating to Viet Minh aims. Nothing is pleasant about terror, because man was put on earth to trust, not fear—but, to write it off as indiscriminate killing, as a form of warfare unacceptable to Western quantitative theories, is scarcely conducive to countering it successfully.

The Diem government's inability to prevent selective terrorism increased its importance as a weapon in these years. One observer has estimated that, ". . . by mid-1959, Viet Cong violence of this type accounted for between fifteen and twenty assassinations of provincial-government officials per month; how many less prominent villagers were similarly treated is not known, but many particularly brutal cases of beheading and disembowelment were reported."[8]

Terrorism formed only part of a process already familiar from the China campaign and from earlier Viet Minh resistance to the French:

> . . . Insurrection took the form of guerrilla action against villages still under government control; it usually led to the surrender or the wiping-out of the local self-defense units and Civil Guards charged with ousting the guerrillas. Organized, indoctrinated, and led by Communist cadres, the Vietcong, as these guerrillas were henceforth called, soon controlled almost the entire countryside by night and about two-thirds of it in daytime. The Vietcong set up their own administration, imposed their own taxes, conscripted the local youth into military service, provided education and medical care, collected food supplies for their fighting units, dug bomb shelters, built defense works along the regions they controlled, and continuously trained new men for stepped-up military operations. For years, they increased the number of their fighting men (if not their cadres) entirely through local recruiting, and their arms supply more through the capture of arms from government units than through infiltration from the North. . . . From 1960 on, they began to operate in ever-larger groups, and to attack and overrun government outposts held by the army, as well as to ambush and destroy army units sent to relieve outposts under attack. . . .[9]

The Viet Minh effort naturally varied from area to area, but, in general, it was determined and effective, as in the case of the Montagnards, in the central highlands:

> . . . Their vulnerability to Communist influence has been high, as a result of their distrust of Vietnamese settlers and government officials and the astute efforts of Communist agents to win their favor. These agents have adopted tribal customs, often speak the tribal dialects, have married tribal women, and have in many cases lived and worked for years among the tribal people. Young tribesmen have been sent to North Vietnam for political and guerrilla

8. Ibid.
9. Buttinger, op. cit.

training and have come back home. The tribal peoples have been promised autonomy. . . .[10]

As previously discussed (see Chapter 65), effective countermeasures might have won over the Montagnards, but the Saigon government repeatedly failed to promulgate them; indeed, Diem's officials seemed to go out of their way to antagonize these primitive tribesmen.

Neither Communist leadership nor Communist guerrillas, however, monopolized the resistance effort. Diem may have bested the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects, but he had not eliminated them. In places, the remnants made common cause with the Viet Minh; indeed, Fall has suggested that the bulk of early opposition came from the sects. Remnants of the Dai Viet party were also working against the government, as was another group, the National Salvation Movement, sponsored by Vietnamese dissidents in Paris.[11]

From this mélange of dissent arose the National Liberation Front, or NLF. Its birthdate is not definitely known in the West. Kahin and Lewis point out that a clandestine broadcasting station called itself the Voice of the South Vietnam Liberation Front as early as mid-1958. Robert Shaplen noted that, in 1958, the NLF flag was seen in Viet Minh-dominated areas of the South. Douglas Pike has argued that ". . . the initial organization phase was the period from mid-1959, when the decision was made to begin building an organization, to December 1960, when the new creation was first unveiled." While arguing that the NLF per se was a Communist-front organization imported from Hanoi, Pike readily admitted that it depended on indigenous, and not alone Communist, support:

. . . Members of the original NLF, and its most ardent supporters in the early years, were drawn from the ranks of the Viet Minh Communists; the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects; a scattering of minority group members, primarily ethnic Cambodians and montagnards; idealistic youth, recruited from the universities and polytechnic schools; representatives of farmers' organizations from parts of the Mekong delta, where serious land tenure problems existed; leaders of small political parties or groups, or professionals associated with them; intellectuals who had broken with the GVN (particularly members of a network of Peace Committees that had sprung up in 1954 in both the North and the South); military deserters; refugees of various sorts from the Diem government, such as those singled out by neighbors in the Denunciation of Communism campaign but who fled before arrest.[12]

In short, here was a genuine grass-roots opposition whose predominantly nationalist elements caused Hanoi and the Viet Minh in the South to act carefully, generally downplaying the Communist bias of the new

10. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*
11. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
12. Pike, op. cit.; see also Lacouture, op. cit.; Shaplen, op. cit.

organization while providing leadership and guidance essential to its control. Pike goes on:

. . . Many of the original participants in the NLF had turned to it because they had been denied participation in South Vietnam's political process, even in the role of loyal opposition; some felt that the NLF was the most promising route to power, believing as did many at the time that the Diem government would not prove viable. They had one thing in common, to bring down the Diem government.[13]

Opposition to Diem did not end with this heterogeneous bunch. In spring of 1960, before Hanoi had officially admitted NLF's existence, mounting criticism in Saigon civil and military circles found voice in a public protest—the Caravelle Manifesto—to Diem signed by eighteen prominent Vietnamese, ten of them former government ministers.

Their statement referred to "anti-democratic elections"

. . . and to "continuous arrests [that] fill the jails and prisons to the rafters," and it charged that "effective power" had been "concentrated in fact in the hands of an irresponsible member of the 'family' [Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's brother] from whom emanates all orders."[14]

Diem cracked down hard on this group, arresting all signatories.

A few months later, in November, a group of army officers rebelled. After considerable behind-the-scenes maneuvering, three paratrooper battalions surrounded Diem's palace in Saigon. Leaders of the revolt called on Diem ". . . to rid himself of his family advisers and follow a political course more sensitive to the country's needs." While stalling the rebels, Diem and Nhu called up loyal elements, which broke up the revolt. Once again, the government cracked down hard and arrested many civil and military opposition leaders. Others went underground or fled the country.[15]

Only after these developments did Hanoi officially announce the existence of NLF and a program calling for liberation of the South, departure of the Americans, and final reunification of the country. To what extent Hanoi voluntarily acted and to what extent Ho's hand was forced by the southern cadres is not known in the West. The Hanoi government did not seem in any hurry to recognize the southern movement. The sanction came only during the Third Congress of the Vietnam Communist Party, in September 1960. But the same Congress stressed the necessity for continued internal development of North Vietnam. Vo Nguyen Giap, DRV Minister of Defense, told the Congress:

. . . Today, the economic construction in the North has become the central task of the Party. Therefore it is necessary to cut down defense budget,

13. Pike, op. cit.
14. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
15. Ibid.

adequately reduce our army contingent so as to concentrate manpower and material in economic construction.[16]

Such a policy in no way abrogated the repeatedly stated goal of reunification of the country, but, considering the state of insurrection that existed in the South, the Hanoi government logically would have been in no hurry to act—not as long as Diem continued to do the job for the Communists, and not as long as guerrillas in the South, who cost Hanoi next to nothing, continued to exploit his errors.

Primarily for this reason, the exact extent of Hanoi's participation from 1954 to 1960 is relatively unimportant. Had Diem, with all the millions of dollars and expertise furnished by the United States built even a reasonable government in the South, he would have neutralized the Viet Minh threat and then some. No matter what the American Government, or its particular spokesmen in this matter, would have us believe, Ho Chi Minh did not bring about the attempted coup of 1960. The villains were and remain Ngo Dinh Diem, his imperial court, his ambitious and venal generals and officials, and his Vietnamese and senior American advisers.

This would have been an appropriate time for Diem to do an about-face and come to terms with his critics, not alone those in cities and towns and those in government and armed forces, but the dissident peoples in the countryside, and, most of all, the peasants—the vast majority that formed the "neither-nor" constituency whose support was vital both to viable government and to an NLF-inspired insurgency.

Unfortunately, Diem proved incapable of reversing his pernicious policies. By 1960, he was a prisoner of forces as strong as those that ever surrounded Chiang Kai-shek. Had his warders ably administered the country, Diem might have survived. They did not. Not only were they inefficient, but they were repressive and corrupt, and they could only keep the government on a collision course with disaster. In Joseph Buttinger's biting words:

> . . . Opposed by the intellectuals, despised by the educated middle class, rejected by businessmen, hated by the youth and by all nationalists with political ambitions, and totally lacking in mass support, the Diem Government had to rely for its survival on an apparatus of coercion."[17]

And by coercion with little purpose: negative, soul-destroying coercion, the attempt of mediocre minds to preserve a status quo in a situation demanding imaginative and daring change.

The army was symptomatic of the regime. By 1960, its major faults were becoming all too clear to objective observers. Far from being a national force that offered protection and security to peasants, the army served the political purposes of Diem and the ruling oligarchy. As had

16. Ibid.
17. Buttinger, op. cit.

been the case with Chiang Kai-shek's mainland armies, officer promotion depended on political whim. As had been the case in Greece, location of units more often satisfied private interests than public welfare, the estates of prominent politicians, for example, being guarded while rural areas lay open to Viet Minh depredation. As in the case of all totalitarian countries, "palace guard," or trusted, units never ventured far from the capital's periphery and played little part in combating increasingly serious guerrilla attacks in the countryside.

In spring of 1960, the prominent Vietnamese who submitted a public manifesto to Diem included a separate clause covering and, indeed, condemning the army:

> . . . The purpose of the army, pillar of the defense of the country, is to stop foreign invasions and to eliminate rebel movements. It is at the service of the country only and should not lend itself to the exploitation of any faction or party. Its total reorganization is necessary. Clannishness and party obedience should be eliminated; its moral base strengthened; a noble tradition of national pride created; and fighting spirit, professional conscience, and bravery should become criteria for promotion. The troops should be encouraged to respect their officers, and the officers should be encouraged to love their men. Distrust, jealousy, rancor among colleagues of the same rank should be eliminated. . . .[18]

Operationally, the army had failed to neutralize Viet Cong tactics. Too often, corps commanders either refused to fight or were forbidden to fight or were unable to fight effectively. Politically tainted command relationships often meant confused and lackadaisical operations in situations demanding immediate and forceful response. Almost total lack of identification with peasants meant corresponding lack of information on which to base operations. Fear and frustration entered the picture to cause the army to use increasingly repressive measures and thus further to alienate the peasantry. Morale remained low, desertions high.

As mentioned earlier, in 1955 the Diem government had transferred the village security task to the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps. Neither organization proved able to cope with it effectively. Uneven and usually corrupt administration had produced largely untrained and badly equipped units whose poorly paid militiamen seemed unable to keep the Viet Cong from the door. As one result, local officials, businessmen, and plantation managers made private deals with guerrillas, to whom they paid bribes in money or kind—a sort of rural protection racket with the Viet Cong representing the "mob." Unfortunately, Saigon insisted that its government controlled these "quiet" areas, when the opposite held true.

18. Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall (eds.), *The Viet-Nam Reader—Articles and Documents on American Foreign Policy and the Viet-Nam Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1967).

At a crucial time, then, the Diem government was not meeting its responsibilities. Instead of offering the people legitimate government, it was wallowing in a self-created malaise made more dangerous by failure of Diem, his advisers, and senior American officials both in Saigon and Washington to face up to problems and take appropriate action.

The American response to Diem's deteriorating position was mixed. Not only did the two camps, official and unofficial, hold frequently opposing views, but individual opinions in each camp often radically differed. Among other things, this caused uneven reporting, both public and private, at a time when a thoroughly confused and dangerous situation demanded objective coverage in order to be understood either by concerned officials in Washington or by the American public.

The basic villain was ignorance, which prompted fear among officials at all levels. So long as American officials believed in the "domino theory," so long as they insisted that South Vietnam was a "strategic necessity" as opposed to a "strategic convenience," their vision remained myopic, unable to see beyond the day to recognize inherent fallacies in Diem's repressive policies. Part of this failure rested on misconception of enemy capabilities and intentions, part on ignorance of Vietnam—a natural ignorance compounded by an insulated and luxurious life in Saigon, where the true situation in the countryside was not to be learned. Whatever the reason, results were disastrous. Typical of misinformation broadcast by Eisenhower-administration officials was that contained in an emotive speech by Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, in June 1956. Robertson told an American audience:

> . . . And finally Vietnam today, in mid-1956, [is] progressing rapidly to the establishment of democratic institutions by elective processes, its people resuming peaceful pursuits, its army growing in effectiveness, sense of mission, and morale, the puppet Vietnamese politicians discredited, the refugees well on the way to permanent settlement, the countryside generally orderly and calm. . . .
>
> Perhaps no more eloquent testimony to the new state of affairs in Vietnam could be cited than the choice of the people themselves, as expressed in their free election of last March. At that time the last possible question as to the feeling of the people was erased by an overwhelming majority for President Diem's leadership. . . .

William Lederer, an experienced participant in and student of the area and author of *The Ugly American,* quoted the above words in his recent book *Our Own Worst Enemy* and added:

> . . . There is not one single true statement in this excerpt from Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson's address. I do not know of a single

living historian or student of Vietnamese affairs, official or otherwise, who would disagree with me. In mid-1956, under President Ngo Dinh Diem, there was no democratic institution. The president was ruling the nation like a tyrant. The army was not growing in effectiveness. The so-called discrediting of puppet Vietnamese politicians simply meant that President Ngo Dinh Diem was murdering or jailing everyone who disagreed with him. The free election which Walter Robertson speaks of [for members of the National Assembly] was a total fraud. . . .

Lederer's findings were later supported by official dissembling in 1959, ". . . when the countryside was slipping rapidly away from the control of the Vietnamese government."[19] Major General Samuel Myers, deputy chief of MAAG, ingeniously reported that summer that ". . . the Viet Minh guerrillas . . . were gradually nibbled away until they ceased to become a major menace to the government." In July, Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow told a Senate committee: ". . . The [Vietnam] government is becoming more and more effective in curbing these terrorist acts . . . [and] the internal situation has been brought from chaos to basic stability."[20] Wesley Fishel, who headed the Michigan State University-CIA mission to Saigon, wrote in the autumn issue of *Yale Review* for 1959:

. . . On October 26, 1959, South Vietnam will celebrate its fourth anniversary of the Republic of Vietnam. The anticipated elections of 1956 have never been held, and the Communist capability in Vietnam, south of the 17th parallel, has been reduced to one of sheer nuisance activity. . . . It is one Asian area where Communism has been rolled back without war. . . . There is little likelihood of a revolution against the regime. . . .

Other important voices echoed these sentiments, including those of Admiral Arthur Radford and Admiral Felix Stump, who agreed that ". . . President Ngo Dinh Diem was the most brilliant and successful Asian leader of democracy since Chiang Kai-shek."[21]

These incredibly inaccurate statements played directly into Diem's hands. The optimism of American Pollyannas created an ideal blackmail situation ably exploited by experienced mandarins who surrounded Diem. American policy makers had been told for so long that Diem was the only man who could prevent Vietnam from falling to Communists that they believed it, and they did not stop to examine sources:

19. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra;* William Lederer, *Our Own Worst Enemy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968).

20. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.* Ambassador Durbrow nonetheless indirectly supported the 1960 coup in that he failed to warn Diem—another example of officials telling the American public one thing while officially reporting another.

21. Lederer, op. cit.

frightened politicians, officials who had staked careers on the Diem regime, militarists who wanted to expand the armed forces, even an American public-relations agency hired by the Diem government to perpetuate the myth of his indispensability throughout the United States!

Ignorance existed in other areas, the MAAG mission typifying one. In 1960, MAAG advisers were only beginning to comprehend Viet Minh techniques, and then only in part. Civil-aid officials erred just as badly by continuing to back expensive projects either without realizing, or realizing but refusing to admit, that success of such projects hinged almost totally on political and social reforms that the Diem government refused to make.

Efforts to inform the American public of burgeoning disaster did not prosper, and for several reasons. At first, the relatively low-priority area from the news standpoint attracted but few reporters. Later, when French defeat and withdrawal brought more-extensive coverage, newcomers were impeded both by ignorance of the area and by suspicious and unco-operative American and Vietnamese officials.

Official hostility was not new. It had begun shortly after World War II, when French officials became incensed at factual reporting. News suppression is invariably one of the first devices chosen by a government operating from fear. The French continued to suppress news until their withdrawal. The Diem government picked up the ugly habit, and such were the emotional issues, and such the personal stakes, that a good many American officials subverted all that is brilliant in the American heritage and, from desks carrying the great seal of the United States Government and backed by the American flag, took refuge in lies that they wished reported to American taxpayers.

Personal and official hindrances sometimes prevented accurate reporting, as did confused issues and failure to identify the type of war being fought. This naturally contributed to American public apathy, but we must remember that, from the news standpoint, Vietnam continued to be a relatively low-priority area—it was difficult for the American public to identify with strange-sounding names in a country of which many had never previously heard and did not even know the exact location.

In 1960 and later, it was far easier to accept official pronouncements than to seek out issues and decide for oneself. In this sense, the Vietnam lobby in Washington had things largely its own way. Large blocs of the American public, if thinking about Vietnam at all, believed that, if South Vietnam fell to the "Communists," all of Southeast Asia would be overrun and Red hordes would shortly appear off the California coast. Preventing this, so they were told time and again, was the Christian savior, Ngo Dinh Diem; therefore the American Government had no option but to support the Diem regime.

This was the general picture when John F. Kennedy became President

of the United States. His relatively brief administration would soon suffer the Vietnam problem and would greatly change its dimensions. At this juncture, however, we must interrupt the Vietnam story to look at contemporary insurgencies in Kenya, Cyprus, Algeria, and Cuba.

Chapter 67

The Mau Mau rebellion • Historical background • British colonization • Early native political movements • Rise of the KCA • Enter Jomo Kenyatta • Early Mau Mau activities • Government suppression • Mau Mau appeal • Organization and strength of Mau Mau • Kenyatta's arrest • The emergency begins

WHILE FIGHTING CONTINUED in French Indochina and Malaya, a new insurgency broke out in Kenya, the large British colony in East Africa (see map, p. 864). Unlike the other areas, communism did not fuel this boiling pot of trouble, which soon became known as the Mau Mau rebellion. Although the Kenyan political leader Jomo Kenyatta had fallen under Marxist influence during his long period of self-imposed exile in England, the instrument of rebellion that he fashioned in Nairobi after World War II bore but slight resemblance to other Communist-inspired and -directed guerrilla movements. For here the mantle of Marx soon slipped away to expose a primitive body of rebellion that fed on a weird admixture of religious-tribal cultism while performing violent deeds particularly abhorrent to the Western world.[1]

1. Colonial Office (F. D. Corfield), *Historical Survey of the Origin and Growth of Mau Mau* (London: HMSO, 1960) (Command Paper 1030). Hereafter cited as Corfield: The author suggests that Kenyatta learned Soviet Communist agitprop and organizational techniques on short visits to the Soviet Union, first in

Most readers will probably associate the Mau Mau rebellion with Robert Ruark's best-selling novel *Something of Value,*[2] which stressed Mau Mau excesses. The historian cannot justify these, but he can explain them, just as he can explain moral aberrations among more-civilized races, for instance the wholesale slaughter of two world wars, and Nazi Germany's performance with the Jews. In the case of the Mau Mau, the explanation begins in the nineteenth century and might be called the story of an insurgency that need never have happened.

Dozens of tribes had occupied eastern Africa over the centuries. These pastoral bodies migrated to lush plains, and when they had killed the game and their cattle and goats had eaten the tender grass, they moved to greener pastures. Some fell prey to other, more warlike tribes, some to natural disasters and epidemics. Some tribes survived and even prospered; some disappeared.

The Bantu-speaking Agikuyu, or Gikuyu tribe, which we know as the Kikuyu, is probably seven or eight hundred years old. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, a population increase caused the tribe to advance into the Kiambu district and north to fertile plains of Nyeri and Mount Kenya. Here the Kikuyu settled to farm the land while protecting it from incursions of the warlike Masai, which, in the nineteenth century, stressed a warrior cult and terrorized such neighboring tribes as the Bantu, Taveta, and Kikuyu.[3]

Whether the tribal complex ever would have amalgamated into a peaceful state, we don't know. But anthropologists long since have exploded the popular conception of savage hordes living in an anarchic

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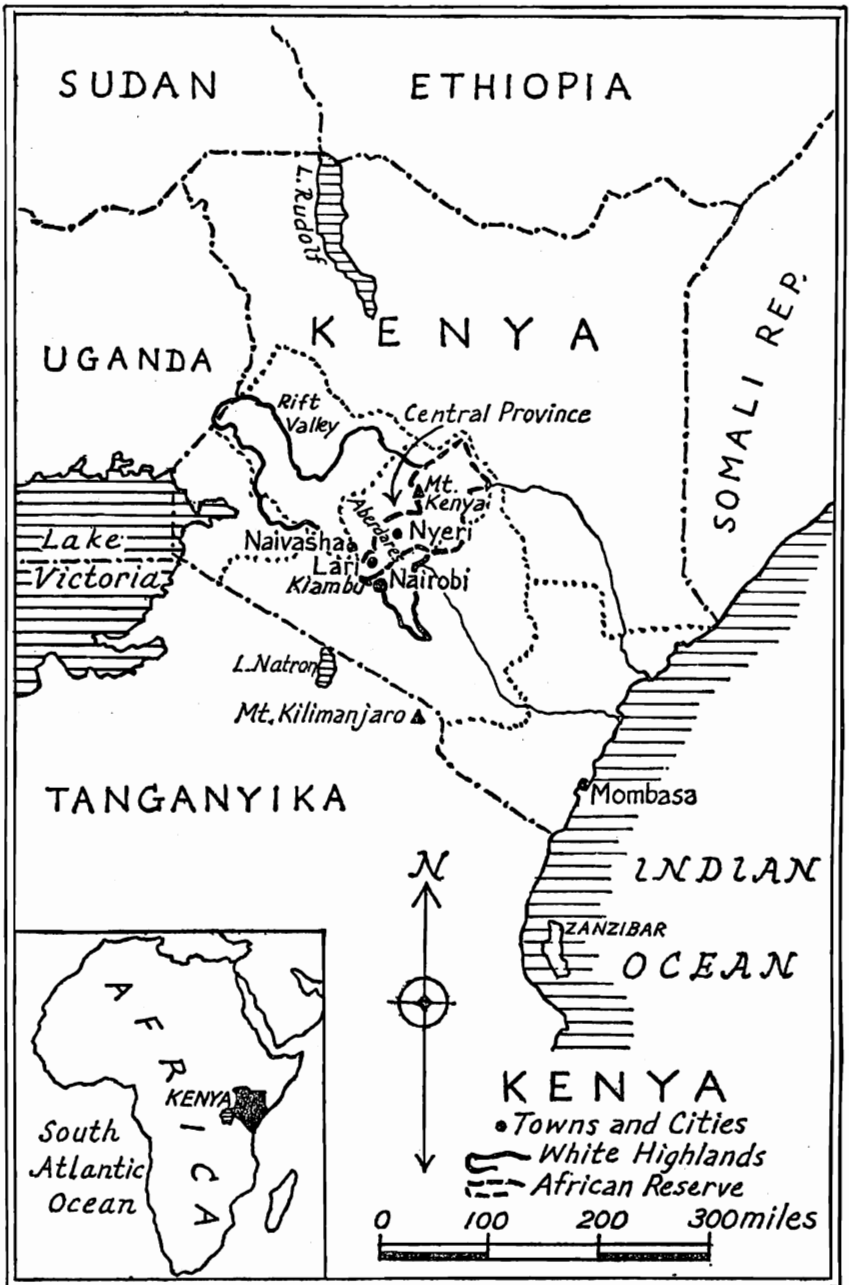
1929–30 and later in 1933, when he attended the Lenin School. This suggestion appears impractical to me in view of Kenyatta's brief stay in the U.S.S.R. and the hiatus of thirteen years between techniques learned and techniques practiced. More logically, Corfield points to the lack of Communist bias in Mau Mau leadership and also that a Communist Party did not exist in Kenya: ". . . It can accordingly be concluded that Mau Mau had virtually no connection with Communism, but was developed by Kenyatta as an atavistic tribal rising aimed against Western civilization and technology and in particular against Government and the Europeans as symbols of progress"; see also L. S. B. Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (London: Methuen, 1952); L. S. B. Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau* (London: Methuen, 1954): Dr. Leakey awards the movement more of a religious-nationalist bias; Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within —Autobiography and Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966): ". . . My own investigation of Mau Mau ideology," Dr. Barnett wrote, "viewed as the unifying set of aims, interests and beliefs of the Movement, has shown it to be a rather complex phenomenon containing at least four major aspects or components; namely secular, moral-religious, African national and Kikuyu tribal."

2. Robert Ruark, *Something of Value* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955).

3. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra;* see also Roland Oliver, and Gervase Mathew (eds.), *History of East Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), Vol. 1; Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya—The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938).


SUDAN
ETHIOPIA
L. Rudolf
KENYA
UGANDA
SOMALI REP.
Rift Valley
Central Province
Mt. Kenya
Aberdares
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Naivasha
Lari
Klambu
Nairobi
Lake Victoria
L. Natron
Mt. Kilimanjaro
TANGANYIKA
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ZANZIBAR
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AFRICA
KENYA
South Atlantic Ocean
KENYA
Towns and Cities
White Highlands
African Reserve
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state. We know that a *modus vivendi* often existed between tribes, and we also know that some tribes possessed a viable political structure as well as moral codes that, in result, often compared favorably with the Christian ethic—belief realized through feathers and blood instead of bread and wine, but belief just as firm and perhaps more so than that in the West.[4]

We also have a good deal of firsthand information about the Kikuyu from Jomo Kenyatta's early book *Facing Mount Kenya.* Those inclined to shrug away his words as obviously prejudiced will find much of what he wrote confirmed by independent scholarship and particularly by the works of Dr. L. S. B. Leakey. A son of missionaries, Leakey grew up among the Kikuyu, where he mastered the difficult language, became a member of a tribal age-group and later a first-grade elder of the tribe. He also became a distinguished archaeologist and historian. His books on Kenya and the Kikuyu should be read in order to understand the underlying grievances that allowed the insurgency to form and caused so many Africans to support it.[5]

The Kikuyu worshiped a god, angry old Murungu, or Ngai—". . . supreme, almighty, unseen but all pervading, having four 'homes' in the four sacred mountains of the Kikuyu."[6] Ngai forever required propitiating by animal sacrifice and a mumbo-jumbo that meant nothing to the Westerner but a great deal to the African. The Kikuyu also practiced ancestor worship and a form of animism in which they recognized spirits in trees, large rocks, waterfalls, and epidemic diseases. Ceremony played a vital role in their religion. So did the related all-important oath, which, varying from the supreme, or *githathi,* oathing ceremony to less severe forms, governed tribal society, economics, marriage, even tribal health. White magic was the province of the *mundu mugo,* or "medicine man," who functioned as doctor, seer, and protector against black-magic practitioners:

> . . . It was this absolute fear of magic powers that was the foundation stone of all Kikuyu ceremonies of oath taking, and in consequence the taking of a solemn oath was an act never lightly undertaken, and once sworn, its effect upon the taker was very great.[7]

Animal sacrifice normally accompanied oath taking—". . . in the course of the life of an individual Kikuyu there were no less than 108 occasions

4. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra.*

5. Ibid. and Leakey (*Defeating Mau Mau*), *supra;* see also the following three works by Leakey: "Colonial Administration from the Native Point of View." In *Comparative Methods of Colonial Administration* (London: Chatham House, 1930); *Kenya—Contrasts and Problems* (London: Methuen, 1936); *White Africa* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937); Barnett and Njama, op. cit.; Corfield, op. cit.; Fred Majdalaney, *State of Emergency—The Full Story of Mau Mau* (London: Longmans, Green, 1962).

6. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra;* see also Kenyatta, op. cit.

7. Ibid.

from birth to death which required the slaughter and sacrifice of a goat or a sheep." But ". . . the Kikuyu were a deeply religious people for whom life without religion was unthinkable."[8]

The Kikuyu governed themselves by regional, or "ridge," councils of elders—the *athamaki,* whose spokesmen and members had trained for the role since adolescent initiation into an age-group followed by specific *rites de passage,* each of which increased importance and responsibilities. Farming and animal husbandry were the main occupations. People lived in villages fortified for protection against Masai raids. Individuals owned farms and even estates worked by tenants. A strict moral code governed buying and selling of land. Tribal law preserved certain forest areas for purposes of hunting and beekeeping and also for fuel reserves. Early Western explorers, toward the end of the nineteenth century, were in general impressed with Kikuyu territory, which, according to one, ". . . as far as the eye could see . . . was one vast garden."[9]

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, manifold disaster struck the Kikuyu and other eastern African tribes. A smallpox epidemic tore through the land to decimate humans, as a rinderpest epidemic decimated cattle. Severe drought and a locust invasion followed. Leakey has estimated that the combined tragedy took from 20 to 50 per cent of the tribe. It also caused families to evacuate lands in the Kiambu country, where farms reverted to bush country.

As if this weren't sufficient, the Kikuyu now faced invasion from the West. Toward the end of the century, Germany and Great Britain carved out respective spheres of commercial influence in eastern Africa through the co-operation of the sultan of Zanzibar. In 1890, the British East Africa Company began moving inland, an effort soon taken over by the British Government, which established a protectorate over Kenya and, at the turn of the century, built a railroad from Mombasa to Uganda, nearly six hundred miles into the interior. To help justify this expensive project, the British began colonizing south-central Kenya, the supply railhead being the village of Nairobi. In this area, the government acquired sixteen thousand square miles of prime land, the White Highlands, for distribution to settlers.[10]

The colonizing task fell to two men: to the high commissioner, Sir Charles Eliot, a thirty-seven-year-old scholar and diplomat, and to an eccentric, adventure-loving nobleman, Lord Delamere. Considering natural hazards and costly discouragements involved in establishing and building farms, both men rate high from the technical standpoint.

The white man also brought numerous benefits to Africans. Tribal wars, in general, vanished. European doctors and veterinarians began

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.; see also Marie de Kiewiet Hemphill, "The British Sphere 1884–94." In Oliver and Mathew, *supra;* Barnett and Njama, op. cit.

to eliminate dreadful epidemic diseases that had wiped out tribes and herds of cattle since time immemorial; Western methods and medicines brought general improvement in health and a lowering of the high infant-mortality rate. European farming methods brought bigger and better crops. European and Asian merchants filled market places with new and exciting wares. Missionaries, mostly Scottish preachers, established schools and spread the Christian gospel, which held considerable appeal to illiterate natives. Had the white man respected the native's identity, his traditions and beliefs, his dignity and natural ambition, he might still be in control of a prosperous Kenya.

Unfortunately, he did no such thing. Exercising an arrogance of ignorance that would persist in subsequent decades, he interpreted the situation as it fitted his convenience. In Leakey's words,

> . . . this simple and yet highly effective organized system of decentralized control of religious, judicial, and secular affairs was not in the least understood by the British when they came to the country. The administrators believed that throughout Africa there was a system of "chiefs" and subchiefs and they believed wrongly that the spokesman of the senior ridge councils was the "chief" of that ridge. If he met with approval he was retained as "chief" whereas he had never before been a chief in our sense, and if he did not suit the British he was replaced by a "chief" chosen and appointed by the administration. Thus there was instituted a system wholly foreign to Kikuyu custom and tradition.[11]

The European also erred, perhaps intentionally, in land acquisition. Government officials assumed that large areas of "empty" land in the Kiambu district were for the taking. This was not always the case. As we have seen, calamity had forced widespread evacuation of Kiambu lands legitimately owned by individual Africans. In his mind, the African had not relinquished title, nor had the tribe yielded valuable forest reserves. Bushland that officials assumed was not being used was in reality serving as grazing land for the all-important cattle and goats. Governmental payments for land sold to white settlers (". . . a halfpenny an acre plus survey fees")[12] meant one thing to the government, another to the native, who regarded the deal as temporary since sale or transfer of privately owned land involved a host of tribal-religious rites essential to freeing it from evil spirits:

> . . . so from the Kikuyu point of view none of the rights acquired in Kikuyu lands by the white settlers were considered as vesting ownership in the newcomers, while from the point of view of British law, and the country was now administered by the British, the transactions were wholly valid and had been made in absolute good faith.[13]

11. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra.*
12. R. Meinertzhagen, *Kenya During 1902–1906* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1957).
13. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra.*

Here was the genesis of the later Kikuyu complaint that the land was stolen by the whites—a grievance fundamental to the rebellion, a grievance that arose from British arrogance of ignorance.

The white man's attitude, in general, was uncompromising. Our old friend Captain Richard Meinertzhagen (see Chapter 19, Volume I) was sent to Kenya as a young officer. In 1902, he met Eliot, whom he found capable but scarcely attractive:

. . . He is out of touch and harmony with the world in general. His pet hobby is the study of hudibranchs or sea slugs. Never did a man more closely resemble the objects of his hobby. He is invertebrate, with an icy cold nature, unsympathetic, but a scholar of the first rank.[14]

Their meeting upset the young subaltern. Eliot

. . . amazed me with his views on the future of East Africa. He envisaged a thriving colony of thousands of Europeans. . . . He intends to confine the natives to reserves and use them as cheap labor on farms. I suggested that the country belonged to Africans, that their interests must prevail over the interests of strangers. He would not have it; he kept on using the word "paramount" with reference to the claims of Europeans. I said that some day the African would be educated and armed; that would lead to a clash. Eliot thought that that day was so far distant as not to matter . . . but I am convinced that in the end the Africans will win and that Eliot's policy can lead only to trouble and disappointment.

A few months later, Meinertzhagen met Lord Delamere:

. . . He is an enthusiast about the future of East Africa and remarked: "I am going to prove to you all that this is a white man's country." "But," I humbly said, "it is a black man's country; how are you going to superimpose the white over black?" Delamere is a quick-tempered man; he said, rather impatiently, "The black man will benefit and co-operate."[15]

Eliot, Delamere, and most of their subordinates exemplified the concept of the Christian white man's burden. Under their aegis, an entire colony was developing to further this notion. In essence, the Africans existed for the white man's convenience (profit). In essence, the black was not a human being, and few white men in Kenya would have agreed with Meinertzhagen, who noted, upon his departure in 1904:

. . . I am sorry to leave the Kikuyu, for I like them. They are the most intelligent of the African tribes I have met; therefore they will be the most progressive under European guidance and will be more susceptible to subversive activities. They will be one of the first tribes to demand freedom from European influence and in the end cause a lot of trouble. And if white

14. Meinertzhagen, op. cit.
15. Ibid.

settlement really takes hold in this country it is bound to do so at the expense of the Kikuyu, who own the best land, and I can foresee much trouble.[16]

As presciently foreseen by Meinertzhagen, Eliot's policy led precisely to trouble, disappointment—and finally rebellion. Under Eliot's administration, the white man not only took land that was not his, but compelled the African to work this land under an arrangement close to slavery. He kept natives in large reserves and denied them identity to other than themselves and their employers. Although Eliot left Kenya in 1904, his legacy continued to rule: In 1915, for example, the Crown Lands Ordinance made all Africans "tenants at the will of the Crown," the government refusing to issue them land title deeds.[17]

The African's service in two world wars, his stumbling attempts, beginning in 1920, to gain a political voice, his efforts to educate himself (encouraged finally by the government, deprecated by white Kenyans), did not alter his status. Those blacks who demanded the return of "stolen lands" might as well have saved their breath; those who demanded a place in government were marked as agitators and carefully watched. Although the British Government made Kenya a colony after World War I and, in 1923, announced that it would respect African rights by a "trusteeship," matters changed but slightly.[18]

Education continued in the hands of Scottish missionaries, who too often taught form but not substance of Christianity. In their eagerness to learn to read and write at mission schools, many young Kikuyu embraced Christianity but

> . . . did not accept the Christian doctrine or have any intention of really trying to live up to Christian standards of morality, honesty, and codes of behavior. At the same time, many of these young men—and as time went on young women too—learned enough to make them cease to have real faith in their own Kikuyu religious beliefs and practices, so that a body of people sprang into being who had abandoned one faith without accepting another in its place and who were thus without any real guiding principles in their lives.[19]

Secular education was limited in the extreme, the government failing to live up to its responsibilities by providing needed teachers and schools. The few educated blacks could not find jobs commensurate with ability. They were accepted neither into government nor into white society.

16. Ibid.: Meinertzhagen also disapproved of colonial administration. In 1904, he noted in his journal " . . . the low class of man who is appointed. . . . Few of them have had any education, and many of them do not pretend to be members of the educated class. One can neither read nor write. This is not surprising when one realizes that no examination is required to enter the local Civil Service."

17. Barnett and Njama, op. cit.

18. Ibid.; see also Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra;* Corfield, op. cit.; Majdalaney, op. cit.

19. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra.*

The white man, long before, had closed the door to the evolutionary notion, and he was not now going to open it.

The black political movement in Kenya began in 1921, with the Young Kikuyu Association, which a few years later became the Kikuyu Central Association, or KCA. In the twenties and thirties this organization exploited the old grievance of "stolen lands," a sore point which survived even though a Royal Commission in 1932 investigated and awarded "appropriate" compensation. It also exploited new grievances such as the hated *kipande,* or compulsory black worker registration; low wages; a law that prohibited Africans from raising coffee; lack of African representation in the colonial legislature; and the color bar.

The KCA movement did not prosper. White settlers disrupted it whenever possible; older tribal chiefs, appointed by the new government and relatively well off, did not trust young Kikuyu leaders.

But neither did the movement die. Failure of the colonial administration to provide proper education, coupled with the Church of Scotland's insistence on banning such tribal rites as *irua,* or female circumcision, and festival dances, turned the Kikuyu to providing their own schools and religion, which soon became the main instruments of propaganda to serve the KCA's militant identity.[20]

World War II also played a role. The government declared the KCA illegal, which brought its leaders increased prominence among tribesmen. The war transported numerous Africans abroad, in some ways a broadening and awakening experience that made them more receptive to KCA propaganda when they returned. In their absence, Kenya had enjoyed considerable prosperity, and postwar years seemed to promise more. From a social-political-economic standpoint, however, the returning black veteran found but slight improvement. Although the government established a number of industrial training schools, openings for subsequent employment "were very limited." F. D. Corfield, in an official report published in 1960, noted:

> . . . over and above these economic grievances there was a deeper sense of resentment, caused by the various forms of discrimination which were considered by the Kikuyu to be a barrier to his economic, political and social aspirations—the restriction on the planting of cash crops, such as coffee; the fact that Africans were not permitted to acquire land in the White Highlands; the different wage scales which applied to Europeans, Asians and Africans by the Government; the restrictive covenants which applied to housing in European areas, some municipalities, and the opposition to entry into some of the larger hotels.[21]

20. Ibid.; see also Kenyatta, op. cit., who explains the importance of female circumcision to tribal tradition and mores.

21. Corfield, op. cit.; see also Barnett and Njama, op. cit., who offer interesting comparisons between wages received by Africans, Asians, and whites.

To the returning veteran, the colony seemed as devoid of opportunity for the black man as formerly. But now the black man was finding his voice, and now appeared a formidable leader, Jomo Kenyatta, who, to many, resembled a latter-day Moses intent on leading his people from the wilderness.

Jomo Kenyatta was born on a tribal reserve outside Nairobi around 1893. Educated in a Church of Scotland mission school, he worked as a clerk in Nairobi, edited a newspaper, and, in 1925, joined the KCA, becoming secretary-general in 1928. A year later, the association sent him to London to present a list of grievances to the Colonial Office. Staying on, he joined the Communist Party and toured England and the Soviet Union; after a brief stay in Kenya, he returned to England, where he obtained a degree in anthropology at the London School of Economics, his thesis being published as a book, *Facing Mount Kenya.*[22] He also married an English woman, who bore him a son but remained in England when he returned to Kenya, in 1946.[23]

The first phase of what came to be called the Emergency began shortly after Kenyatta's return to Nairobi. Here he reorganized remnants of the illegal KCA into a militant party that operated under cover of the Kenya African Union, Kenyatta becoming its president in 1947. Inflammatory speeches now became the order of the day, as did ugly rumors of special oathing ceremonies along with talk of killing all Europeans. District officers began to report sinister activities of a new organization, the Mau Mau, in 1948, and missionaries, tribal chiefs, police, and civil officials began to confirm the reports.[24]

Neither governor nor government seemed unduly alarmed. In 1950, the government recognized the Mau Mau as ". . . an evil and subversive association" and brought a gang to court; found guilty, the nineteen Africans won an appeal on a slim technicality. Although this led to proscription of the Mau Mau and to more prosecutions, the government did not take further remedial action.[25]

Considerable blame must rest on the governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, who felt he knew more about Africans than some of his better-informed subordinates. If ever a man believed in the Christian white man's burden, it was Mitchell. An old Africa hand, he held that natural inferiority of Africans explained their dismal circumstances. An imperialist to the core, he saw England as the Trustee, whose major aim is

> . . . now, as it has always been, to create conditions in which his wards can advance in civilization, knowledge and capacity, with all the help he can give, to the furthest point they can reach. But that cannot be done with-

22. *Supra.*
23. Majdalaney, op. cit.
24. Corfield, op. cit.
25. Ibid.

out effecting a radical transformation of the subsistence society in which the masses are still enmeshed, with its poverty, sorcery, superstition and ignorance, and all the other conditions which combine to chain the African to his dark and terror-ridden past.

Although he wanted certain reforms, African independence was not to be thought of. If England succeeded in its trust,

. . . there will be created here in East and Central Africa a Christian civilization, tolerant of course of other faiths, with "equal rights for all civilized men" as its major political principle.

Qualified Africans could play a part in the process:

. . . If these politically mature groups are willing to accept and to collaborate without reserve in the central policy of the Trustee, then they have a right to be associated closely—indeed, I would say to be entrusted—with the execution of it and the works will benefit greatly by their participation. But if they, or any one of them, reject that policy, then they are in effect taking a position in opposition to high policy and cannot expect to be accorded anything more than the representation reasonable for a minority.

The Trustee policy, ". . . administered by a strong and enlightened colonial power," was Kenya's only hope for the future.[26]

Poor old Mitchell. As he was writing these words, the rebellion had broken out to shatter his imperialist dreams. Whether he could have salvaged the situation by instituting needed reforms during his tenure (1944–52), admittedly a difficult task in view of white opposition, we shall never know. His reforms, at best, would have been mild, as witness excerpts from one of his dispatches relating to exclusive white ownership of the White Highlands:

. . . the land must, on no account, be simply thrown open for congestion and destruction by ignorant peasants following their ancestral agricultural practices and tenure.
. . . It is the general experience of mankind that a tolerably high standard of living in any community cannot rest solely upon peasant farming by primitive methods. . . .[27]

Mitchell did not dwell on the British Government's responsibility in changing these methods or improving the "peasant's" lot. He otherwise refused to act with vigor. Perhaps colonial bureaucracy was the real villain, as he suggests in his book, but it is difficult to deny that the function of a governor is to govern. Despite significant theft of arms and ammunition from government depots, security remained lax. Mitchell apparently did not reinforce the police function significantly, the main instrument for intelligence collection and collation. The police section

26. Philip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts* (London: Hutchinson, 1954).
27. Corfield, op. cit.

responsible, a small and impoverished Special Branch, operated mainly in Nairobi and Mombasa, which severely limited its activities. Command channels remained muddled: Corfield concluded that most of the intelligence reports forwarded in the "formative" years ". . . just 'disappeared' into the Central Secretariat." As one result, the government lacked clear definition of the Mau Mau, of its origin, organization, methods, and goals; as another result, it failed to impede the spread of Mau Mau propaganda and recruitment.[28]

Official ignorance was startling. The anthropologist Dr. Donald Barnett has suggested that Mau Mau itself is a meaningless term that may have been corrupted by a European policeman from the word *muma,* or oath, or may have derived from a derogatory term for venal tribal elders. Africans did not use the term, any more than the Viet Minh in Indochina used the term Viet Cong. What some Africans called "The Movement" was in reality the work of the KCA, which was far more extensively organized than local authorities imagined.[29]

Beginning in 1950, the KCA ". . . underwent a dramatic shift . . . from a highly selective, elite organization to an underground mass movement."[30] From headquarters in Nairobi, organizers traveled the land recruiting new members and setting up cells and units. A ceremonial oath had been essential to membership for years, but the new underground movement ". . . demanded strict secrecy as well as total commitment and the oath was altered to meet these requirements."[31] Persons who would not voluntarily submit to the oath were forced to submit whenever possible, an unseemly business conducted at night with black-magic overtones.

The program worked for several reasons. The first and, according to Dr. Leakey, the foremost was legitimate grievances, which made Africans receptive to KCA "land and freedom" propaganda. The land grievance topped the list. In 1951, Mr. Eliud Mathu, member of the Legislative Council in Nairobi, told a meeting of Africans:

> . . . It is on the land that the African lives and it means everything to him. The African cannot depend for his livelihood on profits made through trading. We cannot depend on wages. We must go back every time to the only social security we have—the piece of land. The land stolen must be restored, because without land the future of the African people is doomed. God will hear us because that is the thing he gave us.[32]

Another was the government's educational failure, both religious and secular: the one creating a group of confused Christians, the other maintaining a high level of ignorance and illiteracy. A third was the adminis-

28. Ibid.
29. Barnett and Njama, op. cit.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Corfield, op. cit.

trative system of government-appointed "chiefs," who often lacked popular following. Another was the peculiar psychology of the oath. In Dr. Leakey's words,

> . . . We have already seen that a Kikuyu who takes a solemn oath is punished by supernatural powers if he breaks that oath, or if he has perjured himself. One of the phrases used in the Mau Mau oath ceremony is to the effect that "if I do anything to give away this organization to the enemy, may I be killed by the oath"! Having once made such an oath, even under pressure, no ordinary Kikuyu would dare to go and make a report to the police or to his employer, because, were he to do so, he would be breaking the oath and thus calling down upon himself, or upon members of his family, supernatural penalties.[33]

His only recourse was a "cleansing ceremony" to nullify the force of the oath, but

> . . . participation in such a ceremony could not be kept quiet for long, since, to be effective, it must be carried out in public and before many witnesses. The Mau Mau people made it very clear to their victims that if they tried to get out of their obligations under the oath by such means, they would be victimized and even, if necessary, murdered.[34]

Some loyal Christian Kikuyu reported Mau Mau activities, and other Kikuyu, ". . . many of whom were afraid and shocked," refused to join the movement. The KCA approach nevertheless contained an inherent appeal, and the government continued to underestimate the movement's growth (an estimated quarter of a million by mid 1952).[35] A Central Committee, in Nairobi, ran the movment by means of seven district committees, each supporting division, location, and sublocation committees.[36]

Although only a fraction of the Mau Mau were armed—Corfield estimates that, in 1952, the movement possessed between four hundred and eight hundred modern weapons, stolen from government arsenals —Mau Mau leaders grew increasingly bold. Early in 1952, terrorist gangs started burning huts of African officials and fields of some white farmers. The Mau Mau oath also continued to change and, by spring, included an ominous promise to kill on order.[37]

33. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra.*
34. Ibid.
35. Corfield, op. cit.
36. Barnett and Njama, op. cit., explain the organization in detail.
37. Leakey (*Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*), *supra:* Both the First Oath, or Unity Oath, and the Second Oath, or Warrior Oath, derived from the traditional Kikuyu *githathi* oath but involved considerable black magic along with bestial practices that intentionally violated tribal taboos in order to separate further the militants from the tribe to create a class apart—not unlike the anti-Christian movement in England that employed the revolting Black Mass; see also Corfield, op. cit., who suggests that the *batuni,* or Warrior Oath, began being administered as early

In June the governor retired, and the interregnum proved no more energetic in coping with the deteriorating situation. Government itself was badly split. In July the commissioner of police told the government:

> . . . If it is accepted that a general revolt among the Kikuyu people is being carried into effect, and I have no doubt that this is the case, the situation calls for immediate action, and action which must go far beyond that which lies in the hands of the police.[38]

But in August, in response to demands of a legislative group for action, the acting governor stated: ". . . I categorically deny that there is a state of emergency."[39]

Despite Jomo Kenyatta's alleged denunciation of the Mau Mau, reports of large-scale oathing ceremonies continued to reach Government House. In September, police reported the murder of fourteen Africans by Mau Mau gangs, who also burned some white farms and killed or mutilated several hundred cattle and sheep. At the end of the month, the new governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, arrived and inspected disturbed areas. While Baring was so engaged, the Mau Mau brazenly murdered a Kikuyu senior chief in daylight a few miles from Nairobi. Baring notified his government: ". . . It is now abundantly clear that we are facing a planned revolutionary movement. If the movement cannot be stopped, there will be an administrative break-down, followed by bloodshed amounting to civil war. . . ."[40] Whitehall authorized him to declare a state of emergency.

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as 1948. By 1953, all Mau Mau terrorists were taking it—in the forest, it was called the *githaka;* see also Barnett, and Njama, op. cit., who write most interestingly on the subject and suggest that the Warrior Oath is a logical extension of the *githathi* oath: ". . . the sexual acts or symbols performed or invoked while swearing an oath were calculated violations of acknowledged taboos designed, in both traditional and modern usage, to revolt and inspire awe and fear in the initiates or accused. Second, that according to Kikuyu belief, the more vile or repulsive were the acts performed while swearing an oath—i.e., the more highly tabooed such acts would be in everyday life—the stronger and more binding did such an oath become. Third, that Karari [a terrorist] and others should have found the Second Oath both 'horrible' and 'typically Kikuyu' was, in light of the above, both a normal and highly predictable response"; to this writer, the Warrior Oath described by Karari would be no more perverted in Kikuyu minds than certain fraternal initiation rites experienced by many readers would be in American minds. The oath, at this stage, also brings to mind the *Blutbrüderschaft* indulged by members of the Luftwaffe in World War II, which was a logical if somewhat perverted extension of the commissioned officer's oath. But the oath early described by Karari is a far cry from later forest oaths, which involved violent sexual orgies and the drinking of ghastly concoctions, and which seem to this writer to have been indulged by illiterate and semihysterical commanders trying desperately to hold together a fragmenting organization.

38. Majdalaney, op. cit.
39. Ibid.
40. Corfield, op. cit.

On the night of October 20, a British battalion arrived by air from Egypt and a British cruiser sailed into Mombasa. Early the next morning, police arrested Kenyatta and 182 followers. A short time later, Baring broadcast a state of emergency and included a plea that emphasized the poverty of the administration he had inherited:

> . . . Kenya has before it a bright future with a good prospect of a rising standard of living for people of all races, provided that there is peace and order. In peaceful conditions plans were being made for economic development and particularly for help to the poorer inhabitants of this country. There was, for example, good hopes of accelerating the pace of the construction of houses for Africans, of expanding African education, and of improving the positions of Africans in the Civil Service. All these things will be impossible of realization if conditions of disorder continue. . . .[41]

The words came seven years too late.

41. Ibid.

Chapter 68

Mau Mau terrorism • The government's response • British security forces • The tactical problem • British military tactics • Mau Mau mistakes • General Erskine's military solution • Forest guerrillas • Final operations • The tally

IF SIR EVELYN BARING, Kenya's new governor, hoped to disrupt the Mau Mau rebellion by forceful action, he was disappointed. Government had waited too long. Two weeks after the declaration of emergency in October 1952, a Mau Mau gang killed a white farmer and two of his African servants. Ugly incidents continued against Europeans and Africans alike. In late November, a Mau Mau gang killed a white retired naval commander and badly cut up his wife; four days later, terrorists in Nairobi murdered a leading African politician, a moderate. Although official reports noted "increasing lawlessness," the government apparently did not respect the implications of these murders: Arrests of Kenyatta and other Mau Mau leaders had not broken the insurgency.

Lacking positive identification of the organization and of its strength and objectives, the government adopted a defensive strategy, farming out its limited number of troops to support local police units. At the same time, it began to expand police forces; Baring also sent for an

intelligence expert, Sir Percy Sillitoe, to reorganize the all-important but theretofore neglected police intelligence service, Special Branch. Finally, government began to organize a Kikuyu Home Guard cored by Tribal Police to protect native villages against Mau Mau depredations.

These measures, valid enough, suffered from several disadvantages. The first was the theater of operations, which comprised, in addition to Nairobi,

> . . . the whole of the Central Province (which embraces the Kikuyu Reserve) and the three settler Districts of the adjoining Rift Valley Province [where some seventy thousand Kikuyu worked on European farms]: ten Districts in all, about 14,000 square miles or about one-sixteenth of the country.[1]

Two large areas of forests and mountains, the Aberdare Range of some six hundred square miles and the Mount Kenya area of about nine hundred square miles, provided natural sanctuary for Mau Mau guerrilla gangs. Since these forests bordered the African Reserve, they greatly eased the Mau Mau task of agitation and recruitment—much as jungle-based terrorists in Malaya gained sustenance from bordering Chinese villages.[2]

Extent and variety of terrain dictated difficult operations at best. But, at this time, security forces lacked a single commander to provide common plan and purpose. The official responsible for security operations, the Member for Law and Order, was also Attorney General, a latter-day Pooh-Bah who carried out his own orders, much as if the late Mr. J. Edgar Hoover had served simultaneously as Attorney General and chief of the FBI.

The major security instrument was the Kenya Police, a colonial force with mostly white officers. This group included a reserve force, soon mobilized. The Kenya Police Reserve, or KPR, consisted mostly of white settlers who wanted direct action and who were not inclined to respect legal niceties.

Still another security force existed: the Tribal Police, which was made up of Africans who operated under white District Officers and looked after security needs of the DOs and various chiefs and headmen. They were not, technically, police and had no official relationship with the Kenya Police (which helps to explain early intelligence failures).

Troops provided a further complication, in that most Europeans did not speak Swahili and were definitely not at home in a forest environ-

1. Majdalaney, op. cit.; see also P. M. Slane, "Tactical Problems in Kenya," *Army Quarterly,* October 1954.

2. Barnett and Njama, op. cit., offer details on composition and operation of forest gangs.

ment. Fred Majdalaney, in his excellent book *State of Emergency*, described the initial military problem:

. . . The degree of dispersion is indicated by one deployment of the British battalion which entailed a tour of 400 miles if the commanding officer visited each sub-unit of his three companies, and even a company commander traveled seventy miles on a tour of his three platoons. It was in the early stages a war of small sub-units operating very much on their own and improvising methods of cooperating with their police opposite numbers, with the nearest District Officer, with the settlers and police reservists (often the same man) in the European areas and with the chiefs and headmen in the Kikuyu locations. . . . Information was the crying need and when they were lucky enough to receive any that was accurate (a rare occurrence) they sometimes made a kill or a capture. It was a matter of following up reported acts of violence attributable to Mau Mau, and constant patrolling. It was a crime wave rather than a war.[3]

A political complication also existed. The arrest and deportation of Kenyatta and his lieutenants were neither as intelligent nor as effective as people believed at the time. If this action disrupted the movement's leadership, it also removed what might well have proved a restraining hand, and it removed a leader with whom the government in time might have been able to negotiate. In the event, lesser KCA members immediately took over the movement's leadership, and when these were arrested, still lesser members moved in. The ultimate result was a diluted thing called the Council of Freedom, which from Nairobi maintained liaison with district and locational committees. But, at some point, the Nairobi group, or "passive wing," lost control of terrorist gangs in Nairobi and in the forests, thus yielding to fanatical and ignorant leaders whose excesses horrified the civilized world and badly damaged the movement.[4]

Such was early support enjoyed by the movement, and such its organization, that Kenyatta's arrest did not seriously upset operations. Early in 1953, the Mau Mau opened a general offensive against Europeans and loyal Africans. Donald Barnett's and Karari Njama's excellent description of the period February–May 1953 may remind the reader of resistance days in France and other occupied countries in World War II:

. . . As the major patterns of resistance were being established within forest, town and countryside, this dual role was becoming fixed as a way of life for countless thousands of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peasants, particularly the women, children and men too old to bear arms. At night, or with great care and secrecy during the day, they attended meetings and oathing ceremonies, carried food and material to supply depots near the forest boundary,

3. Majdalaney, op. cit.
4. Corfield, op. cit.

provided refuge and lodging for active fighters or new recruits passing through the village, purchased or stole weapons, ammunition, medical supplies, etc., for the guerrilla units, and performed numerous other tasks in support of the "fight for land and freedom." During the daylight hours, however, these same peasants feigned loyalty to the white man's Government and tried, under steadily mounting pressure and hardships, to carry out the normal tasks and duties of their everyday lives. Many willingly endured this ever dangerous and harsh double-life, filled increasingly with fear, anxiety, suspicion, hunger and brutality, for one, two and, in some cases, even three years. Others, whose existence was no less dangerous or miserable, endeavoured in very pragmatic fashion to play both sides against the middle, seeking to accommodate Government with one hand and the revolutionary forces with the other in a frequently vain effort to safeguard their own lives, loved ones and property. For still others, like Karari [who had taken the Warrior Oath], there was no room in the middle; their situation required that they openly declare, in actions as well as words, either for or against the revolution. Karari, whose recollections reflect the ambivalence inherent in his position, decided to throw in his lot with the revolution, though this decision was ultimately made for him by the flow of events. Others faced with a similar decision, and especially those who had achieved an education equal or superior to Karari's lined up on the Government side.[5]

Terrorist raids on farms to gain food and cattle and terrorist assaults that involved murder or attempted murder generally occurred at night, usually with the co-operation, willing or unwilling, of African servants. Although, in the first two weeks of the new year, the Mau Mau killed two Europeans and thirty-five Africans, other European farmers, including women, successfully beat off attacks, as did units of the expanding Kikuyu Home Guard. The murders nonetheless drove settlers into frenzy and, as undoubtedly planned by the Mau Mau, brought severe repression on Africans in general.

Continued attacks caused the government to make the administering of the Mau Mau oath a capital offense. At this time, security forces

. . . concentrated on breaking or at least neutralizing the popular base of the revolt among the peasant masses in the Kikuyu Reserve. In addition to curfews, movement restrictions, new pass requirements, collective fines and punishment, "cleansing" and counter-Mau Mau oathing campaigns and severe methods of interrogation, Government launched a strong anti-Mau Mau propaganda campaign, raised personal taxes and introduced a "communal" or forced labor scheme whereby damaged roads and bridges could be repaired, guard and police posts erected and new agricultural schemes enforced without cost.[6]

5. Barnett and Njama, op. cit.
6. Ibid.

Drawing on lessons of Malaya, the government declared the Kikuyu Reserve a Special Area, ". . . wherein a person failing to halt when challenged could be shot";[7] the Aberdare and Mount Kenya forests became Prohibited Areas—anyone found in them could be shot on sight. The government cleared some European areas of Kikuyu labor; in other areas, African farm workers voluntarily returned to the Reserve. The government also organized three-man committees—civil, police and military—to run operations at district and province levels. Finally, Baring brought in a senior military adviser, Major General W. R. N. Hinde.

Once again, these measures seemed valid enough, but did not immediately produce desired results. The influx of natives to the Reserve proved particularly unfortunate, since they could not be readily absorbed, which meant that the Mau Mau exploited their subsequent discontent. Raids and attacks continued, culminating, at the end of March, in a two-pronged operation against the native village complex of Lari and the police post at Naivasha. The night attack at Lari, carried out in the most bestial fashion, took eighty-four native lives; terrorists mutilated another thirty-one natives and burned a large number of huts. The Naivasha attack killed one policeman and gained the Mau Mau eighteen automatic weapons and twenty-nine rifles; the attackers also released 173 prisoners.[8] According to Barnett's informant, Karari, ". . . the Naivasha raid marked the rising power of *Mau Mau* and was followed by a flow of thousands of young men entering the Aberdare and Mt. Kenya forests."[9]

Although attacks were reasonably well co-ordinated, they succeeded as much from government errors as from Mau Mau skill. In the long run, they proved a serious mistake, because they tipped the Mau Mau hand and caused a good many *attentiste* Kikuyu to turn to the government, providing information or joining the Home Guard. They also brought Kenya into world focus with sympathy automatically given to the victims, and thus weakened the Mau Mau hand. They inspired Hinde to work out the committee system of operations, to start arming the Kikuyu Guard, and to conscript from the colony's 150,000 Asians, a move theretofore opposed by the white community. Finally, they brought military reinforcement, a brigade, from England and caused the War Office to establish a separate military command for East Africa under General Sir George Erskine.

Erskine did not accept prevailing defensive strategy, but instead sought a military solution. Wanting to eliminate or at least diminish contact between forest gangs and supporters in the Reserve, he cleared a one-mile-wide strip along the hundred miles of forest Reserve, a new Prohibitive Area occupied by police posts that were to create a sort of

7. Ibid.
8. Majdalaney, op. cit.
9. Barnett and Njama, op. cit.

cordon sanitaire. Although lacking troops, he managed to form an infantry force to protect the Reserve until the Kikuyu Guard was strong enough for the task. At the same time, he set the RAF to bombing forest areas in hope of trying to keep pressure on the gangs.

Matters remained touch and go for some time. Quite a few Kikuyus in the Reserve sympathized with and aided Mau Mau gangs; loyal natives in general were terrorized into keeping silent. Mau Mau also infiltrated the Home Guard, though probably not to the extent later reported by Karari.[10] Erskine nonetheless managed to establish a viable Home Guard, which subsequently served courageously and well.

Erskine now commenced operations in the forest itself. To carry out the new mission, his troops at first tried massive sweep operations, "grouse drives," which generally failed to catch any quarry. By this time, various terrorist gangs had become at home in the forest. Karari later wrote that various wild animals

> . . . became accustomed to our presence and smell and, after a few months in the forest, they treated us as simply another form of animal life and we in turn learnt all their habits and calls. This proved extremely useful to us in detecting the presence or approach of strangers. Security forces entering the home of the animals smelling of soap, cigarettes and laundered clothing were greeted with many danger and warning signals or calls from the animals. . . .[11]

If an operation happened to blunder into a Mau Mau camp, or "hide," the Mau Mau quickly packed up and experienced little difficulty in snaking through "lines" of soldiers struggling awkwardly through heavy forest. Realizing, finally, that the soldiers themselves had to become at home in guerrilla environment, the high command ordered construction of roads leading some five or six miles into the forest. A troop unit moved to each terminal point, set up base, and fanned out patrols.

The forests held a vast number of surprises for troops. The two ranges, Aberdare and Mount Kenya, climbed steadily through belts of woods and bamboo split laterally into ridges and gulleys—cruel territory at best, but, with its strange sounds and hidden dangers, anathema to ordinary troops, no matter how well trained. The vast areas swallowed both Mau Mau gangs and troop units.[12] Erskine called for more and more troops. By late autumn of 1953, forest operations were claiming eleven infantry battalions supported by young officers from Kenya Regiment and by African trackers. A group of young Kenyan pilots flying light aircraft also worked closely with patrols, both in spotting Mau Mau targets and in relaying messages and dropping supply; the RAF

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.: Karari describes in detail the life of his forest gang.

continued to bomb forest areas, using both the Harvard trainer and, later, the Liberator bomber (with generally poor results).[13]

By end of 1953, the government had deployed over ten thousand troops and expanded the police from seven thousand to fifteen thousand plus six thousand part-time auxiliaries. The Home Guard numbered some twenty thousand. Government forces claimed over three thousand Mau Mau killed and over a thousand captured. Security forces had arrested about 150,000 Kikuyu (including Embu and Meru) and brought sixty-four thousand to trial.[14]

Mau Mau gains were not so impressive. The gangs had killed sixteen Europeans and wounded five; eleven Asians, with seventeen wounded; 613 Kikuyu, with 359 wounded. Although killings would continue, the Mau Mau now realized that they had failed to unite the tribe in a general uprising. If gangs remained intact inside forests, communications between gangs and also with supporters in the Reserve and in Nairobi were becoming more difficult. Gang leaders faced increasingly severe morale problems, and leadership quarrels also developed. Dedan Kimathi's "Kenya Defense Council," in the Aberdare forest, operated independently of Mount Kenya, Nairobi, and Reserve organizations, as did his subsequent "Kenya Parliament," whose pretensions to government fell victim to lack of capability and communications.[15]

Early in 1954, the government scored a major victory: the capture of Waruhiu Itote, or General China, the thirty-two-year-old leader of the Mount Kenya gangs—some five thousand Mau Mau who operated independently of the Aberdare gangs. His patient interrogation by a Kenyan police officer, Ian Henderson, not only produced a wealth of intelligence, but Henderson also persuaded China to co-operate in trying to arrange a surrender of the Mount Kenya forces, a laborious process that, thanks to personal courage of Henderson and his assistants as well as a realistic government offer, came within a hair of success. Although, at the last minute, it failed, negotiations did result in surrender or capture of other important Mau Mau leaders, and the intelligence produced also dealt a blow to the support organization in the Reserve.[16]

The situation was still unfavorable from the government's standpoint, however. In January 1954, a parliamentary delegation concluded:

> . . . It is our view based upon all the evidence available to us, both from official and responsible unofficial sources, that the influence of Mau Mau in the Kikuyu area, except in certain localities, has not declined; it has,

13. Frank Kitson, *Gangs and Counter-gangs* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1960); see also Slane, op. cit.; Barnett and Njama, op. cit.
14. Majdalaney, op. cit.; see also Corfield, op. cit.
15. Barnett and Njama, op. cit.
16. Ian Henderson (with Philip Goodhart), *The Hunt for Kimathi* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958); see also Barnett and Njama, op. cit., who suggest lesser results than claimed by security forces.

on the contrary, increased; in this respect the situation has deteriorated and the danger of infection outside the Kikuyu area is now greater, not less, than it was at the beginning of the State of Emergency. . . . In Nairobi, the situation is both grave and acute. Mau Mau orders are carried out in the heart of the city, Mau Mau "courts" sit in judgement and their "sentences" are carried out by gangsters. There is evidence that the revenues collected by gangsters, which may be considerable, are used for the purposes of bribery as well as for purchasing Mau Mau supplies. . . . There is [also] a passive resistance movement amongst Africans, an example of which is a "bus boycott" under which Africans for several months boycotted European-owned buses. . . .[17]

So grave had the situation in Nairobi and adjoining Kiambu District grown that General Erskine had been forced into a different operation: nothing less than wholesale removal of some hundred thousand Africans from the city and surrounding areas for screening purposes, the theory being that the forest gangs could not survive without this support. Operation Anvil began in late April. For several weeks, twenty-five thousand police and soldiers, the latter temporarily transferred from forest operations, screened Nairobi's Africans to send thousands of Mau Mau suspects to specially prepared detention camps.[18] The operation continued through most of May. Although criticized, particularly from liberal sources, as unduly harsh, it accomplished its mission: It broke up the Mau Mau support organization in Nairobi and Kiambu, which never recovered. It also eliminated a great deal of crime within the city, and, further, it yielded valuable intelligence.

Erskine exploited his victory in several ways: He tightened control of the civil population by a more rigorous identity-card system. Follow-up raids, known as "pepper-pots" and conducted by special intelligence teams, kept remaining Mau Mau off balance and continued to provide intelligence. The government also carried out a resettlement scheme that, by end of 1954, had moved about a million natives into villages that could be more easily protected and controlled.[19]

Although Erskine's strategy necessarily interrupted forest operations, a few units continued to press the gangs or at least to impede their contact with the Reserve. By now, some units were becoming quite skillful in forest environment, and new operational techniques also improved efficiency.[20] A young British regular officer named Frank Kitson had already introduced pseudo gangs; that is, small units led by Europeans

17. Barnett and Njama, op. cit.

18. Ibid., which cites 50,000 persons detained, a figure that perhaps included families of the detainees who were sent back to the Reserve; see also Majdalaney, op. cit., who states that the operation screened 30,000 Africans, with just over half sent to detention camps; Kitson, op. cit., states that 10,000 Africans were incarcerated.

19. Majdalaney, op. cit.

20. Slane, op. cit.

and consisting of captured Mau Mau and loyal Kikuyu fitted out to resemble real gangs. Pseudo gangs made contact with real gangs either in the Reserve or in the forest in order to get intelligence or to carry out offensive action against them if circumstances were favorable. Kitson had told his story well in his book *Gangs and Counter-gangs*.[21] As he points out, this is an old technique and variants of it were used in the Philippine insurrection and in Malaya, among other places. The disturbing fact is that a young British officer had to introduce it in Kenya, where it should have been standard operating procedure at once invoked by those responsible for the colony's security.

Erskine also improved his *cordon sanitaire* by building a fifty-mile ditch along eastern and southern borders of Mount Kenya forest:

> . . . It was eighteen feet wide and ten feet deep, the most primeval of military obstacles, the fosse. Along its bed bristled thousands of sharpened stakes and these were augmented by miles of barbed wire which had been booby-trapped. At half-mile intervals there were police posts and the half-mile between them was continuously patrolled by night and by day. Massed African labor created this ditch and it proved a highly successful barrier to the barefoot Mau Mau terrorist. . . .[22]

Erskine also enforced a rigorous food-denial policy. Special laws required farmers to lock up cattle after dark and prohibited food crops being planted within three miles of forests.

Despite the success of all these measures, the gangs continued active, stealing or destroying cattle, burning homesteads, murdering natives and even a few Europeans. As soon as he could, Erskine returned to the task of suppressing their activities. In January 1955, the military opened Operation Hammer, a sweep of the Aberdares in approximately division strength. What military commanders fondly thought of as a "combing" operation unfortunately lacked teeth. Operation Hammer brought to earth just over a hundred fifty Mau Mau. This disappointing result produced a more sophisticated tactic known as "domination of areas":

> . . . The essence of this was that instead of sweeping the forest, units would be given areas of it to dominate. Every unit and sub-unit would therefore have its own bit of forest to take charge of and get to know intimately so that the enemy would have difficulty in entering it without the fact becoming known.[23]

A two-month effort along these lines in the Mount Kenya forests netted 277 Mau Mau killed, captured, or prisoner, a meager result, consider-

21. *Supra.*
22. Majdalaney, op. cit.; see also Barnett and Njama, op. cit.
23. Majdalaney, op. cit.

ing the investment, which included airdrop of over one hundred thousand pounds of supply.

The key to productive counteroperations remained intelligence, and, increasingly, security forces concentrated on procuring good information. Erskine's successor, General Sir Gerald Lathbury, established a separate police section called Special Forces, which enlarged Kitson's pseudo-gang technique and proved probably the most successful of all methods employed. The Administration developed a related technique of considerable interest, from both psychological and operational standpoints. This involved forest sweeps by largely native lines; in one instance, seventeen thousand natives, mostly women, cleared a large area of forest, the Mau Mau either surrendering or being hacked to pieces. Although the army continued operations in certain parts of the forest, from late 1955 Special Forces increasingly took over the task of tracking down the two thousand terrorists who remained in Aberdare forest under command of Dedan Kimathi. This police action, thrilling in the extreme, demanded infinite patience and is well told in Ian Henderson and Philip Goodhart's book *The Hunt for Kimathi.* The hunt ended in October 1956, when the deranged terrorist was wounded and captured; he was later executed.

Kimathi's capture virtually ended Mau Mau resistance. All told, security forces had killed over eleven thousand Mau Mau (presumed) and captured some twenty-five hundred, at a cost of 167 dead (101 Africans) and over fifteen hundred wounded (1,469 Africans). Civilian casualties, including those of the Kikuyu Guard, totaled almost nineteen hundred dead (1,819 Africans) and almost a thousand wounded (916 Africans). By spring of 1959, the counterinsurgency had cost British and Kenya governments £55 million.[24]

At the height of the emergency, security forces detained seventy-seven thousand Africans. This figure shrank to about two thousand by end of 1958. Meanwhile, the government had held elections ". . . on a qualitative franchise for the eight African seats in the legislature." In the next two years, more Africans were brought into government until they formed a majority in the Legislative Council.

Kenyatta and his lieutenants meanwhile had been removed from jail and held under house arrest. The government freed Kenyatta altogether in 1961. Just over two years later, Kenya became a republic, with Kenyatta its first president.

24. Corfield, op. cit.; see also James Cameron, *The African Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1961).

Chapter 69

The Cyprus rebellion • Historical background • The question of enosis *• The 1931 rebellion • The postwar situation • Makarios and Grivas • Grivas' estimate of the situation • Origin of EOKA • Opening attacks • Early guerrilla operations • Harding's negotiations • He deports Makarios • His military solution • Organization and strength of EOKA • British counterguerrilla tactics • Grivas' critical analysis of British tactics • Attempts at a political solution • Fragile peace • The cost • Analysis of Grivas' tactics*

BRITISH TROOPS were still fighting guerrillas in Malaya and Kenya when a serious insurgency broke out in Cyprus, the eastern-Mediterranean island that the British had ruled for over seventy-five years and that, in 1954, had become British military headquarters in the Middle East (see map, p. 901).

The Cyprus rebellion had been a long time forming and was neither Communist-inspired nor Communist-directed. All elements of rebellion were present in 1878, when Disraeli, in furthering his Middle East strategy, wrested Cyprus from Turkish control.[1] Nominally Ottoman territory—it lies only forty miles from the Turkish coast—it held two distinct ethnic groups, which differed in race, religion, and language. The Turkish population, 18–20 per cent, accepted British rule amicably, but the Greek portion, 80 per cent, at once expressed desire for *enosis,* or union, with Greece. Whitehall refused, arguing that, under

1. Robert Stephens, *Cyprus—A Place of Arms* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966).

terms of the Anglo-Turkish Convention, it was governing only by proxy. This argument vanished when Turkey joined the wrong side in 1914; Great Britain annexed the island and, in the following year, offered it to Greece if she would declare war against the Central Powers. Greece refused and Britain retained possession.

Greek Cypriotes argued after the war that Britain, free of treaty entanglements with Turkey, could grant enosis if she wished. Although Prime Minister Lloyd George seemed favorably disposed, ". . . the War Office opposed on strategic grounds any change in the island's status."[2] In 1925, the island became a crown colony, and British officials remained deaf to continued pleas for enosis. In 1931, Greek Cypriotes spontaneously rebelled against British rule.

Captain H. A. Freeman, who, at the time, commanded the British garrison of one infantry company—125 men—later described the chauvinistic temper of Greek Cypriotes and the wave of anti-British feeling during the 1931 financial crisis, when the administration imposed new taxes. In late October 1931, Greek Cypriote leaders met and, ". . . after inflammatory speeches by the Bishop of Kitium and Mr. Lanitis, an ex-member of the Legislative Assembly," decided to enforce a demand for enosis: ". . . This was telegraphed to Nicosia, where the church bells were rung—the usual method of collecting the people. The mob was addressed by its leaders . . . and, after being blessed by the priests, they marched on Government House."[3]

Here they stoned and broke windows and finally set the structure on fire. Police, in turn, opened fire, killing one Cypriote and wounding sixteen. Captain Freeman marched his company to the scene and successfully dispersed the crowd. Whitehall dispatched another company of troops from Egypt (by air!) and, two days later, two cruisers and two destroyers arrived to add to government muscle. The governor also declared Defense Order in Council, similar to martial law ". . . except that the Civil Government remains in control and the Civil Courts continue to function." Within a week, ". . . this badly organized rebellion" was broken:

> . . . There were no government casualties but six Cypriots were killed, and over thirty wounded. The bishops of Kition and Kyrenia and eight other Greek Cypriot religious and political leaders were banished for life from the island. Two thousand others were sent to prison and fines amounting to £66,000 were imposed on the Greek Cypriots to pay for the damage. Constitutional government was suspended, the Legislative Council and local councils abolished, political parties banned and the press put under censorship. The governor was empowered to rule by decree. The Colonial Office

2. Ibid.
3. H. A. Freeman, "The Rebellion in Cyprus—1931," *Army Quarterly*, January 1933.

promised to review the constitutional future of the island but no new constitution was put forward until 1948.[4]

World War II somewhat relaxed political tensions on the island. As in 1914, so in 1940, numerous Greek Cypriotes volunteered to fight for the allies. The Anglo-Greek alliance, as opposed to Turkish neutrality and pro-Axis attitude, brought a softening in British attitude, and, in 1941, the administration allowed political parties to form once again. The war also created considerable prosperity for the people. Perhaps more important, Greek Cypriotes reckoned that self-determination of peoples promised by allied declarations would at last result in long-awaited enosis with Greece.

They reckoned without other factors, however. One was continuing antagonism of Turkish Cypriotes to enosis, a feeling strengthened by island Communists, both Turkish and Greek. Another was Greek civil war and cold war in general: Greece was in no position to effectively press either Great Britain or the United States for enosis while depending on them for survival. Once Greece and Turkey, as members of NATO, formed a strategic flank against the Soviet threat, the United States turned a deaf ear to Greek demands, since to respect them would mean a break with Turkey. Finally, loss of Palestine and unsettled conditions surrounding bases in Egypt and Iraq increased the strategic importance of Cyprus to Britain, though scarcely to the degree the War Office believed.

If the cumulative force of these factors prevented Greek Cypriotes from achieving their postwar goal, Mr. Clement Attlee's Labour government nonetheless allowed exiled Cypriote leaders to return to the island and attempted to substitute constitutional reforms for enosis. Had either party faced reality, a working arrangement might have resulted in 1948. But clouds obscured common sense: in the case of Greek Cypriotes, who now numbered some four hundred thousand, a political immaturity and naïveté—the result largely of British refusal to encourage indigenous political growth from 1931 onward—that prevented them from grasping opportunities inherent in the proposed constitution; in the case of the British, failure of the Labour government and particularly of Mr. Ernest Bevin and his advisers to respect the depth of Greek Cypriote feeling regarding this issue. Once negotiations lapsed, the gulf widened; in 1950, a plebiscite showed 96 per cent of Greek Cypriotes in favor of enosis. The plebiscite was allegedly inspired by the young and determined bishop of Kition, who, at thirty-seven years, became the new archbishop of Cyprus, Makarios III.[5]

New negotiations might now have commenced but for factors pre-

4. Stephens, op. cit.

5. Ibid.; see also Charles Foley, *Island in Revolt* (London: Longmans, Green, 1962); Doros Alastos, *Cyprus Guerrilla—Grivas, Makarios and the British* (London: William Heinemann, 1960).

viously mentioned and for the introduction of a new and in some ways sinister character in the Cyprus drama: George Grivas. At fifty-three years of age, Grivas was a good-looking man, short and broadly built, ". . . with a strong, unsmiling face and deep-set eyes under fierce brows; his thin mouth . . . topped by a dark moustache."[6] A Cypriote born and raised, son of a prosperous grocer, Grivas graduated from the Athens Military Academy to become a professional officer in the Greek army, where colleagues found him dour and determined, a Spartan ". . . tireless and demanding, a martinet who required no less of himself than he did of the soldiers under him. . . ."[7] We earlier encountered him briefly in the Greek civil war (see Chapter 57), when, as a colonel, he commanded the irregular *Khi,* or X, organization, an extreme-rightist movement dedicated to killing as many Communists as possible—an experience that left Grivas impressed with the effectiveness of Communist subversive warfare in accomplishing limited goals. Retired because of extreme political views, he studied Communist methods of warfare with the same intensity bestowed on his stamp collection; he also ran for parliament on a promonarchist platform and was defeated.[8] Adrift in the political caldron of Athenian politics, he brushed against Greek nationalists and Cypriote exiles, finally to join the stew of enosis: In 1951, the small but determined group decided that Grivas ". . . should undertake the leadership of an armed struggle to throw the British out of Cyprus."[9]

Grivas has described the ensuing struggle in two books, *The Memoirs of General Grivas* and the rather more technical but no less Zarathustrian work *General Grivas on Guerrilla Warfare.*[10] Grivas does not emerge as a particularly attractive man in these works, but, rather, as a man with a mission, a man who faced up to means at hand which he used with great effect for a particular end.

His task was extremely difficult. He knew and respected the British and had every reason to believe that they would fight and fight hard to retain sovereignty over Cyprus. A conventional campaign was thus hopeless, but so was a guerrilla campaign: Only the western, mountainous half of the relatively small island (some hundred forty miles long and sixty miles wide) offered natural sanctuary, but good roads meant rapid troop movement; a Royal Navy blockade would mean difficulty in receiving arms and supply; only a relatively few Greek Cypriotes had

6. Foley, op. cit.; see also Dudley Barker, *Grivas—Portrait of a Terrorist* (London: Cresset Press, 1959); W. Byford-Jones, *Grivas and the Story of EOKA* (London: Robert Hale, 1959).

7. Charles W. Thayer, *Guerrilla* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

8. Stephens, op. cit.; Barker, op. cit.

9. George Grivas, *The Memoirs of General Grivas* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964). Ed. Charles Foley. Hereafter cited as Grivas (*Memoirs*).

10. Ibid.; George Grivas, *General Grivas on Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965). Tr. A. S. Pallis. Hereafter cited as Grivas (*Guerrilla*).

had military training, and most were skeptical about his plan, Archbishop Makarios himself seeming ". . . reserved and sceptical." These adverse conditions meant that ". . . the main weight of the campaign will be placed on sabotage," designed ". . . to draw the attention of international public opinion, especially among the allies of Greece, to the Cyprus question."[11] Essential to the plan was co-operation of the Greek Cypriote population, particularly its passive resistance to British rule and countermeasures. Grivas rightly guessed that he could exploit the general desire for enosis into support necessary for his operational plans.

Meager resources compelled him to spend the next three years in Athens collecting arms and smuggling them into Cyprus, where volunteers, recruited from two Christian Youth movements during his second visit, received and hid them. Progress remained slow: The new Prime Minister of Greece, Marshal Papagos, would not support the movement. Archbishop Makarios feared reprisal effects of violence and ran hot and cold on Grivas' preparations. By late 1954, when Grivas landed secretly on Cyprus, only one arms shipment, with a total value of £600, awaited him. Actual shooting stock amounted to seven revolvers, forty-seven rifles of assorted calibers and manufacture, and ten automatic weapons.[12]

Known now as Dighenis—a mythological Byzantine warrior-hero—Grivas began training saboteurs while organizing small guerrilla groups, distributing and hiding weapons and explosives and establishing intelligence and courier services. Leaning heavily on youthful volunteers, he organized sabotage groups of five or six persons and selected targets in principal cities. His was the qualitative approach: He selected only the most suitable men, each of whom swore to obey his orders while preserving utmost secrecy.[13]

Thus the origin of *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston* (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) or EOKA; at the start of the rebellion, April 1955, it numbered fewer than a hundred activists. The majority of the Greek Cypriote population, however, sympathized in whole or in part with its professed aims.

EOKA's greatest ally was the British Government. Continuing to misread the depth of Greek Cypriote feeling, the British military, in spring of 1954, moved Middle East land and air headquarters from Suez to the island. Throughout summer and autumn, various official spokesmen left no doubt that Britain would retain sovereignty over Cyprus, which, so the argument ran, was needed ". . . to fulfil her treaty obligations to the Arab states, NATO, Greece, Turkey and the United

11. Grivas (*Guerrilla*), *supra;* see also Lawrence Durrell, *Bitter Lemons* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), for a good picture of island life before the rebellion.
12. Grivas (*Memoirs*), *supra.*
13. Alastos, op. cit., gives the oath; see also Barker, op. cit.; Durrell, op. cit.

Nations."[14] Greek willingness to guarantee her old ally military bases on Cyprus was brushed aside, as was a Greek appeal to the UN to debate the case for the island's self-determination.[15] Having been forced to leave Palestine and Egypt, the British were in no mood for compromise: In September 1953, a convalescent Anthony Eden allegedly had told Marshal Papagos: ". . . For Her Majesty's Government there is not and there cannot be a Cypriot problem which has to be discussed with the Greek Government";[16] in July 1954, the Minister of State for the Colonies told the House of Commons that Cyprus could "never" hope to become an independent state.

Such sentiments further charged island air. The colonial government was not popular, to start with. British intransigence now eliminated the moderating force of Archbishop Makarios on Cyprus and Marshal Papagos in Athens and brought them into Grivas' camp. It also helped Grivas to arrange a series of demonstrations, strikes, and riots that effectively screened his own clandestine preparations. The opening of the rebellion by EOKA attacks on government, police, and military installations, early on April 1, 1955, caught the government completely by surprise. Confused intelligence agents studied inflammatory leaflets distributed by the thousands and frowned: What was EOKA? Who (or what) was DIGHENIS?

Grivas continued the attacks for a few days. He then switched to demonstrations, mostly by young students. In June, he opened a prolonged series of attacks that killed one policeman and wounded sixteen others, besides causing considerable property damage and agitation among the British population. Although disappointed in material results, Grivas exulted in international publicity (engendered in large part by Radio Athens, which would continue to report the campaign to the world); Grivas reasoned that this would force the UN to reverse its earlier decision and debate the Cyprus question. He now moved to the mountains to organize guerrilla groups prior to opening a new series of attacks, intended ". . . to terrorize the police and to paralyze the administration, both in the towns and the countryside." His plan would have won approval of Irish Republican Army leaders thirty-five years earlier or Irgun-Sternist leaders in Palestine ten years earlier. By such means,

> . . . the army would be drawn deeper into the terrain of my choosing and their strength dissipated; at present they were concentrating on guarding government buildings and on riot duty. My town groups would execute police who were too zealous on the British behalf, while my countryside groups would attack police stations, kill isolated policemen and ambush police patrols, which were already being stiffened by soldiers.[17]

14. Stephens, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Alastos, op. cit.; Eden did not mention the meeting in his memoirs.
17. Grivas, op. cit.

UN refusal to reopen the Cyprus question, in September, brought a new spurt of EOKA activity. While guerrillas began striking primarily military targets in the countryside, selective terror tactics in cities and towns resulted in more police deaths, which, according to Grivas, soon ". . . shattered opposition to EOKA among the Greek police."

These tactics succeeded in part because the hostile population refused to co-operate with police and army. Grivas constantly exploited what often was only incipient hostility. He showered the population with leaflets and pamphlets, a propaganda campaign augmented by the technique of the Voice—megaphoned instructions to a village in the dead of night. While EOKA did not hesitate to kill informers and traitors, its members treated the people with great circumspection—for example, always paying for food or goods and maintaining strict sexual morality.[18]

The tactics succeeded for another good reason: police inefficiency. Charles Foley, a distinguished British newspaperman and publisher of the *Times of Cyprus* during the emergency, later wrote:

> . . . Mr. Robins, the Police Commissioner, was soon at his wits' end to stop Greek resignations from the Force: it was obvious that "disloyal" elements at his H.Q. were reporting over-zealous colleagues to EOKA. He revealed no secret in saying, in a poignant moment, that things were virtually out of his control. Coming from Tanganyika a few months before, he had been asked to turn a weak peace-time force, used to trailing after pickpockets and erring motorists, into a body capable of dealing with armed terrorism. Negligence, meanness, stagnation over the years had sapped the spirit of his men long before EOKA appeared.[19]

Against this background of mounting terror, the British compounded an already confused situation by calling Greece and Turkey to a London conference—thus introducing Turkey into the Cyprus discussions. To ". . . avoid shaking hands with murder," the indignant government did *not* invite Cypriote representatives to hear Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan present still another constitutional scheme: While offering Cyprus limited self-government, Macmillan refused to abandon or even question the right of British sovereignty. Before the Greeks could reject what, to them, was an unworkable plan, widespread anti-Greek riots in Izmir and Istanbul wrecked the conference.

Matters meanwhile were worsening on Cyprus, where EOKA, despite operational flaws, clearly held the initiative. In October, a distinguished soldier, Field Marshal Sir John Harding, arrived as the new governor, empowered both to negotiate with Makarios and, with help of substantial military reinforcements, to quell EOKA.[20]

18. Alastos, op. cit.
19. Foley, op. cit.
20. Stephens, op. cit.; see also Durrell, op. cit., who served as press adviser to the government during the early years of the emergency.

Negotiations with Makarios made some progress over the next few months: Harding yielded on the important question of self-determination—but in the unspecified future. He also dangled a £38-million development scheme before the people, a futile gesture in view of continued British political intransigence. The talks also suffered from disruptive forces already discussed, as well as from concomitant forces: from continuing EOKA successes, which placed uncomfortable pressure on Makarios to refrain from yielding on enosis, pressure increased by civil hostility engendered by British countermeasures; from a new administration in Athens, the Karamanlis government, which did not feel strong enough to intervene forcefully; from Prime Minister Anthony Eden's mistrust of Makarios; from the deteriorating position in Jordan, which, in British minds, increased further the strategic value of Cyprus.

In late February 1956, the British broke off the talks. A few days later, security agents intercepted Makarios on his way to Athens and, shades of 1931, deported him to the Seychelles Islands—thus leaving the field open to Grivas. Since Grivas was not willing to reveal himself, this, in effect, eliminated further negotiations. As Charles Foley later noted: ". . . Harding, by signing the deportation orders, had cut himself off from four-fifths of the population. No Greek Cypriot would enter Government House."[21]

Field Marshal Harding now removed the velvet glove to seek a military solution. At this time, his security forces amounted to some five thousand police and about twenty thousand troops with another five thousand scheduled to arrive. British intelligence did not know it, but Grivas commanded 273 "regulars," who shared about a hundred weapons and who were augmented by some 750 villagers armed with shotguns (from which he formed OKT, or ambush units)—a hard core that the Greek Cypriote population increasingly supported, though sometimes with sorrow and misgiving. By this time, Grivas had divided the island into sectors, which, at his order, undertook specific tasks and enjoyed support of two main groups, ANE, a youth organization, and PEKA, a covert civil organization. Although his later claim that ". . . every Greek Cypriot, from the smallest child to old men and women, belonged to our army . . ." was exaggerated, there is no doubt that he had fashioned an effective organization in a remarkably short time and with remarkably few materials at his disposal.[22]

Harding and his advisers apparently did not have a clue concerning the depth of EOKA. Convinced that he was up against a few terrorists who enjoyed the support of no more than 5 per cent of the popula-

21. Foley, op. cit.

22. Grivas (*Guerrilla*), op. cit.: Mines, for example, were made from stolen dynamite or explosive from old shells dumped off shore by the British at the end of World War II.

tion,[23] the field marshal "attacked" in two directions, a quantitative approach designed to eliminate terrorist attacks in the cities and guerrilla activity in the mountains. Continued EOKA raids already had caused him to proclaim a State of Emergency, and, following what Foley termed the Templer Bible of Malaya, to invoke stringent regulations governing the civil population. Anyone carrying firearms was subject to a death sentence; persons could be detained or banished without trial. Rewards were offered for information on terrorist activities; Dighenis carried a £10,000 price on his head. As extra measure, Harding proscribed the local Communist Party, AKEL, and locked up 129 of its members—a strange move, since the party *opposed* the rebellion.[24] Other measures involved not only such collective punishments as regional curfews and large community fines, but indiscriminate and often insulting search methods—a sort of military charging into the fog of a civil population soon turned very hostile.[25] Grivas later wrote:

> . . . The "security forces" set about their work in a manner which might have been deliberately designed to drive the population into our arms. On the pretext of searching they burst into people's homes by day and night, made them stand for hours with their hands up, abused and insulted them. Soldiers would empty sacks of grain on the floor of a farmhouse and pour oil, wine or paraffin over it [sic], thus ruining enough food to keep a family for a year; or they would stop a lorry taking produce to market and tip the whole load of fruit and vegetables out on to the road. Anyone who protested had scant hope of getting justice.[26]

Whipping schoolboys and prolonged detention of hundreds of suspects continued to infuriate Greek Cypriotes. In spring of 1956, Harding executed two terrorists, which further antagonized the people (and caused Grivas to execute two captured British soldiers). Grivas, himself, was now on the run. A British patrol almost captured him in May—on May 25, he noted in his diary: ". . . This day is the worst of the struggle for me." In early June, he fled from another patrol in such haste that he left behind personal gear including his diary.[27]

Although the rebel leader remained free, British hopes for his capture or surrender soared. In autumn, Harding replied to a cease-fire called by Grivas with an insulting ultimatum to surrender. Grivas answered by renewing his campaign.

23. Foley, op. cit.: On one occasion Harding told him, ". . . Not five percent of Greek Cypriots are behind this evil organization. Not five percent!"
24. Alastos, op. cit.
25. Foley, op. cit.; Alastos, op. cit.
26. Grivas (*Memoirs*), *supra*.
27. Barker, op. cit.

Harding already had sent sizable task forces into the mountains to break up guerrilla bands, operations later criticized by Grivas:

> . . . I had expected that a Field-Marshal would come out with a flexible military plan; if he did, it was hard to discern what it consisted of. Twice from my hiding place in the mountains I watched forces of up to 1,000 troops looking for me, with helicopters flying overhead. I did not even trouble to move off as they approached, so aimless was their search. Officers, remaining on the road, shouted orders as if on an exercise. In Limassol later the strong patrols which so often passed our house went by as though on a route march. This, then, was the "spider's web" which Harding said he was weaving for us.[28]

Harding tried to repair tactical poverty by a number of devices. One was tracking-dogs, which terrorists sabotaged by liberal use of pepper. Another was "Q patrols"—". . . small mobile units of strong-arm men from the Special Branch [police intelligence], both British and Turkish, which relied on Greek traitors and informers for their leads into the organization."[29] The patrols enjoyed only limited success, due to EOKA's excellent intelligence and courier system. A later tactic, of counterambushes, produced far better results, but to Grivas' relief the British failed to expand the technique.[30] Still later, the British began using helicopters, ". . . mostly for carrying out reconnaissance against guerrilla bands in the mountains and over inhabited areas where operations were proceeding."[31] Again to Grivas' relief, the British did not use them to exploit certain tactical situations. (In his later work, *Guerrilla Warfare,* Grivas stressed the importance of the helicopter to future guerrilla campaigns, and noted, in passing, ". . . its vulnerability because of its low speed and its proximity to the ground.")

Some of Harding's subordinates employed more-radical measures. According to Charles Foley and other observers, British intelligence officers used torture while interrogating captured terrorists. Security forces also seem to have frequently employed indiscriminate detentions. The hostile civil climate, without question, adversely affected some conscript or National Service soldiers, who mistreated not only "suspects" but ordinary citizens—stupid behavior that could only benefit the EOKA.

After early failure, British military tactics grew more sophisticated, but even the most carefully planned and executed operations left escape gaps for the guerrillas, although, on occasion, some were captured

28. Grivas (*Memoirs*), *supra;* see also Kenneth Diacre, "Cyprus, 1956," *Army Quarterly,* April 1956, who describes a raid on a mountain village.
29. Ibid.
30. Grivas (*Guerrilla*), *supra.*
31. Ibid.

or killed and, in time, whole groups were neutralized. Grivas himself remained unimpressed with general British military performance:

. . . The officers lacked initiative and judgement and the other ranks lacked training, dash and personal courage. This is a harsh verdict, and I think that this seeming indifference to duty, so unlike what I knew of the British Army, was due in part to the fact that many of them felt that they were fighting for an unjust cause; this view is supported by the fact that frequent instances of military disobedience occurred, and sometimes developed into mutinies.[32]

Nor did Harding's performance particularly impress the guerrilla leader. Although British operations became more co-ordinated in 1957, they never grew subtle, at least in Grivas' mind:

. . . Harding disliked changing a decision, once he had made it; if the results were not all he expected he would go on just the same, thus opening the way to a series of mistakes. His soldierly bluntness, which put the whole country against him, was also a valuable index to me of his military intentions. In speeches and broadcasts, and through newspaper interviews which he gave so prodigally, I was kept in constant touch with the way in which his mind was working. No less lavish were his assurances of early victory: did he believe them himself? It seemed that he did, and thus fell into what Napoleon called the biggest mistake a General could make: to paint an imaginary picture and believe it to be true.[33]

Grivas later placed his finger on Harding's real failure:

. . . he underrated his enemy on the one hand, and overweighed his forces on the other. But one does not use a tank to catch field-mice—a cat will do the job better. The Field-Marshal's only hope of finding us was to play cat and mouse: to use tiny, expertly trained groups, who could work with cunning and patience and strike rapidly when we least expected.[34]

Instead,

. . . the British flooded Cyprus with troops, so that one met a soldier at every step, with the only result that they offered plenty of targets and so sustained casualties. They completely ignored the principle of "saturation" of the terrain. In accordance with this principle, each separate kind of terrain has a limit to its capacity of absorption of means without risk. Beyond this limit, any increase in forces not only does not yield better results but, on

32. Grivas (*Memoirs*), *supra;* see also Foley, op. cit.
33. Grivas (*Memoirs*), *supra.*
34. Ibid.; see also Grivas (*Guerrilla*), *supra:* ". . . In various studies and handbooks on guerrilla warfare, mention is made of 'fast-moving, mobile units' etc. for use in operations against guerrillas, whereas in my opinion what is needed is a special organization of specialized forces corresponding to the general and special conditions of the struggle."

the contrary, increases casualties and complicates movements to the extent of placing the operation itself in jeopardy.[35]

Lacking "a special organization of specialized forces" to fight the terrorists, Harding perforce depended on quantitative tactics. The abortive Suez Canal operation, at the end of October, greatly facilitated Grivas' campaign by drawing off a large number of troops.[36] EOKA carried out 416 attacks in November alone[37]—"Black November" to embarrassed British authorities, who replied with even more stringent regulations, including the threat of a death sentence for a variety of offenses. The conflict now widened into fighting between Greek Cypriotes and Turkish Cypriotes, the latter recruited in considerable quantity by the British for the police force. When EOKA agents killed Turkish policemen, the Turks formed an underground terrorist organization, Volkan, for reprisal purposes.

In December, the British flew in a peace dove in form of the Radcliffe Constitution, which, although suggesting a division in low-level rule between Greeks and Turks, changed little at the top: ". . . Cyprus must remain under British sovereignty; . . . Britain must have the use of the island as a military base; . . . external affairs, defense and internal security were to remain in British hands."[38] The Greek Government rejected the proposals ". . . even before the Cypriots had seen them," and Makarios, a prisoner in the Seychelles, refused to discuss them until he was released.[39]

The rebellion continued in cruel intensity into 1957, with each side recording major gains and losses. The first real breakthrough came in March 1957: A renewed British military effort had cost Grivas the loss of over sixty hard-core fighters since the turn of the year; although plenty of fight remained in EOKA, Grivas now offered another cease-fire in return for Makarios' release.[40] The Suez fiasco had cost Anthony Eden his job, and his replacement, Harold Macmillan, urged on by President Eisenhower, agreed to the archbishop's release but refused to allow his return to Cyprus.

The turn of events nonetheless brought a welcome lull in fighting, which Britain followed with two additional moves, one secret and one not. The former consisted of a strategic reappraisal, the first step in abandoning the theretofore sacrosanct demand for continued British sovereignty over all of Cyprus. The Macmillan government next replaced Harding with Sir Hugh Foot, a ". . . colonial civil servant with

35. Grivas (*Guerrilla*), *supra*.
36. Barker, op. cit., suggests that Grivas was about finished at this point, a conclusion official in origin, and rather ludicrous in view of "Black November."
37. Stephens, op. cit.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Barker, op. cit., writes that "EOKA was virtually crushed" at this point—again, wishful thinking in view of subsequent events.

a liberal reputation."[41] The Greek Government, in turn, began to yield on the question of enosis—perhaps, her leaders reasoned, independence would be sufficient for the time being. The UN also came around to supporting, albeit mildly, the right of Cypriote self-determination. The Menderes government, in Turkey, continued to hold for partition.

A good bit of blood would spill before these discordant goals merged into a working plan. Grivas' cease-fire, fragile at best, gave way to renewed fighting in late 1957. Throughout 1958, pressures internal and external continued to influence involved parties. In March, Grivas added to guerrilla-terrorist tactics by launching a Gandhi-like campaign of "passive resistance," which included an island-wide boycott of all British goods. By year's end, British security forces seemed no closer to "winning" the war than they had three years earlier.

But if EOKA resistance had once gained considerable international sympathy, it was beginning to lose it, as the rift between Turkey and Greece widened to NATO's disadvantage and as danger of total civil war developed in Cyprus.

The home front was also feeling the pinch: ". . . Although the EOKA campaign could have been kept up for a long time, the economic repercussions of the boycott and the British counter-measures—curfews, mass detentions, dismissal of workers from military establishments—were beginning to be felt by the Greek Cypriot population."[42] The British were no happier: The boycott proved effective and thus expensive, and so was support of twenty-eight thousand troops (about one to every twenty civilians) plus greatly expanded police forces, all to control a few hundred terrorists; a civil war would prove even more costly and would produce severe international repercussions. Resumption of emergency measures, including wholesale round-up and detention of Greek Cypriotes, was bringing unfavorable international publicity without seeming to influence the military situation favorably.

The Macmillan government now decided that the whole of Cyprus was not a "strategic necessity" but, rather, a "strategic convenience," not worth the foreseeable cost of retention. Instead, Britain could yield sovereignty in return for base rights (which the Greek Government had suggested four years earlier), a decision aided by the fall of the Iraqi Government and that country's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact. Turkey also indicated a new willingness to negotiate—the result of international pressure by countries, mainly the United States, on whom she depended for economic and military aid.

The effect of these shifting pressures enabled Britain to bring the Greek and the Turkish governments into direct negotiations toward end of 1958. Makarios recognized the changing situation and approved. With the political rug pulled from under him, Grivas, in early 1959,

41. Stephens, op. cit.
42. Ibid.

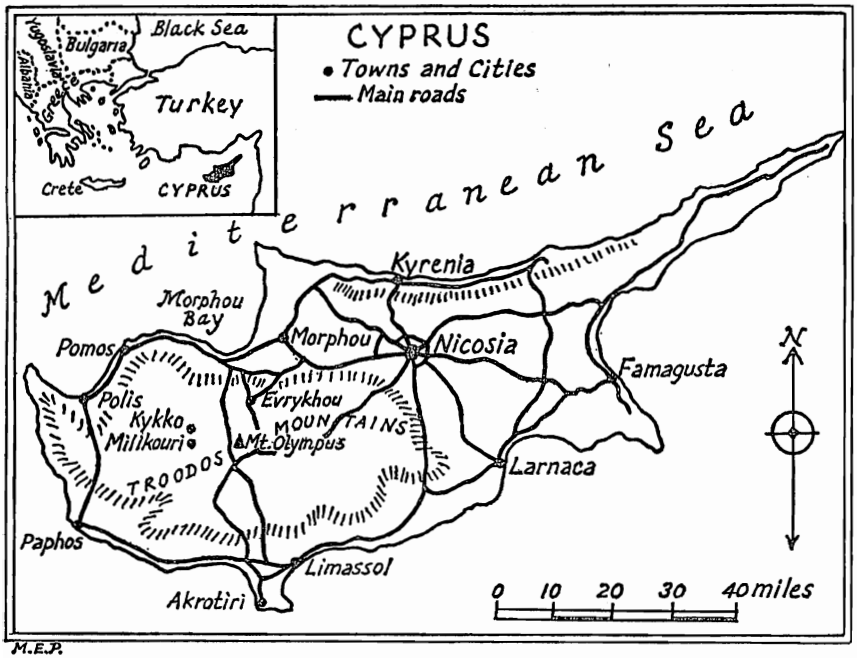
announced a final cease-fire. Conferences in Zurich and London followed, and Cyprus eventually emerged as a republic with its own constitution and a complicated series of treaties meant to protect British, Greek, and Turkish interests.

Though opposed to the settlement, Grivas disbanded EOKA and left the island. In Athens, he enjoyed a hero's welcome, including promotion to lieutenant general and a life pension[43]—exaggerated tribute, perhaps, considering the muddled fate that awaited Greek Cypriotes, a fate influenced in part by his subsequent mysterious and at times sinister machinations. Grivas had not gained his intended goal of enosis, nor had he forced the British from Cyprus. All things considered, however, he could claim the upper hand in this war that had taken five to six hundred lives, wounded over twelve hundred persons, and cost the British Government an estimated £90 million.[44] Starting from scratch, for four years he not only had fought a greatly superior force to a draw at an estimated financial cost of about £50,000,[45] but, at the end, he was prepared to carry on the battle, as witness the imposing amount of arms and ammunition finally surrendered by EOKA fighters at Grivas' orders.[46]

Most Western observers found it difficult to award more than grudging admiration to Grivas' employment of Byzantine tactics, and many of them spoke in terms of moral abhorrence. Such judgments seem to this writer to lack balance, in that they fail to weigh British culpability in the emergency; first by a myopic prewar policy; second by failing to adopt a mature and rational, as opposed to primarily an emotional, attitude concerning the future government of Cyprus; third by deporting Makarios and thus creating a political vacuum; and fourth by inviting the disputatious and disreputable Menderes government to debate the question and thus inflame already heated island passions. These and other actions were predicated on the assumption that force would rule. They thus invited counterforce (the potential of which the British Government failed to respect) and opened the way for a Grivas, unhappily an astute military professional able to adapt tactical thinking to the tactical problem.

Grivas was not deaf to cries of outrage from Western voices or from objections by Makarios and Papagos, or to distaste of island moderates. Rather, like Marion and his North Carolinians in the American revolution, like Lenin and his fellows before and during the Russian revolution, like Michael Collins and the IRA during the Irish revolution, and like Menachem Begin in Palestine, he was contemptuous. In defending

43. Ibid.
44. Foley, op. cit.; see also Barker, op. cit.
45. Barker, op. cit.
46. Foley, op. cit.



his techniques, he later wrote words that, despite translation, carry a Lawrentian ring:

. . . The British, who arm their commandoes with knives and instruct them to kill in just this way—from the rear—protested vociferously when such tactics were applied to themselves. It may be argued that these things are only permissible in war. This is nonsense. I was fighting a war in Cyprus against the British, and if they did not recognize the fact from the start they were forced to at the end. The truth is that our form of war, in which a few hundred fell in four years, was far more selective than most, and I speak as one who has seen battlefields covered with dead. We did not strike, like the bomber, at random. We shot only British servicemen who would have killed us if they could have fired first, and civilians who were traitors or intelligence agents. To shoot down your enemies in the street may be unprecedented, but I was looking for results, not precedents. . . . All war is cruel and the only way to win against superior forces is by ruse and trickery; you can no more afford to make a difference between striking in front or from behind than you can between employing rifles and howitzers. The British may criticize me as much as they like for making war in Cyprus, but I was not obliged to ask their permission to do so; nor can they now deny that I made it in the most successful way. For my part, I always drew the line at unnecessary cruelty.[47]

47. Grivas (*Memoirs*), *supra.*

Unfortunately, Grivas' ruthless methods and generally extremist political views badly damaged the people he allegedly wanted to help. His war disrupted Cypriote life to an alarming degree, and it also served to turn Greek Cypriotes against each other. In his fanatical single-mindedness, Grivas underestimated and exacerbated the Turkish nationalist factor, and left a volatile and divided island with civil war almost inevitable.

Chapter 70

The Algerian crisis • Historical background • The French conquest • French colonial policy • Growth of nationalism • The 1945 riots • Ahmed Ben Bella and the OS • Belkacem Krim's guerrillas • The internal situation • FLN emerges • Outbreak of rebellion • Soustelle's pacification strategy • Origin of SAS • French military and political errors • La guerre révolutionnaire

THE INK HAD SCARCELY DRIED on the Geneva Agreements, which extricated France from Indochina, when the Mendès-France government faced another major crisis, in Algeria (see map, p. 915). As in Indochina, trouble in this principal North African colony as well as in Tunisia and Morocco had been brewing for a long time.

The Maghreb otherwise resembled Indochina. Algeria was an older holding, the occupation having begun in 1830 (see Chapter 11, Volume I), but Tunisia did not become a protectorate until 1881 and Morocco only in 1912. Algeria occupied a colonial status similar to Cochin China, or southern Vietnam; Tunisia and Morocco retained their monarchs and something of their local administration, as did the other French Indochina kingdoms. Tunisia and Morocco claimed more-cohesive cultures than the semi-nomadic Algerians, but some Algerian tribes traced from antiquity, and all were proud: The French did not subjugate them until 1857, and active resistance continued until 1881. Tunisia submitted more readily to French rule; the pacification of Morocco continued until 1934 (see Chapter 28, Volume I).

In theory, French colonial policy in North Africa called for assimilation—a civilizing mission to convert Arab-Berber peoples into good and loyal Frenchmen. In practice, Paris allowed European colonizers to develop the countries on a double-standard basis, their local powers steadily increased by continuing dissension in the French Government. While the Moslems enjoyed certain benefits brought by the newcomers, most notably in health, trade, and administration, reactionary colonial governments dominated by *colons* soon brought conditions matching those in Indochina (see Chapter 42, Volume I): extensive land ownership by Europeans and a local Moslem elite who controlled the economic and financial structure while the bulk of the people were landless and hungry, a vast illiterate body suffering a pastoral-agricultural economy with distinct feudal overtones.[1]

With one result: although each North African country was said to be pacified, the French never ruled comfortably, and force was never far removed from government. An Arab Bureau with a strong military arm put down early, spasmodic resistance without much trouble, though often with considerable brutality. But the multiplying germs of nationalism that ultimately infected Indochina and the Far East also settled in North Africa and the Middle East.

The germs attacked variously. In Tunisia, a nationalist political party, the Neo-Destour, emerged in the early 1930s under Habib Bourguiba and, despite a host of vicissitudes, continued to grow and, finally, in 1956, to win a relatively peaceful battle for independence. Morocco reacted more slowly: In the 1940s, nationalists strongly influenced by Cairo nationalists founded *Istiq-lal,* which won the backing of Sultan Mohammed V and, as in the case of the Neo-Destour, overcame multiple obstacles to wage a successful campaign for independence, again a relatively peaceful transition, occurring in 1956.[2] The process in both cases involved considerable guerrilla-terrorist activity, but, like international liberal pressures, this proved contributory rather than fundamental. Both countries owed an immense debt first to the Indochinese insurgency, which drained France of so much of her strength, including troops from North Africa, and second to the Algerian rebellion, which began in late 1954.

Algeria was a late-comer to the Arab nationlist movement, primarily because of her special relationship with France. Unlike other colonies, Algeria constituted part of metropolitan France. Europeans had begun settling in coastal areas soon after Bugeaud had put down initial re-

1. Joan Gillespie, *Algeria—Rebellion and Revolution* (London: Ernest Benn, 1960); Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1961).

2. Stéphane Bernard, *The Franco-Morocco Conflict 1943–56* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

sistance, and in time grew to a heterogeneous colony of over a million Frenchmen, Italians, Spaniards, and Corsicans.

French culture affected Algeria more than Tunisia or Morocco; educated Algerian Moslems often regarded themselves as French rather than Algerian. Probably for this reason, no forceful leader such as Habib Bourguiba emerged from the educated classes during the fateful thirties and forties, nor did a monarchical symbol exist as a nationalist rallying point.

Despite wishful thinking of European Algerians who denied Moslems a national tradition, a latent nationalism existed: It stemmed from centuries before the birth of Christ, and it survived and gained from centuries of occupation by Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, and modern Europeans.[3] It began to emerge after World War I, but it was always factious, and intense internal rivalry made it easier to neutralize, if not suppress, from without.

Nationalist murmurings before World War I found voice shortly after the war, when Ferhat Abbas, representing a group of French-educated Moslems and former Moslem officers in the French army, unsuccessfully demanded social and political reforms. Returning Algerian soldiers—about one hundred thousand had served in France—and Algerian workers showed more interest in economic reforms, which, together with a demand for independence, became the rallying cry of the ENA (*Étoile Nord-Africaine*) movement, soon led by Messali Hadj, a Communist who subsequently left the party and, influenced by Chekib Arslan, became strongly pro-Islamic.[4] A small Communist Party also emerged, but was banned in 1929. In the mid-thirties, a religious movement called the Association of Ulemas (religious teachers) added to the cry for reforms and independence. Though alarmed, the administration and the powerful European community turned a deaf ear to all these voices. Shortly after the war, they had neutralized Clemenceau's effort to introduce parity in the French-Moslem relationship, and the next twenty years saw no change in their attitude.

In World War II, the European colony accepted Vichy rule and, in turn, gained a free hand to ban various nationalist movements and imprison such leaders as Messali.[5] Ferhat Abbas and other prominent Moslems nonetheless survived to present the Free French Government with an Algerian Manifesto—a demand for self-determination and specific rural reforms in return for Moslem participation in World War II.[6] While promising nothing specific, De Gaulle seemed sympathetic and, once again, Moslems fought on the side of France. Ferhat Abbas and his intellectual following, now supporting a party called the AML (*Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté*), continued to press for reforms

3. Gillespie, op. cit.
4. Ibid.
5. SORO, op. cit.
6. Behr, op. cit.; see also Gillespie, op. cit.

within the system. The ENA, however, which had become the PPA (*Parti du Peuple Algérien*) ". . . advocated direct action in the countryside as the only way of achieving improvements."[7] On V-E Day, May 8, 1945, the PPA instigated Moslem riots that led to the death of perhaps a hundred Europeans in Algeria.[8] European "militia" forces, supported by police and army units, attacked Moslem settlements throughout Algeria; French authorities admitted fifteen hundred Moslem deaths, but more-realistic estimates varied from twenty thousand, reported by *Time* magazine, to forty-five thousand, claimed by Algerian nationalists.[9]

The slaughter quieted matters—temporarily. Under Governor General Chataigneau's rather liberal aegis, Ferhat Abbas converted his following to a new party, the UDMA (*Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien*), and continued to follow a moderate policy. Also in 1946, Messali Hadj converted the remnant PPA organization to a new party, the MTLD (*Mouvement pour le Triomphe de Libertés Démocratiques*). This party, too, seemed to follow a moderate policy despite militants who wanted to use force to fight the government.[10]

Decisive action by the French Government might now have steadied matters. Instead, the Algerian Statute of 1947 merely modified the existing system, with real power remaining in hands of a new governor general, a reactionary socialist, Marcel-Edmond Naegelen.[11] Although the new law provided for an Algerian Assembly with legislative powers, half of the one hundred and twenty elected delegates ". . . were elected by one-tenth of Algeria's population [i.e., the Europeans and upper-class Moslems], the remainder by the other nine-tenths."[12] Internal administration remained lopsided and corrupt. Rigged elections in 1948 offered flamboyant proof that nothing had really changed: precisely what the European colony intended.[13]

Their error lay in believing same.

As happened elsewhere, World War II had caused fundamental changes. The fall of France and the loyalty of Algeria's Europeans to Vichy had discredited the administration. Some Algerians had taken allied promises of self-determination seriously; returning veterans who had fought long and hard in Italy looked forward to overdue reforms. Instead, they found the Algerian people victims of reaction—and a few rebelled.

In 1947, a small group, which included a number of war veterans,

7. SORO, op. cit.
8. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Algerian Insurrection 1954–1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967).
9. *Time*, February 17, 1958.
10. Behr, op. cit.
11. Tanya Matthews, *Algerian ABC* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961).
12. Behr, op. cit.
13. Gillespie, op. cit.; see also Matthews, op. cit.

splintered from the MTLD to launch a secret paramilitary movement, the OS (*Organisation Secrète*), under the titular control of handsome and magnetic Ahmed Ben Bella, a twenty-eight-year-old combat veteran and former sergeant major in the Free French army, where he had been decorated for bravery. Drawing on Mao Tse-tung's writings, lessons of the Sinn Fein movement, and Tito's World War II resistance, in three years Ben Bella and his fellows built the organization to some five hundred trained militants. In addition, the OS won new members from MTLD ranks and, in time, attracted another underground movement, Belkacem Krim's guerrillas already active in Kabylie.

The first important overt action by OS occurred in 1949, when Ben Bella, remembering Lenin's teachings, masterminded a robbery of the Oran post office, which yielded party coffers over three million francs.[14] Following this short-lived success, French police closed in, arrested Ben Bella and other leaders, and captured numerous caches of arms. Important lieutenants fled to Cairo, however, where Ben Bella joined them after escaping from jail, in 1952.

The young rebels now formed the League of Nine (*Club des Neufs*), which, early in 1954, became the CRUA (*Comité Révolutionnaire pour l'Unité et l'Action*). Ben Bella and three other members remained in Cairo as an External Delegation to drum up political and material support for the rebellion from sympathetic states. The other leaders returned to Algeria as an Interior Delegation, each to organize and train guerrilla forces in an assigned *wilaya,* or operational district. In October, the six wilaya commanders secretly met and decided to start the shooting.

The rebel decision cannot be justified, but it can be explained. It was a decision of desperation. The majority of Algeria's nine and a half million Moslems were living in abject poverty, devoid of either dignity or hope. A French official investigation in 1954 revealed the travesty of the comforting fiction that Algeria was France—"*L'Algérie, c'est la France*" (as a European living in Algiers would say with tears in his eyes, having just referred to his Moslem servant as *raton* [little rat] or *bicot* [nigger]). According to the Maspétiol report,

> . . . 90 percent of Algeria's wealth was in the hands of ten percent of its inhabitants; nearly one million Moslems were totally or partially unemployed, and two more millions seriously under-employed; the average yearly income per head of the rural Moslem population stood at about 16 pounds sterling, and for another 1,600,000 Moslems living in towns the annual per capita income was about 45 pounds sterling. Eighty percent of all Moslem children did not go to school at all. The report stressed French achievements in road building, urban development and public health, but, taking account

14. Behr, op. cit.

of the changing value of the franc, it estimated that France was spending on Algeria, in 1953, about the same amount yearly as she had spent in 1913.[15]

Other authorities estimated that, in 1954, ". . . about three-quarters of the Moslem population was illiterate in Arabic, and about 90 per cent illiterate in French." Six and a half million Moslems owned some 615,000 small farms; 120,000 Europeans including dependents owned about twenty-two thousand farms. Nearly 6 million Moslem farmers claimed a per-capita annual income of about $45; European per-capita income from farming ranged from $240 to about $3,000.[16] A limited industrial plant employed only half a million Moslems; another half million worked in France. A galloping birthrate compounded this almost unbelievable poverty.[17]

The French Government, or, rather, a succession of divergent governments representing the controlled anarchy under which France labored for as long as one could remember, had recognized the unhappy situation and attempted without success to implement overdue reforms. Much of the failure rested on lack of stable government, with accompanying inefficiency, which in turn made it easier for the *colons,* some one million Europeans of whom about half were French, to sabotage reform measures in favor of rule by force, a policy in general approved by local French civil and military authorities.

The *colons* seem to have altogether misjudged the situation. Holding Moslems in general contempt, they had neutralized nationalist movements during and after World War II and apparently thought that this halcyon state of affairs could continue by their paying lip service through the Algerian Assembly to Moslem delegates derisively termed *Beni Oui Ouis* (yes men) by Abbas' and Messali's followers. As had happened to the British in Cyprus and Kenya, and to French and Dutch *colons* in Indochina and Indonesia, they refused to recognize the strength of nationalist feeling that contributed, in this case, to CRUA support. One of them, a liberal named Jean Daniel, wrote in *L'Express* in June 1955:

> . . . These French of Algeria have more than one point in common with the Southerners of the United States: courage, dynamism, narrowness of views, the sincere conviction that they are born to be masters as others are born to be slaves.[18]

Such was their arrogance derived from ignorance that they failed to recognize and correct a collision course with disaster.

15. Ibid.
16. Gillespie, op. cit.
17. Germaine Tillion, *Algeria—the Realities* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958); See also Tanya Matthews, op. cit.; Behr, op. cit.
18. Gillespie, op. cit.

In choosing force, however, the rebels also displayed an arrogance of ignorance:

. . . They underestimated both the umbilical cord linking Algeria to France in the minds of the great majority of public opinion in metropolitan France, and the diehard courage, tenacity and obstinacy of the European inhabitants of Algeria. They underestimated the military forces against them and the means France was prepared to place at the French army's disposal. Above all, they underestimated the sacrifices which nearly every single one of Algeria's nine million Moslems would have to endure. . . . They underestimated, too, Algeria's importance as a pawn in the Cold War, and naively failed to realize that France's allies, however disapproving, would neither interfere nor proffer advice until French public opinion had reconciled itself to the eventuality of Algerian independence.[19]

On November 1, 1954, rebel bands—perhaps a total of two to three thousand poorly armed guerrillas—struck more than thirty targets, the majority being gendarmerie posts in the Aurès Mountains of eastern Algeria.[20] Liberally scattered pamphlets announced that the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale,* or FLN, the new name for the CRUA) and its army—soon to be called the National Liberation Army, or ALN—would lead Algerians to independence. If France were to grant this, the tract explained, European nationals would retain their rights and presumably France would enjoy a special relationship with the new nation.[21] Here was a basis for negotiation. French rejection automatically meant war.

French military force in Algeria numbered about fifty thousand. While armored columns struck out for the Aurès area to crush the rebels, the Mendès-France government rushed in three paratrooper battalions from France. The military showed no great concern; in minds of senior commanders, this was a local uprising, the work of Communist *fellaghas,* or bandits, who would quickly yield to superior power of the French army.

As any veteran of Indochina might have informed the military commander, mechanized columns accomplished little except to provide numerous targets of opportunity for lurking guerrillas. Nor should the reader be surprised to learn that simultaneous police measures only exacerbated the situation: for example, police arrested one hundred and sixty MTLD members, some of whom were moderates wanting to avoid war. Police brutality almost immediately provided another divisive issue: In December, forty-six Moslem members of the Algerian Assembly protested against ". . . illegal searches, arbitrary arrests and

19. Behr, op. cit.
20. Gillespie, op. cit.; O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
21. Gillespie, op. cit.

inhuman brutalities to which prisoners . . . are subjected." The vicious circle of terror and counterterror soon neutralized moderating forces such as those led by Ferhat Abbas. Revolution spread rapidly, the guerrillas ruthlessly killing or maiming any moderates ("traitors") who stood in the way. The new governor general, Jacques Soustelle, inspected the Aurès area in early 1955 and found a countryside frozen by fear: ". . . The population as a whole, without throwing in their lot with the rebels . . . remained frightened and noncommittal."[22] Soustelle told the Algerian Assembly that he intended to pacify the country, which would continue to ". . . form an integral part of France, one and indivisible."[23]

Within months, rebellion had spread north to coastal areas and then west. In April, the French Government declared a limited state of emergency and endowed certain local authorities with powers similar to those exercised by British forces in Malaya. But Soustelle's pacifying hand was checked by limited resources—in May, the army numbered only one hundred thousand.[24] The European colony also frustrated most of his administrative reforms. He did establish a new administrative corps, the SAS (*Sections Administratives Spécialisées*), which sent young French officers to remote parts of the country to function similarly to British civil district commissioners.

The SAS was still in the formative stage when Moslem uprisings in eastern Algeria brought another wave of terror. The ghastly killings and counterkillings of August 1955 led to three important developments. The first was the effect of Moslem terror on the new governor general. Soustelle, a young scholar and anthropologist who had served De Gaulle in an intelligence capacity during the war, arrived in Algeria with a liberal reputation. *Colon* hostility seemed to shake his limited assurance, as did Moslem savagery; in short order, his liberal intentions disappeared like gilt in the acid of reality. The second was the effect outside Algeria: The Afro-Asian bloc introduced the subject of the rebellion into the United Nations, much against France's will. The third was the effect on Algerian Moslem "moderates" such as Ahmed Francis and Ferhat Abbas, who published a manifesto addressed to the French Government and urging "the Algerian national idea," a document that ". . . both encouraged the rebels to continue and had a considerable effect on French public opinion in France."[25]

Inept countertactics remained the rebellion's best friend. In Edward Behr's words,

> . . . Police and army activity against the rebels contributed to its very success: the lack of discrimination with which arrests were made and villages

22. Behr, op. cit.
23. Ibid.
24. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
25. Behr, op. cit.

destroyed, the increasingly brutal interrogation measures practised by troops and police, the blind conservatism of most European settlers, all helped to turn the mass of the Moslem population into prudent "attentistes," intent on keeping out of trouble if possible but increasingly willing to support the rebellion.[26]

The French military build-up was still under way during 1955, and commanders did not possess sufficient troops to carry out traditional pacification tactics. Once troops occupied important towns and villages (the *quadrillage*), few units remained for the *ratissage* (cleaning out grid areas so that SAS units could proceed with pacification) or for the *bouclage* (sealing off and combing known insurgent areas). The FLN also benefited from Arab League support, particularly from Nasser's Egypt, and from Tunisian and Moroccan sanctuaries, which provided arms and supply.

French political weakness was even more serious. In early 1956, the new French premier, socialist Guy Mollet, appointed Soustelle's successor, seventy-nine-year-old General Georges Catroux. In Algiers to install his new minister resident, Mollet faced a hostile European mob, which pelted him with rotten vegetables while police stood idly by. Bowing to mob authority, Mollet cancelled the appointment and named a man acceptable to Algerian *colons,* Robert Lacoste.

Mollet's disastrous capitulation provided false strength to Europeans in Algeria and blinded them even further to political realities. In their own eyes, they had become a law unto themselves, an attitude that nullified further conciliatory efforts toward Moslems on the part of the Mollet government and thus widened the gulf between European and Moslem. But more than this: Mollet's political insouciance infuriated and frightened Moslem moderates and inevitably drove more of them into supporting and even joining the FLN.

By bowing to force, then, Mollet opened the way to force, which proved disastrous to all elements in Algeria. Mollet's action, as analyzed by Edward Behr, did not stem from cowardice but, rather, from ignorance derived by listening to the wrong people—a tragedy, since, ". . . on any number of occasions, civilians and officers alike could have gauged the true nature of the situation in Algeria by questioning men of proven experience whose testimony was not likely to be false."[27] Ignorant of ". . . the true nature of the situation," Mollet succumbed to military blandishments and agreed to let the army ". . . use political propaganda weapons" in addition to other pacification measures. With this decision, Mollet tacitly yielded control over the French military at a time when control was vital.[28]

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.; see also Gillespie, op. cit.

The French army was in a particularly dangerous frame of mind at this time. Its collapse in 1940 and its defeat in Indochina had left it laboring under a gigantic inferiority complex. Although blaming the home front for the Indochinese disaster—the stab-in-the-back thesis so effectively enunciated by Hindenburg and Ludendorff in 1918—the army, in reality, had been greatly impressed by the Viet Minh intermingling of political and military factors to fight revolutionary warfare. Returning prisoners of war also had been indoctrinated in Viet Minh ways, and, in time, a powerful school of revolutionary warfare—*la guerre révolutionnaire*—had developed in the French army.

We are unable here to analyze it in detail; that has been done by Professor Peter Paret in his excellent book *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria—The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine.*[29] In brief, the French school dissected Chinese and Viet Minh revolutionary doctrines and developed a counterrevolutionary doctrine that depended on powerful ideological and moral forces to produce a "dynamic strategy." If communism formed a strong ideology, then hatred of communism would form a stronger one. If Communists could indoctrinate soldiers and civilians with certain beliefs, the French could indoctrinate them with counterbeliefs.

Proponents of the new school recognized that the army would have to change its ways, relying heavily on psychological warfare in reeducating soldiers and target peoples to the glory and grandeur of a new crusade. But the nation, too, would have to change its ways: There would be no shirking, as in the case of Indochina; if government could not lead the people to support counterrevolutionary warfare, then the army would have to educate government and people!

The doctrine contained certain strengths. At a time of defeat and doubt, it offered a positive program, a splendid vision of a new France. Militarily, it admitted past errors and sought to correct them, in some cases successfully, as will be seen.

Its weaknesses, however, far outweighed strengths. Approaching the subject deductively, its proponents had gathered operational flowers from Mao's and Giap's works while ignoring thorny philosophical stems. The doctrine of *la guerre révolutionnaire* as applied to the Algerian rebellion failed from the beginning, because, as noted by that sound reporter C. L. Sulzberger, it ignored Mao's first lesson: ". . . If the political objectives that one seeks to attain are not the secret and profound aspirations of the masses, all is lost from the beginning."[30]

Nor is genius required to recognize the doctrine's fascist connotations. As Professor Paret asked: Is it accidental that so many of its

29. Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria—The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

30. C. L. Sulzberger, *The Test: De Gaulle and Algeria* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962).

theorists and supporters ". . . are found among the leaders of the various putsches and rebellions that shook France during the past year?" Its proponents made no secret of their disgust not alone for the Fourth Republic, which they insisted had let down French arms so badly, but also for the reigning political philosophy: In Colonel Hogard's words of 1958, ". . . it is time to realize that the democratic ideology has become powerless in the world today."[31] In the minds of the new school, democratic ideology could only be replaced by totalitarian ideology, which was and is foreign to political beliefs held by most Frenchmen.

The doctrine contained other weaknesses. In its civil application to Algeria, it was far too ambitious, considering size and training of the French army. It was also too negative: Its ideology pre-supposed a constant state of war with Communists, a war of no compromise, a fight to the finish. This was repugnant to millions of Frenchmen, including hundreds of thousands of conscript soldiers who were tired of war and held little respect for the professional army.

At this crucial time, proponents of *la guerre révolutionnaire* badly overestimated the strength of appeal to fellow countrymen. They undoubtedly believed that the bulk of the army subscribed to their new mission—that of preventing a Communist takeover of the world. Despite the Communist threat and the anarchic quality of the home government, the bulk of the army, not to mention that of the citizenry, did not believe in the mission. Civil and military leaders, finding its proponents a bore, shrugged off the new propaganda. This was a mistake: Boring it was, but, as will be seen in the next chapter, it was also dangerous.

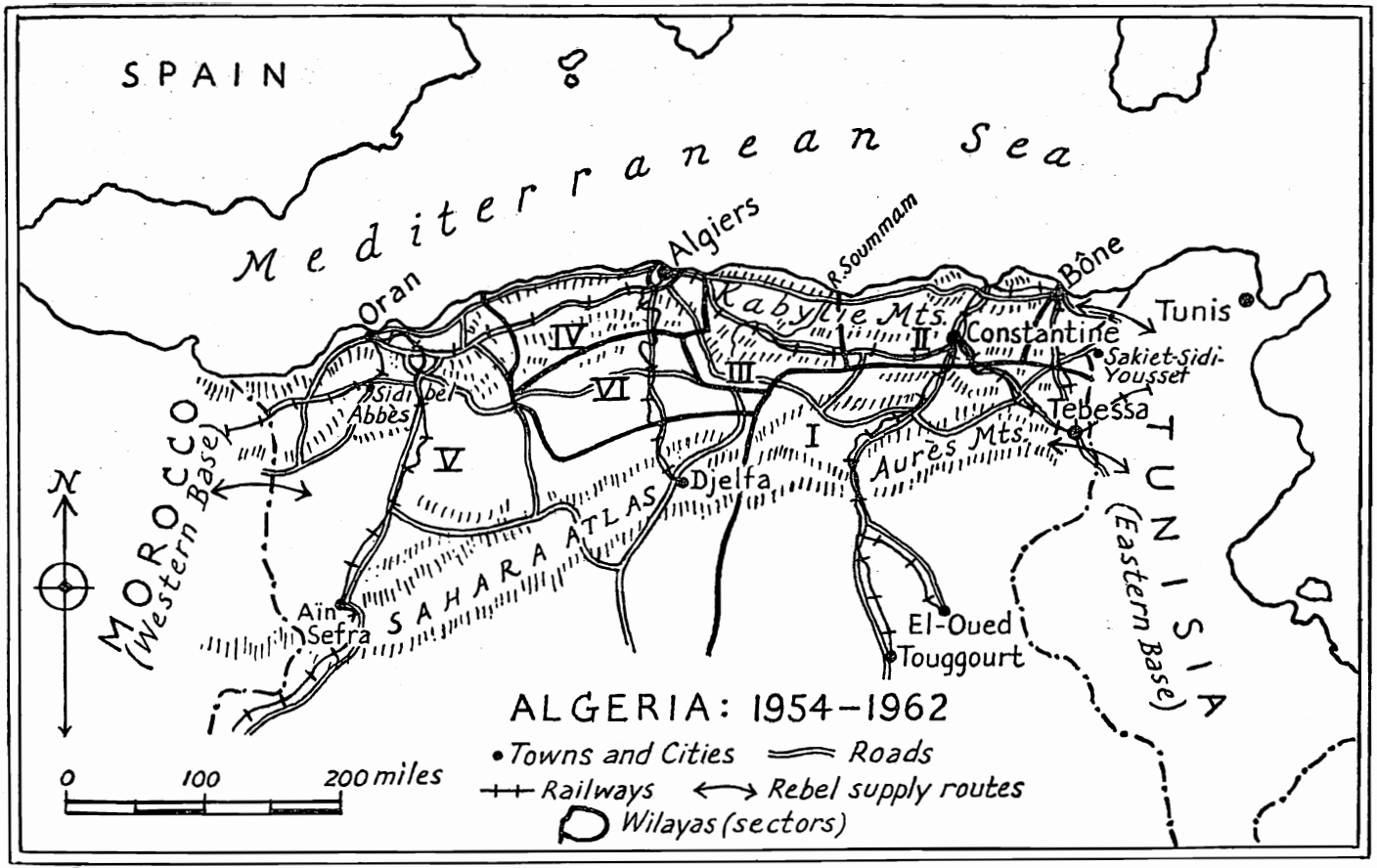
31. Paret (*French Revolutionary Warfare*), *supra.*

Chapter 71

FLN growth • Rebel weaknesses • French strength increases • The CNRA • The battle of Algiers • Jacques Massu and la guerre révolutionnaire *• French excesses • War in the countryside • Guerrilla organization • The counterinsurgency task: destruction and construction • French tactics • The Morice Line • Problem of sanctuaries • Failure of the* regroupement *program • SAS difficulties • De Gaulle takes over • The Constantine Plan • French tactical adaptation: the Challe Plan • Role of helicopters • De Gaulle's peace offensive • Origin of OAS • A mutiny fails • Algerian independence • The cost*

REVOLUTIONARY DOCTRINE OR NO, the French army continued to rely on traditional techniques in fighting the Algerian war. In March 1956, shortly after Mollet's abdication to the Algiers mob, the army executed two Moslem terrorists. The FLN replied by killing or wounding a number of Europeans—and the gulf between European and Moslem again widened, to FLN advantage.

The FLN also gained when the French granted independence to Morocco and Tunisia, thus easing the flow of arms into Algeria besides providing border sanctuaries and training areas for guerrilla forces. The abortive Anglo-French campaign in Suez, during summer of 1956, further helped rebel operations by drawing off French military units. The army's interception and arrest, a few months later, of Ben Bella and several associates who were flying from Rabat to a conference called by Habib Bourguiba in Tunis was a grave error; since the party was a guest of the Moroccan sultan, the act insulted Moslem hospitality and made Tunisian and Moroccan leaders even more sympathetic to the


SPAIN
Mediterranean Sea
Algiers
R. Soummam
Bône
Oran
Kabylie Mts.
Tunis
Constantine
Sakiet-Sidi-Yousset
Tebessa
Sidi bel Abbès
MOROCCO (Western Base)
Djelfa
Aurès Mts.
SAHARA ATLAS
TUNISIA (Eastern Base)
Aïn Sefra
El-Oued
Touggourt
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
N
0
100
200 miles
ALGERIA: 1954–1962
• Towns and Cities
Roads
Railways
Rebel supply routes
Wilayas (sectors)

M.E.P.

Algerian rebel cause. The Mollet government acquiesced in the deed, thus compounding damage both by eliminating a powerful Algerian nationalist with whom to conduct negotiations, and by further alienating the most powerful leader in the Maghreb, Bourguiba, who was actively trying to promote a peaceful solution to the Algerian problem.[1] Taken with inept military tactics, these events helped FLN to increase during 1956 to an estimated eighty-five hundred guerrillas supported by twenty-one thousand auxiliaries, who greatly expanded the rebellion.

The French military, however, also enjoyed some important advantages. One was increasing strength: By April 1956, the forces in Algeria numbered 250,000, which, by utilizing conscript soldiers and reservists, would rise to four hundred thousand by autumn.[2] Another was the factious nature of the rebellion. Ferhat Abbas and other UDMA moderates did not leap into FLN arms, but, rather, displayed an independence that, properly exploited, might well have become an important and perhaps even decisive divisive force. Nor did Messali Hadj and the MTLD join FLN ranks. Instead, he reconstituted the party into the Algerian National Movement (*Mouvement National Algérien*), or MNA, which rivaled the FLN both in Algiers and in the countryside, as well as in France proper. Although the Communist PCA joined forces with the FLN in Algiers, neither organization trusted the other, a precarious relationship that ultimately resulted in almost total demise of the Communists.[3]

The FLN and its militant arm, the ALN, were also becoming divisive. Conflict would probably have developed between the two branches—the External Delegation, in Cairo, and the Internal Delegation, inside Algeria—even with proper communications. With messages taking up to three months to deliver by courier and with long delays in delivery of arms and supply, misunderstandings frequently occurred and rivalries flourished. Lack of internal cohesion also played a disruptive role. Tribes within one wilaya held little interest in other wilayas (precisely what Lawrence had discovered in Palestine in 1917). Tribal rivalries not only prevented co-ordinated operations, but also hindered equitable distribution of arms and supply. Ambitious and inexperienced guerrilla leaders began outright attacks on French units, a disaster that, according to Major O'Ballance, cost six thousand insurgent lives—about a third of the guerrilla army—in just two months, April and May of 1956;

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace 1956–1961* (London: William Heinemann, 1966): In late 1956, at President Eisenhower's request, the new ruler of Tunisia outlined a plan that called for France to grant independence to Algeria. As with Tunisia, it would be granted in stages—a plan that in the end, he believed, would prove beneficial to France. As for his own position: "The fighting in Algeria," he told the President, "holds back Tunisia and economic and social progress. I want to do everything to promote a happy solution of the Algerian problem."

2. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*

3. Ibid.

French authorities later claimed fourteen thousand insurgent deaths by year's end.

Leadership arrests and fatalities meant the rise of new leaders such as the young Kabyle, Ramdane Abbane, who soon challenged Ben Bella's leadership. In August 1956, Abbane arranged the Soummam conference, which brought together some two hundred and fifty wilaya rebels in a valley shown as "pacified" on French military maps. Members of the External Delegation (Cairo) were delayed and never did arrive, a confusion that some observers traced to Abbane's machinations.

Abbane was a rough but clever and forceful leader. At the Soummam conference, he established a new governing body, the CNRA (*Conseil National de la Révolution Algérienne*) which, together with its executive, the five-member CCE, was to challenge the Cairo group for leadership of the rebellion. Abbane charged the CCE with introducing a coherent administrative system in each wilaya as well as co-ordinating wilaya operations. He also persuaded his fellows that time was ripe for an all-out urban terrorist campaign—". . . A curfew in Algiers," he argued (in the Lenin tradition), "is worth two hundred dead in the mountains"[4]—a dreadful decision that not only would cost the FLN numerous sympathizers abroad but would nearly cost it its existence. Ironically, Ben Bella, who recognized the error and probably could have prevented the campaign from taking place, was arrested the following month.[5]

Abbane should have moved more cautiously. A new factor, discovery of valuable oil fields in the Sahara, had stiffened French determination to quell the insurrection. By end of 1956, French forces had grown to over four hundred thousand, and the home government had ordered conscript troops to fight. Moreover, the Mollet government had all but abrogated its authority over Algerian affairs when it allowed the army in Algeria to kidnap Ben Bella—and the leadership of that army was determined to eliminate the guerrillas.

Optimistic military reports from the field also had favorably impressed the civil representative in Algiers, Robert Lacoste. When Algiers police failed to cope with FLN's new terror campaign, Lacoste turned the suppression problem over to Major General Jacques Massu and the 10th Parachute Division. The battle of Algiers, which began in late January 1957 and lasted until September, left little doubt in Moslem minds of French military determination and strength and little doubt in colonial minds that the French military was in full control of French policy in Algeria.

In killed, wounded, and maimed, and in brutality and terror, the battle of Algiers compares to the 1944 battle of Warsaw (see Chapter 32,

4. Gillespie, op. cit.

5. Ben Bella subsequently condemned the action in letters sent from prison to FLN leaders. Abbane himself did not long remain in power; in June 1958, FLN newspapers announced his death—possibly arranged by the party.

Volume I). The rebels started the battle with the upper hand: They numbered about twelve hundred well-organized hard-core terrorists supported by perhaps forty-five hundred members of the FLN, an organization that provided a variety of skills and was financed by taxation and extortion, which yielded perhaps three hundred thousand dollars a month.[6] According to one French officer, Colonel Roger Trinquier, whom we met earlier in Indochina (see Chapters 55 and 63), they faced only about a thousand police, neither trained nor equipped for insurgency warfare. Moslems relied on terror in a score and more of forms —unrestricted, promiscuous terror that struck at innocent and guilty alike. Based in the notorious casbah, terrorists stole snake-like through the city to bomb and kill and then hide in the sympathetic Moslem quarter—one important rebel leader, Yassef Saadi, later lived within two hundred yards of army headquarters.[7]

When Lacoste turned the problem over to the army, Massu went after them. Massu was not very bright. A big man with enormous ears and a nose that brought to mind Cyrano de Bergerac, "Roughneck" Massu, as he was known, embraced excesses preached by younger proponents of the *guerre-révolutionnaire* school, colonels such as Trinquier, Ducasse, and Thomazo, who believed, like Communist leaders they had studied, that end justifies means—that fire must be fought with fire.

Lacking co-operation of the Moslem population, Massu depended on informers for intelligence. He established military "special police" units called DOPs (*Détachements Opérationnels de Protection*), which incorporated Moslem defectors; he used hooded informers to identify terrorists; he formed Moslem militia units. Major O'Ballance described another of his techniques, which Diem's government would later use in Vietnam:

> . . . The paratroops started the "ilot" system of surveillance and checking personnel, by making one man responsible for a family, and another responsible for a building or house in which there were invariably many families, another for a whole alleyway or street, and so on. In this way they were able to lay their hands on any wanted Muslim in the Casbah within hours.[8]

In addition to informers, counterterrorist organizations flourished. Consisting of European *ultras,* these employed agent-provocateur techniques: blowing up Moslem and even European dwellings to provoke army reaction.

Most of all, Massu's people depended on fear and duress, and their activities soon equaled anything practiced by the Gestapo in France during World War II. In addition to beatings and killings, the paratroopers used torture—the famous *gégêne,* by which field-telephone wires were

6. Gillespie, op. cit.
7. Trinquier, op. cit.
8. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*

attached to the victim's genitals and current shot through them. Massu and some of his officers openly defended the usage, Massu himself submitting to it.[9] His intelligence officer, Colonel Roger Trinquier, later argued that a terrorist cannot claim the same honors as a soldier if he rejects the same obligations; rather, he is beholden to yield vital information such as the name of his superior. If not, he can be tortured:

> . . . No lawyer is present for such an interrogation. If the prisoner gives the information requested, the examination is quickly terminated; if not, specialists must force his secret from him. Then, as a soldier, he must face the suffering, and perhaps the death, he has heretofore managed to avoid. The terrorist must accept this as a condition inherent in his trade and in the methods of warfare that, with full knowledge, his superiors and he himself have chosen. Once the interrogation is finished, however, the terrorist can take his place among soldiers.[10]

Trinquier's philosophy, which was shared by most proponents of the doctrine of *la guerre révolutionnaire* and by a great many police both in Algeria and metropolitan France, represented a tragic reversion to medieval thinking. If Torquemada would have agreed, the Italian philosopher Beccaria would have disagreed; in a work published in 1764, he demolished the rationale behind torture: ". . . Torture, it was said, is *inhuman;* it is also inefficient; it is frequently used against innocent people and the confessions extracted by it have no validity."[11] Frederick the Great had already abolished torture in Prussia. Other civilized nations tended to follow Beccaria's lead, and, in 1957, most of French society agreed—particularly those who had suffered German barbarism in World War II. The bulk of French society, including a good portion of the army, had no idea that torture had become standard operating procedure in many army units. Greater was the shock, therefore, when such works as Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's *Lieutenant in Algeria,* Lartéguy's *The Centurions,* and Henri Alleg's *The Question* revealed a military depravity that brought howls of liberal protest and a "crisis of conscience" to the army high command—a military depravity that in time would culminate in unsuccessful rebellion against legitimate government.[12] As Edward Behr later wrote, the French army, along with many

9. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy* (Harmondsworth, Middlx: Penguin Books, 1963); Behr, op. cit.: This grandstand play proved nothing, for, as Behr points out, Massu submitted only to limited pain, like going to a dentist, whereas torture derives much of its force from the victim's contemplation of prolonged pain; see also Henri Alleg, *The Question* (London: John Calder, 1958), for a vivid description of French army methods.

10. Trinquier, op. cit.

11. Vidal-Naquet, op. cit.

12. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *Lieutenant in Algeria* (London: Hutchinson, 1958). Tr. Ronald Matthews; Jean Lartéguy, op. cit.; Henri Alleg, op. cit.; Vidal-Naquet, op. cit.; Servan-Schreiber published his work in serial form in *L'Express*

other armies, on occasion, had behaved badly; in the Algerian rebellion, however, ". . . police and army brutality became a permanent and quietly efficient instrument, a weapon of war of the same caliber as the grenade or the mortar-bomb."[13] Pierre Vidal-Naquet went further: ". . . The part played by torture throughout the Algerian war can be summed up in a few words; it started as a police method of interrogation, developed into a military method of operation, and then ultimately turned into a clandestine institution which struck at the very root of the life of the nation."[14]

French policy, which could be described as controlled genocide, seemed to work: By October 1957, the army had destroyed the FLN apparatus in Algiers; Larbi Ben M'Hidi was dead, Yassef Saadi surrendered, other leaders dead, captured, or fled; the city quiet. A massive French effort in the countryside also brought favorable results.

Or so it seemed.

The total campaign had not eliminated the FLN. Killings and arrests and tortures that affected thousands of innocent persons had shocked the population, as ice numbs a wound. As shock wore off, as people realized this was a fight to what the army intended to be their finish, they turned increasingly to the FLN. Moderate leaders such as Ferhat Abbas now not only joined the organization but became one of its leaders. Tunis and Morocco increased support of the rebellion, as did Arab League countries.

The situation in the countryside resembled a small-scale Vietnam. The Soummam conference had brought considerable order to rebel ranks. A rebel colonel now commanded each wilaya and was responsible for civil as well as military functions. A three-man military committee responsible for political affairs, military operations, and liaison/intelligence assisted him, as did a civil committee of some five elected representatives concerned with ". . . civil, financial, economic and Islamic problems."[15] As with the Viet Minh in Indochina, administration carried down to village level, where possible. Small committees, the Popular Assembly, carried out propaganda, taxation, and recruiting functions necessary to maintain civil support of guerrillas, through an organization known as OPA.

Each wilaya consisted of operational zones and subzones, and each zone, in theory at least, supported a "regular" battalion of twenty officers and three hundred and fifty men. These were full-time soldiers, the *moujahidines,* who were paid. Part-time irregulars, the *moussebilines,* the equivalent of the Viet Minh "peasants by day—guerrillas by night,"

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with the open support of one of Massu's generals: General de Bollardière commanded the Blida Atlas area and—brave and good man—forbade the use of torture in his command.

13. Behr, op. cit.
14. Vidal-Naquet, op. cit.
15. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*

assisted them, as did less-trained *fidayines,* many of whom belonged to the civil support system, the OPA, which also included women and probably children.[16]

Although FLN leaders claimed that the guerrillas acquired most arms by raids on French posts, the bulk of arms, ammunition, and supply probably came from neighboring sanctuaries: Morocco and Tunisia. In spring of 1957, the FLN's Exterior Delegation had moved from Cairo to Tunis at invitation of Habib Bourguiba, ambitious in his new-found freedom. What became known as the Eastern Base (as opposed to Morocco—the Western Base) would support some thirty thousand rebels by the end of the year.[17] Financed in part by Arab League countries, in part by taxes and extortions collected in Algeria and France, the FLN bought arms wherever possible; Egypt also sent arms captured from British stocks at Suez, and Syria supplied old French weapons. The system may have been rickety, but there was no doubt that it helped FLN forces inside and outside Algeria to grow during 1957.

The French faced a twofold counterinsurgency task: destruction and construction, as General Allard put it.[18] Security forces had to separate the guerrilla from the civil populace and destroy him along with the political infrastructure that supported him. The construction phase involved converting the population to the government's side in order to prevent re-emergence of the rebel organization.

To carry out the first phase, the French relied on the traditional concept of the *tache d'huile,* modified to circumstances. The *quadrillage* requirement—setting up garrison networks in specified areas—consumed the bulk of forces. Of three hundred thirty thousand troops assigned to rural pacification during 1957–58, three hundred thousand carried out more or less static duties while occupying towns and villages. Some thirty thousand elite troops—paratroopers, marines, and legionnaires—formed a Réserve Générale, a mobile force complete with helicopters to carry out the *ratissage,* or raking operations, and the *bouclage,* or encircling operations, designed to eliminate guerrillas in each area.

Several factors combined to lessen over-all effect of French tactics. One was the inhibiting influence of the garrison concept, which tended to leave the countryside to the guerrillas, a failing already familiar from Indochina. Another was inexperienced conscripts, who could scarcely be expected to understand intricacies of guerrilla warfare, particularly since few seniors understood those intricacies. A third was the old bugaboo from Indochina: an inadequate force for the mission. A fourth was guerrilla reinforcement from neighboring sanctuaries. A fifth was FLN determination: According to Colonel Antoine Argoud, in one small village, ". . . the OPA reorganized ten times in three years, despite public

16. Ibid.; see also Gillespie, op. cit.; Vidal-Naquet, op. cit.
17. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
18. Paret, op. cit.

executions having been carried out in the village square."[19] A sixth was French barbarism: torture, summary executions, a disregard for civilians perhaps best exemplified by Colonel Argoud's order that children should search for mines![20] A seventh was the extent of the "destruction" phase, particularly in the Kabylie, areas of which experienced repression bordering on genocide.

The French defended the garrison concept on grounds that the flag had to fly in order to instill law and confidence and thus gain intelligence essential to fighting guerrillas. The conscript problem persisted to the end: An intense psychological program designed to convert the recruit either to *la mission civilisatrice* or to a "new France," failed almost completely.

The French expanded their forces with Moslems who either volunteered or were drafted for auxiliary service, usually in small *harkas* commanded by French officers and non-commissioned officers, and also in village defense forces. French intelligence agents also subverted "independent" guerrilla bands. None of these expedients proved entirely satisfactory. Moslem forces tended to be unreliable and undoubtedly supplied a great deal of intelligence to the FLN. As for tribal subversion, Professor Paret concluded:

> . . . Promoting dissension among the nationalists was a useful policy, but the allies gained in the process were hardly reliable. The tendency to play off one side against the other appeared to be almost universal among Moslem chiefs; to keep them under control, their men had to be regularized to some extent, and with the coming of liaison officers, of uniforms and paratroopers, the bands lost the ability to blend into the countryside and merge with the population, which had been their most significant military asset.[21]

The French continued to use Moslem soldiers and eventually built up a force of about 150,000. But, as in Indochina, they did not succeed fully in exploiting the potential: ". . . The inadequacy, lateness, and contradictions of their political program prevented a sufficient rallying of the population."[22] By mid-1958, most of Mohammed Bellounis' and Belhadj Djilal's following had gone over to the ALN; Djilal's own men murdered him in April, and French soldiers killed Bellounis in July.

To neutralize Moroccan and Tunisian bases, the French navy maintained a patrol blockade that claimed right of intercept and involved the French Government in steady international imbroglio. France did not lack weapons here. As a senior member of NATO, she claimed powerful allies, and her later threat to publish a list of countries that were furnishing FLN support, including Switzerland and West Germany, effectively diminished the blockade-running operation. She could not,

19. Vidal-Naquet, op. cit.
20. Ibid.
21. Paret, op. cit.
22. Ibid.

however, blockade the Libyan coast, and arms continued to arrive in that country for road shipment to Tunis, and also cross-country from Egypt.

Simultaneously, the French Government carried on a diplomatic offensive designed to prevent other nations from supporting the FLN. She put particular pressure on Moroccan and Tunisian governments, which, due to natural sympathy for the rebels reflected in internal political pressures, were not inclined to co-operate. It was a difficult situation: Increased pressure would further alienate one of the best friends the West had in Africa, Habib Bourguiba.

The troops fighting in Algeria understandably did not appreciate diplomatic nuances. Commanders would spend months searching out and reducing a guerrilla unit only to find it reinforced from across the border; or, if action grew too hot for the guerrilla, he escaped across the border, precisely as had happened in Greece.

The army reacted in two ways: It began building a fortified barrier, a forty-meter-wide complex cored by an electrified fence that stretched two hundred and fifty kilometers (about 150 miles) from Bône to south of Tebessa. Surveyed by radar and human patrols and, in places, covered by searchlights and artillery, its approaches were mined, its avenues patrolled.[23] Like all static defenses, including the Maginot Line, the new Morice Line held disadvantages: It cost a great deal to build (one sixth of the total cost of French military operations for a year)[24]; it required thousands of troops to patrol the often tortuous terrain; in places, it was as far as fifty miles from the border, a disadvantage corrected in time by two expedients: clearing the natives from the area and burning off brush to make a free-fire zone (*zone interdite*) suitable for ground and air interdiction, and in places building a second parallel fence; finally, it could be outflanked.[25] The Morice Line, however, seriously impeded infiltration, though probably not to the degree claimed by military authorities.[26]

The army also moved operations closer and closer to the border until, in September, it exercised "the right of pursuit" into Tunisia, killing six Tunisian soldiers in the process. Instead of condemning the action, the Gaillard government defended it, which worsened already bad relations with Bourguiba's government.[27] A few months later, in February 1958, an air force colonel ordered a bombing and strafing mission against the Tunisian border village of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef on the pretext that machine guns located there fired on French aircraft three miles away in Algerian skies! The raid killed eighty and wounded seventy-nine Tunisians, including children.[28] The Gaillard government again defended

23. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
24. Ibid.
25. *Time,* March 3, 1958.
26. Ibid.; see also O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
27. *Time,* September 16, 1957.
28. *Time,* February 17, 1958.

the action, this time to hostile allies as well. Bourguiba broke off relations with France and protested to the United Nations, thus "internationalizing" the war—which France had tried to prevent.[29] Although a patchy truce emerged, the episode contributed to the fall of the Gaillard government, in April.

The army also ran into trouble in its *regroupement* program, which overlapped the constructive phase of *la guerre révolutionnaire*. Moving hundreds of thousands of people is a difficult task at best. Unfortunately, the French, for the most part, did it badly: Hastily organized and almost totally inadequate centers caused thousands of Moslem deaths from cold and hunger. Word quickly spread among the people, many of whom resisted removal and turned to the rebels.

Regroupement also had another purpose: to provide security for the people and then educate them to support the government. This task fell largely to two groups: to the psychological warfare, the 5th bureaus, of military units, and to SAS units, which, for some time, had been working in remote areas attempting to protect and mobilize the population.

Of the two organizations, SAS performed more satisfactorily, yet, in the end, failed in its task of converting the bulk of the population to the French cause. Several reasons explain the combined failure, but, basically, its fault lay in attempting to sell an inferior product, French hegemony, to people who had already tried and rejected it. Overcommitment also plagued the effort: The 5th bureaus held other major responsibilities, such as indoctrinating French troops into the blandishments of *la guerre révolutionnaire* and converting captured and surrendered guerrillas to the cause. The latter task alone involved organizing and administering internment camps before even approaching the major, brain-washing task. Shortage of qualified personnel meant reliance on people who too often replaced psychology with brutality. But here again, the chief problem lay in trying to sell a specious product with ersatz-communism methods. As Professor Paret concluded:

> . . . Crude weekly crash programs stressing hygiene, patriotism, discipline, etc. and self-criticism meetings took their place; and it is difficult to believe that such directed mass-activities could produce any lasting effects in the prisoners' minds other than antagonism.[30]

SAS units encountered a host of difficulties. Although lieutenants and captains were supposed to concentrate on improving people's welfare, the security task usually claimed the bulk of their energy. Nor did their military bias prove popular. Their use of the *képi bleu*—the distinctive military headgear—and of the *bordj*, or small fort for militia forces, reminded many peasants of the old and unpopular Arab Bureau days of military administration.[31] The language barrier further reduced their

29. Sulzberger, op. cit.
30. Paret, op. cit.
31. Behr, op. cit.

effectiveness, as did military priorities—by shelling a village, the army often undid months of work. Still, SAS units proved a step in the right direction and helped to repair past damage caused by a top-heavy administration that kept thousands of civil servants in cities and few in the countryside. But the task was enormous and personnel in short supply: At its maximum strength, the program utilized fewer than thirteen hundred officers, administering some six hundred and sixty sections with the help of about six hundred and fifty non-commissioned officers and about three thousand civilians.[32] A confusion of mission also plagued the effort. Professor Paret concluded:

> . . . The SAS officers were less concerned with understanding the Algerians than with turning them into docile collaborators.
>
> From imposing French bureaucratic control and instructing the population in French principles of public health, it was a short step to advocating French social and cultural values while—implicitly or explicitly—condemning native traditions.
>
> Far from uniting the two races, such paternalistic tactics were devisive and could easily recoil on their users.[33]

By end of 1957, then, grave faults were apparent in both the destruction and construction tasks of *la guerre révolutionnaire.* Although the army would repair some of these in time, it would not succeed in its most vital mission. In Paret's words:

> . . . Despite its control of the machinery of government and administration, and despite its psychological-warfare armory, France was unable to match the diffused but continuous moral and physical pressure that a native, nationalistic revolutionary movement can exert on the people.[34]

In spring of 1958, political poverty of the Fourth Republic turned to bankruptcy, the catalyst significantly being an uprising of European ultras in Algiers. When Algerian rebels shot three French soldiers in reprisal for execution of three terrorists, the European colony spilled into Algiers' streets. With full military co-operation, angry mobs seized Government House and established a Committee of Public Safety—an insurrection seemingly blessed by thousands of Moslems, some of whom acted spontaneously, some under coercion. Failing to cope with this new crisis, the Fourth Republic fell under the weight of its own weakness. When dust settled, General Charles de Gaulle occupied the chair of power—the beginning of a curious dictatorship that, in repairing what De Gaulle termed "the degradation of the state," would bring numerous surprises to France and the world.

And to his supporters in Algeria. For, if generals and colonels hoped

32. Paret, op. cit.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.

that De Gaulle, one of their own, would underwrite the pernicious doctrine of *la guerre révolutionnaire,* they were doomed to disappointment. De Gaulle held no intention of supporting an "integration" policy that he reasoned had come too late. If the Algerian situation was to be salvaged, he warned soon after resuming power in June 1958,

> . . . opportunities must be opened that, for many, have until now been closed. This means that a livelihood must be given to those who have not had it. This means that the dignity of those who have been deprived of it must now be recognized. This means that a country must be given to those who may have thought they had no country.[35]

De Gaulle moved slowly but steadily to re-establish state authority over the military. Dissident officers in Algeria received transfers to home commands. He ordered his new commander, General Salan, to begin replacing military administrators with civilians, and he also curtailed budget allotments for "psychological warfare," SAS, and *regroupement* activities. In September, he ordered Salan to terminate army participation in Committees of Public Safety: ". . . The moment has come," De Gaulle wrote, ". . . for the military to stop taking part in any organization which has a political character."[36] When Salan demurred, De Gaulle relieved him in favor of a civilian, Paul Delouvrier. The new army commander, General Maurice Challe, became subordinate to Delouvrier—at least in theory.

As De Gaulle consolidated his position, he moved more openly, calling for peace in Algeria. At first, he hoped to negotiate with Moslem moderates inside the country, but as he grew more aware of the real political situation, he extended overtures to the FLN, which meanwhile had established a provisional government-in-exile, the GPRA, in Tunis. Although not recognizing the new government, De Gaulle could scarcely ignore names such as Ferhat Abbas, its prime minister; Ben Bella (still in prison), its deputy prime minister; Belkacem Krim, its defense minister; and dozens of other persons representing just about every shade of Algerian nationalism. Moreover, Tunisia, Communist China, Pakistan, Morocco, Egypt, and a number of African nations had recognized it, and some were providing support.

In early October 1958, De Gaulle announced a five-year reform program for Algeria, the Constantine Plan.[37] A few weeks later, at a press

35. Behr, op. cit.; see also, Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Tr. Terence Kilmartin.

36. Sulzberger, op. cit.

37. Tanya Matthews, op. cit.: De Gaulle promised ". . . that wages in Algeria would be raised to levels comparable with those paid in France, that housing would be provided for a million people, that two-thirds of the Moslem children of school age would be sent to school, that more land would be provided for Moslem farmers and that . . . 400,000 new jobs would be found for Moslems in Algeria in the next five years"; see also Gillespie, op. cit.; see also De Gaulle, op. cit.

conference, he emphasized the continuing cost of the war, which, since November 1954, had taken the lives of seventy-two hundred French soldiers, seventy-seven thousand insurgents, fifteen hundred European civilians, and over ten thousand Moslems.[38] Offering rebels an amnesty, he called for a "peace of the brave" and even suggested, albeit cryptically, self-determination (". . . the political destiny of Algeria is Algeria itself") and a new Algeria, ". . . a vast physical and spiritual transformation," hopefully under French aegis.[39] Unfortunately, the FLN refused these overtures even though military pressure was beginning to hurt.

De Gaulle's words were no more welcome to European ultras or military commanders. Each group believed that a military "victory" was at hand—just as "victory" had been achieved in Algiers. The army held reasonable grounds for optimism. Increasing rebel strength had brought change in rebel tactics: Units up to battalion strength had begun attacking French positions, the prelude, according to some, of the third, or "mobile," phase of Mao-style warfare to be undertaken by the "regular" army training in Tunisia. But French strength also had increased; in 1959 it would reach 550,000 (including police and Moslem auxiliaries).[40] Considering French strength and armament, the rebel action proved premature and ALN units began suffering high casualties. By the time of the frontier battles in 1958, the French claimed thirty thousand insurgent dead and thirteen thousand wounded; in early 1958, they were claiming three thousand insurgent "kills" per month.[41] Allowing for normal military hyperbole—somewhere between 50 and 75 per cent —little doubt existed that the insurgents were being hurt.

French tactics, moreover, were becoming increasingly sophisticated. General Salan and his successor, General Challe, developed a more qualitative approach by organizing *commandos de chasse,* elite units of sixty to a hundred men that disappeared into rebel country for weeks at a time, in General Salan's words,

> . . . moving always on foot and nearly always at night, carrying out surprise attacks on well-chosen targets, unexpectedly arriving in villages, attempting to gain maximum intelligence on FLN units and arrest or eliminate rebel personnel, setting up intelligence networks, ambushing local rebel bands, if necessary splitting up in groups as small as four men . . . perhaps calling on artillery and the air force to engage sizeable rebel concentrations, these units would create constant insecurity for the opponent while gradually giving the rural population a comforting feeling of constant security.[42]

Helicopters had also come into their own; they numbered about two hundred and, although air force retained operational control, which led

38. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
39. Behr, op. cit.
40. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*
41. Ibid.
42. Paret, op. cit.

to late reaction, they were beginning to result in considerable operational gains.[43] Enemy resistance had caused the French to arm helicopters with machine guns and rockets and to protect pilots with armored seats and flak suits. Vulnerability to enemy fire—guerrilla fire—was still high, but improved tactics reduced it. In 1957, helicopter pilots flew fifty-six thousand combat hours and sixty-two machines were hit; in 1958, they flew sixty-four thousand hours and fifty machines were hit; in 1959, they flew sixty-six thousand hours and thirty-five were hit. In 1957, enemy fire killed nine crew members, in 1960 none.[44]

The Challe Plan, as it became known, continued to introduce more-mobile tactics. Large-scale *bouclage* operations also grew in size and intensity throughout 1959 to produce thousands of insurgent dead—according to French reports. Less-biased observers questioned that many of the dead were insurgents and that Challe's widely publicized plan was as productive as he claimed.

De Gaulle himself refused to share military optimism. Challe may have frustrated the final "mobile" phase of the insurgency, but that did not mean he had eliminated the guerrilla threat. Notwithstanding Challe's assertions, urban terrorism was increasing, and guerrilla action continued in the countryside. De Gaulle realized that the French could fight in Algeria for the next hundred years, a war that for some time had been costing France over a billion dollars a year. Military action, he realized, had become of subordinate importance—a necessary prelude to bringing the FLN to the negotiating table. The sooner he could accomplish this, the better, for the GPRA was steadily gaining international sympathy, including substantial Communist support, a fact exploited by French rightists, who forever argued that the rebellion in reality was a Communist putsch.[45]

In September 1959, De Gaulle made his famous "self-determination" speech: within four years after peace, he offered Algeria a choice of three courses: to continue as an integrated part of France; to become a federated member of the French Union; or to secede entirely from French control (in which case, France would retain the Sahara region).

Once again, De Gaulle probably did not expect instant action. Astute

43. Hilaire Béthouart, "Combat Helicopters in Algeria." In T. N. Greene (ed.), *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).

44. Ibid.

45. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra*, estimated that, by the end of 1960, Communist China was supplying half of FLN's annual $80-million budget, with Moslem countries making up the other half. In addition, terrorists extracted large sums by blackmail and extortion from Moslem workers—perhaps as much as $30 million a year in France; see also Eisenhower (*Waging Peace*), *supra:* ". . . De Gaulle's concern over suspected Communist influence in Algeria was strong"—and it was one reason that he shied away, at first, from dealing directly with FLN leaders. Chancellor Adenauer of Germany ". . . seemed almost obsessed with the Algerian problem" and the fear that the entire area would fall under Communist control—a fear that Eisenhower claimed he did not share.

politician that he was, he probably hoped to clear the air further: to satisfy allies, particularly the United States; to cause militant FLN leaders some soul-searching—Ferhat Abbas had admitted a deterioration in the guerrilla campaign and was under considerable pressure from Tunisia and Morocco to come to terms with France; to let natural pressures exert themselves on the FLN, for instance the four hundred thousand Moslems working in France; to show European ultras and the army in Algeria his intention either to gain their acquiescence or provoke a showdown. At the time of his speech, he was aware of military recalcitrance, particularly on part of Challe and Massu, who, backed by a number of "activist" groups in Algiers, were increasingly hindering Delouvrier's reform attempts.

The crisis came in January 1960, when Massu openly criticized De Gaulle in a newspaper interview. De Gaulle promptly transferred him. A protest demonstration of European "territorial units" in Algiers exploded into an insurgency that gendarmerie could not contain and army refused to put down. "Barricades Week" was an incipient attempt to unseat De Gaulle. Fortunately for him, a good many units remained loyal and the action fizzled—but only after French soldiers had fired on French civilians, increasing the bitterness of the European population. The action left De Gaulle more determined than ever to re-establish state authority; in February, he obtained "special powers" for one year and, virtually in a dictatorial role, continued his peace offensive throughout 1960.

De Gaulle continued to meet obstructionism from the European ultras and his own military leaders. Certain of the latter insisted that the FLN rebellion had failed: they pointed to successful border suppression operations and to a marked decrease in size of guerrilla units and scope of guerrilla actions. They failed to understand that De Gaulle's promise of self-determination had moved rebellion to the political arena, a fact De Gaulle realized and one emphasized both by continuing guerrilla-terrorist actions where necessary to serve FLN political purposes and by massive Moslem pro-FLN demonstrations when De Gaulle again visited the country, in December 1960.

To strengthen his hand further, De Gaulle held a referendum, in January 1961, which overwhelmingly approved his Algerian policy. Thus armed, he secretly approached the FLN to arrange talks at Évian. FLN fears of a double cross had just been assuaged when De Gaulle faced another, and final, rebellion, the price of his refusal to take drastic action against dissident military commanders. Men such as Raoul Salan, André Zeller, and Edmond Jouhaud did not suffer retirement gracefully. Instead, with the help of Algerian Europeans and other senior military officers, they organized the OAS (*Organisation de l'Armée Secrète*), whose slogan was "French Algeria or Death." Early in 1960, the OAS had opened a terrorist campaign against the De Gaulle government

inside France. The movement grew until, at some point, General Maurice Challe, De Gaulle's former military commander in Algeria who subsequently served at NATO headquarters, joined it. In April 1961, Challe and Zeller arrived secretly in Algiers. A few days later, the military junta proclaimed open rebellion and, for a few days, France stood in grave danger of falling under a military dictatorship.

As happened earlier, the bulk of conscripts remained loyal to De Gaulle, as did the commander in chief, General Gambiez, all of the navy, and most of the air force. Major O'Ballance has estimated that perhaps forty thousand troops opted for the junta, whose hard core numbered about eighteen thousand paratroopers and legionnaires. In addition, the army distributed an estimated thirty thousand arms to civilian supporters. But junta leadership seemed vague, and when other military units did not join the rebellion, the leaders lost heart. Within four days, Challe surrendered, Zeller followed suit; Jouhaud and Salan went into hiding.[46] De Gaulle arrested five generals and some two hundred officers, dissolved disloyal units—and carried on negotiations with the FLN.[47]

The rebellion now entered a new, and final, phase. The FLN and ALN, already on the defensive, responded favorably to conciliatory moves by further reducing guerrilla-terrorist activity while peace talks continued. Unfortunately, this did not stop the shooting. The De Gaulle government had to fight a take-over attempt by the OAS both in Algeria and in France, a seamy period, with Frenchmen killing Frenchmen, that lasted until spring of 1962. Shortly after the OAS collapsed, France agreed to Algerian independence, which, for better or worse, was proclaimed in July.

The rebellion cost both sides heavily. All told, the French army suffered perhaps twelve thousand troops plus twenty-five hundred Moslem auxiliaries killed. About three thousand Europeans lost their lives and thousands were wounded. Algerian Moslems suffered about 141,000 deaths, according to the French[48]; the FLN estimated six hundred thousand deaths.[49]

Twelve years after the rebellion, France is still recovering from the psychological effects—from shock experienced by millions of Frenchmen upon learning of their police and military proclivity for torture; from bitterness particularly rampant among military rightists, who regarded and still regard De Gaulle's acquiescence as a denial of traditional French values. Twelve years after the rebellion, Algeria is still

46. Behr, op. cit.; see also De Gaulle, op. cit.

47. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra:* Subsequent trials sent Challe and Zeller to prison for fifteen years; sentenced Salan, Jouhaud, and other fugitives to death *in absentia;* dismissed other officers from the service without pension; and summarily retired still others; see also De Gaulle, op. cit.

48. O'Ballance (*Algerian Insurrection*), *supra.*

49. Gillespie, op. cit.

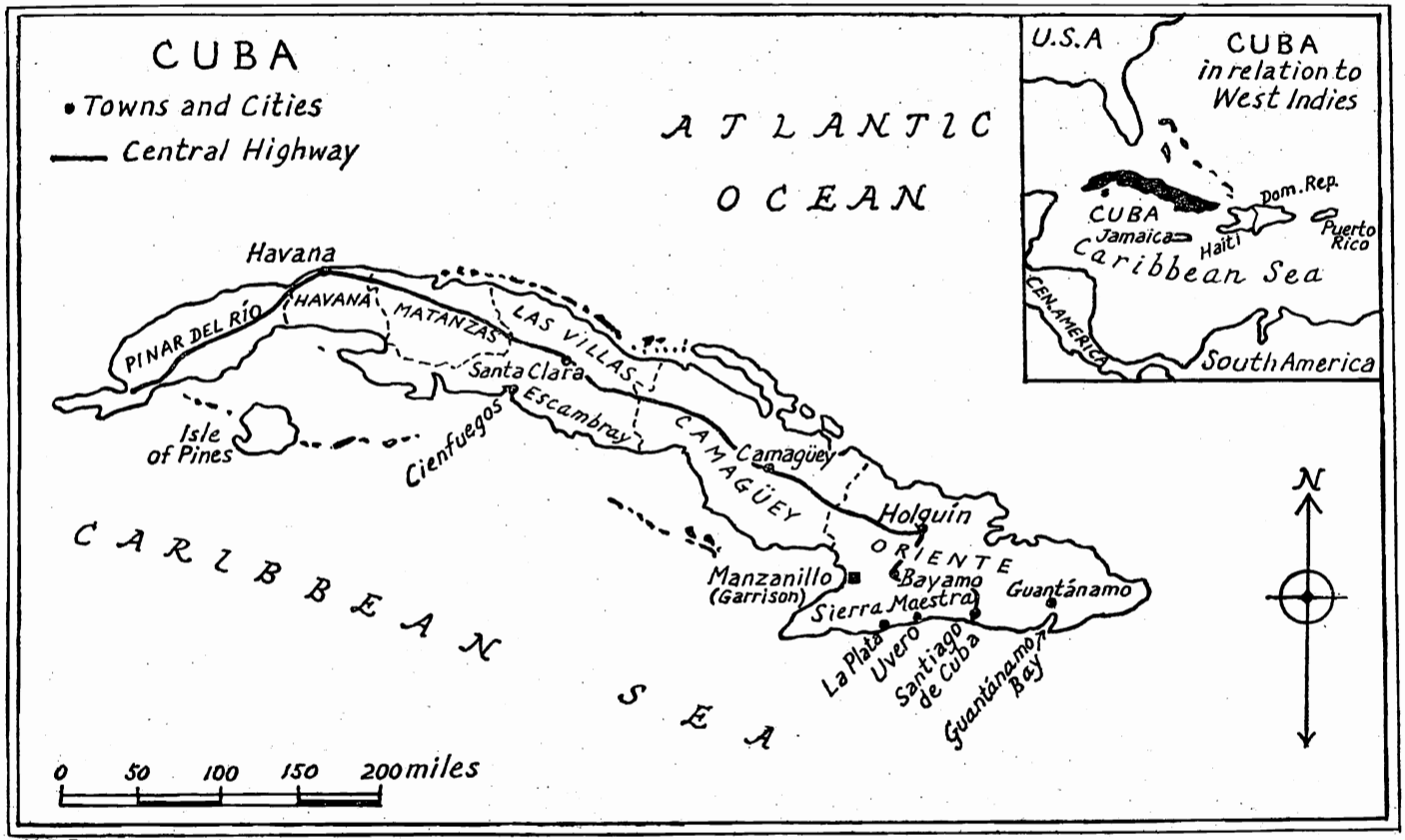
struggling to establish legitimate government, let alone enjoy the fruits of independence—a struggle that has caused her on occasion to seek awkward political bedfellows, but a struggle that may yet lead to rapprochement with France and the West.

Chapter 72

The Cuban revolution • Special characteristics • Its psychological impact on the United States • Historical background • Early American presence • The Platt Amendment • American military intervention • Gerardo Machado and the strong-man tradition • Internal opposition mounts • Early rebellions • Washington intervenes • The Batista era • His strength and weakness • The political situation • The American position • Enter Fidel Castro • His background • The 26th of July Movement • Trial, imprisonment, release

A FINAL INSURGENCY and one of particular importance to the United States marked the end of this turbulent decade. The first phase of the Cuban revolution, fought from 1953 to 1959, replaced Fulgencio Batista with Fidel Castro as Cuba's ruler—the opening act of a drama that would soon raise a Communist flag over this large island lying only ninety miles from Florida's coast.

The rebellion was peculiarly Cuban. Its outbreak surprised both Cuban and American authorities, who seemed reluctant to admit the threat to government. Its suppression, even when that threat became real, seemed generally apathetic. The insurgency followed no particular precedent, combining, as it did, peasant, proletarian, and middle-class elements which finally fused to produce popular revolution. Castro's leadership proved important, but revolution might have occurred without it. It could not have occurred without Batista's government. It is not an easy revolution to understand: It was fought in a welter of confusion compounded by divisive movements inside and outside Cuba,


CUBA
• Towns and Cities
Central Highway
ATLANTIC OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA
Havana
PINAR DEL RÍO
HAVANA
MATANZAS
LAS VILLAS
CAMAGÜEY
ORIENTE
Santa Clara
Escambray
Cienfuegos
Isle of Pines
Camagüey
Holguin
Manzanillo (Garrison)
Bayamo
Sierra Maestra
Guantánamo
La Plata
Uvero
Santiago de Cuba
Guantánamo Bay
0 50 100 150 200 miles
N
U.S.A
CUBA in relation to West Indies
CUBA
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Dom. Rep.
Puerto Rico
Caribbean Sea
CEN. AMERICA
South America

M.E.P.

by American diplomatic and military ambivalence, and by dramatic and frequently erroneous press reports.

In terms of carnage, it did not approach other insurgencies of the day. Castro's first attempt to seize government, in 1953, failed at the cost of perhaps seventy rebel lives. Three years later, when he landed in Oriente province, his force numbered eighty-three men and, in a few days, had been reduced to twelve men struggling to survive in the Sierra Maestra. For months, he commanded a handful of guerrillas. As late as mid-1958, his columns counted no more than three hundred irregulars, some not even armed; at war's end, the rebel army totaled a thousand or two, with perhaps another thousand active supporters. Guerrilla columns fought but few battles and suffered minimum casualties—probably no more than fifty men were killed after reaching the Sierra Maestra sanctuary in early 1957.

Batista's small army expanded to only modest figures—about thirty thousand—despite the increasing urgency of the situation from 1957 onward. Though equipped with American weapons and supported by tanks and aircraft, in only one operation did it aggressively seek out the guerrillas, and this failed. Probably no more than three hundred soldiers lost their lives in the rebellion's last two years.

Far more casualties occurred in cities and towns, where a variety of resistance organizations employed selective terrorism answered in kind by Batista's police and soldiers. No one knows how many casualties resulted from urban warfare. The Castro government later claimed that the revolution exacted twenty thousand lives; more-realistic appraisals put the figure at around two thousand killed.[1]

Casualties do not necessarily determine residual importance of insurgencies. The sudden consummation of the Cuban rebellion, followed swiftly by Castro's conversion to communism, introduced catastrophic change to Cuban fortunes, besides directly affecting American strategic and commercial interests.

Castro's blatant challenge to hemispheric hegemony levied a psychological impact on the United States tantamount to those experienced by France and England during their colonial upheavals, and it led to equally futile reactions. As had happened in Washington following Chiang Kai-shek's fall, charges and countercharges filled the air. A score of biased books appeared to obfuscate further the analysis of events and any lessons to be drawn from them. Subsequent scholarship, fortunately, has done much to unravel the twisted skein of rebellion. An American scholar, Theodore Draper, early attempted to place the Cuban rebellion

1. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Boris Goldenberg, *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965); Theodore Draper, *Castro's Revolution—Myths and Realities* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1962). Hereafter cited as Draper (*CR*); Theodore Draper, *Castroism—Theory and Practice* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965). Hereafter cited as Draper (*Castroism*).

in honest perspective.[2] More recently, a British scholar, Hugh Thomas, has opened new vistas with his definitive history, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom*—a must for any reader interested in the island's past (and future).[3]

As with other insurgencies, the etiology of the Cuban revolution was old and complex, its roots growing from soil prepared by prolonged Spanish occupation, its early blooms the 1865 and 1895 uprisings, its growth from 1898 directly related to American policy deriving from the Spanish-American war (see Chapter 12, Volume I).

This war, which cost perhaps three hundred thousand Cuban lives, brought something akin to anarchy to Cuba.[4] The survivors, about a million and a half people living on an island roughly the size of Pennsylvania, were eager for independence but ill-prepared for self-government. Public services had broken down; people were ill and hungry; bands of Spanish counterguerrillas turned outlaws roamed the island in manner reminiscent of French *routiers* in the Hundred Years' War.

Convinced that Cubans could not govern themselves, President McKinley assigned the problem to the U. S. Army, which occupied and administered the war-torn country until 1902. As in the Philippines, most American civil and military officials tended to treat the native with contempt. General Young described García's veteran guerrilla army as ". . . a lot of degenerates, absolutely devoid of honor or gratitude. They are no more capable of self government than the savages."[5] American soldiers treated Negro guerrillas with open disdain. On the other hand, Americans got on well with Spanish survivors, and many of the latter continued to serve in official capacities. The uneven occupation produced a number of benefits to Cubans, particularly in health and education, and it also resulted in considerable U.S. commercial investment, about $100 million, mostly in tobacco, sugar, and railroads.[6] While this brought welcome prosperity to some, it also introduced a lopsided economy, whose expansion too often depended on bribery and corruption.

But for Congressional legislation (the 1898 Teller Amendment, which renounced American sovereignty over Cuba) and anti-administration pressures arising from the Philippine insurrection, McKinley

2. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*

3. Thomas, op. cit.

4. R. A. Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic* (New York: Macmillan, 1927); H. A. Herring, *A History of Latin America* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955); Fulgencio Batista, *Cuba Betrayed* (New York: Vantage Press, 1962); Thomas, op. cit.

5. Thomas, op. cit.

6. Ibid.: The real figure is higher, since land bought in huge parcels by U.S. companies was so cheap; the American Government eventually rented the Guantánamo base area—45 square miles—at a rent of $2,000 a year!

might have annexed Cuba. Instead, the American Government secured indirect control through the Platt Amendment. This incredible document gave the United States the right to maintain military bases in Cuba and to intervene either to preserve Cuban independence or to maintain stable government. The United States also reserved right to ratify treaties Cuba made with other nations! Theodore Roosevelt's administration extended the legislation by forcing Tomás Estrada Palma's government to incorporate the amendment in the Cuban constitution and in the 1903 treaty between the United States and Cuba.[7]

The Platt Amendment disguised a commercial wolf in the sheep's clothing of strategic necessity. An attempt at colonialism on the cheap, this codicil to the Monroe Doctrine mocked the "manifest destiny" thesis so ably and forcefully expounded by Alfred Mahan, Henry Lodge, and Theodore Roosevelt. It tried to reap the fruits of colonialism without accepting responsibilities of colonialism. It was the opening chapter in the U.S.A's imperialistic fling, and no one quite knew how to interpret it. Secretary of War Elihu Root viewed it circumspectly, carefully differentiating between "formal action"—the use of force—and persuasive action. Secretary of State Philander Knox later chose force to further a "preventive policy." As succeeding administrations learned the limits of force as well as its expense, the Platt Amendment grew less attractive and even embarrassing.[8] But, by the time the American Government and people came to their senses, a great deal of damage had been done.

Cuban self-government proved disastrous. Although Estrada was honest, his administration was not; a weak man, he failed to check venal officials more interested in amassing personal fortunes than in weaving sound fabric of government. Opposition developed. Lacking an adequate army to defend his government, Estrada turned to the United States for support.

McKinley's and Roosevelt's refusal to annex Cuba should have left the island to work out its own political destiny. The Philippine experience had dampened Roosevelt's belief in "manifest destiny," and he would have preferred this. It possibly could have happened, had the commercial element been absent. But it was not absent. American investment soon doubled, to approximately $200 million, and the pot of gold lying beneath the Cuban rainbow seemed scarcely touched. When General Piño Guerra's guerrillas began threatening Estrada's government, Roosevelt found himself under severe pressure to intervene.[9]

7. Bryce Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); see also SORO, op. cit.

8. Wood, op. cit.

9. Thomas, op. cit.: To clarify matters, McKinley sent his Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, to Havana. Taft reported unfavorably on the rebel movement: ". . . It is not a government . . . only an undisciplined horde of men

He refused, but when Estrada resigned, in late September 1906, Roosevelt saw no alternative.[10] A few days later, a hastily improvised force of two thousand U.S. marines landed "to restore order," the vanguard of some five thousand U.S. army occupation troops, which remained for two and a half years. During the interregnum, a provisional governor, Charles Magoon, introduced political, administrative, and military reforms—a program only partially completed when he returned the country to its newly elected president, José Miguel Gómez, in 1908.

The Gómez government and its successor, the Menocal government, virtually legalized what the Estrada administration (but not Estrada) had practiced: wholesale corruption that made the two presidents and their senior lieutenants millionaires at the country's expense. At the same time, American investment increased. In 1912, to protect American interests against an uprising of Negro field hands, Secretary of State Philander Knox arranged a "preventive" landing of American marines.[11] In 1917, marines briefly landed in support of Menocal's regime, which was being challenged by a Liberal revolution. Menocal, who ". . . became known as a man more utterly committed to bribery and corruption than even Gómez,"[12] stood in high favor in Washington, partly because of Wilson's desire for a co-operative Cuba in World War I, partly because ". . . the general attitude in Washington had always been that Menocal was upright and that Gómez and the Liberals were corrupt."[13] At Menocal's request, the Wilson administration stationed twenty-six hundred marines in Cuba, where they remained until 1923, an important instrument in maintaining the fragile "stability" so sought by American commercial interests, particularly during the sugar crisis of 1920 and the election that placed Menocal's candidate, Alfredo Zayas, in the presidency.

Zayas changed nothing of Cuba's political pattern. A rich man by the end of his term, he had insured the growth of forces of discontent. Maintaining internal stability was to become ever more difficult. In early 1921, rebellious University of Havana students had organized a

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under partisan leaders. The movement is large and formidable and commands the sympathy of a majority of the people of Cuba but they are the poorer classes and uneducated."

10. Ibid.: Roosevelt cabled Taft: ". . . If the Palma government had shown any real capacity for self-defense and ability to sustain itself and a sincere purpose to remedy the wrongs of which your telegrams show them to have been guilty, I should have been inclined to stand by them no matter to what extent, including armed intervention. But as things already are we do not have a chance of following any such course . . . [since] they absolutely decline either to endeavor to remedy the wrongs they have done or to so much as lift a hand in their own defense . . . we must simply put ourselves . . . in Palma's place, land a sufficient force to restore order and notify the insurgents that we will carry thru the program in which you and they are agreed. . . ."

11. Wood, op. cit.

12. Thomas, op. cit.

13. Ibid.

student federation, the FEU. In 1925, a trade union federation, CNOC, appeared, as did a small Communist Party. Faced with these and other opposition groups, Zayas' successor, General Gerardo Machado, turned increasingly to strong-arm methods, as befitted one whose hero was Benito Mussolini. Machado cunningly disguised his methods, at least sufficiently to fool the Coolidge administration. By this time, however, the American Government, influenced by various commercial interests, had become so wedded to the strong-man concept of Cuba government that little fooling was necessary. Even when Machado abrogated the constitution to extend his term of office, American apologists defended the action in interests of "stability"; nor did the Hoover administration seem entirely displeased. A U. S. State Department official later wrote:

> . . . both the Department and the Embassy put a premium on "order" in Cuba. . . . President Machado had brought internal peace to Cuba for the first time since 1917. Both Ambassador Crowder and the Department indicated that their passivity to the constitutional amendments was due to their hope that under Machado peace, order, and "political cooperation" would continue.[14]

Secretary of State Stimson's experience in Mexico and Nicaragua had caused him to shy away from intervention elsewhere, and though he continued to "intermeddle," he would not intervene:

> . . . Henceforth, the Department's policy became one of drift, punctuated by spasmodic and gradually feebler attempts to persuade Machado to satisfy the press, the public, and the opposition by legislative reforms and by permitting a larger measure of civil liberties.[15]

If Washington turned a blind eye, influential segments of the Cuban population did not. Continued opposition had long since caused Machado to compound wholesale corruption by the unpleasant expedient of imprisoning, torturing, and murdering political opponents. With the constitution defunct and the sugar market at an all-time low, Cuba faced political and economic bankruptcy.[16]

Underground opposition spread among students and middle-class citizens. An organization known as ABC undertook ". . . by the deliberate creation of terror to cause a break-down in governmental activities, so, they assumed, making action of some sort by Washington inevitable."[17] Machado blamed political assassinations of his *porristas* on "Communist" elements and replied with counterterror. Murder

14. Wood, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Ruby Hart Phillips, *Cuba–Island of Paradox* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959).
17. Thomas, op. cit.; Phillips, op. cit.: ABC used a cellular organization based on a secret French revolutionary society.

became commonplace: ". . . Scarcely a night passed in Havana without some attempt at assassination, or some cruel measure of reprisal by the secret police."[18] Early in 1933, the CNOC called out twenty thousand sugar workers at beginning of harvest. In May, a rebellion broke out in Santa Clara.

The American Government intervened, but not quite in the way imagined by Cuban terrorists. Instead of marines, the newly elected president Franklin Roosevelt, sent Sumner Welles as his ambassador to "mediate." After studying the situation and consulting with various opposition groups, Welles attempted to force Machado to step down.

In addition to a bureaucratic apparatus whose senior officials would continue to benefit from his stay in office, Machado had two allies in his fight with Welles and the opposition groups. The Communists were one, but, at this time, the party was not even strong enough to ward off a general strike that brought life in the cities almost to a standstill. The army was the other. Here was Machado's Achilles' heel. By involving the military in state administration, Machado had opened its ranks to unseemly pressures. Graft permeated the twelve-thousand-man body. Senior officers were not reliable and were prone to back a new horse; junior officers, many trained in the United States, desired a military efficiency they believed could come only with change. Enlisted men resented inadequate food and clothing and were amenable to change. Machado's refusal to give the military a voice in his discussions with the opposition further weakened its loyalty, and, in the crunch, important elements refused to back him.

Machado abdicated in August. A ghastly period followed, in which ABC terrorists killed any *porristas* they could find. The blood bath, graphically described to American readers by Ruby Hart Phillips, wife of the New York *Times* correspondent in Havana, in her interesting book *Cuba–Island of Paradox,* probably took a thousand lives before the government restored precarious order.[19] Although Welles asked Washington to land troops, wiser counsels prevailed and held intervention to a naval fleet, which appeared in island waters and effectively strengthened Welles's hand.

Cuba's new ruler, Carlos Miguel Céspedes, was Sumner Welles's compromise selection. Too weak for the task, he almost at once succumbed to forces unleashed by the "sergeants' revolt": a small but powerful group of well-organized non-commissioned officers who, incredibly, led a bloodless coup that installed a thirty-two-year-old sergeant-typist, Fulgencio Batista, as army chief of staff!

An exceptional man, Batista. Son of a sugar worker, he was of mulatto-Indian extraction. At age eight, he was working in cane fields;

18. Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944); see also Wood, op. cit., for a detailed analysis of the Welles negotiations; see also Cordell Hull, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan, 1948).

19. Phillips, op. cit.; see also Wood, op. cit.

orphaned at thirteen, he attended a night school run by American Quakers.[20] He later held a variety of common-laborer jobs and finally enlisted in the army. Correspondence courses trained him in stenography; promoted to sergeant, he held a staff job that allowed him to participate in and soon lead the army rebellion.

Batista was young, smart, handsome in a way, charming when he wished to be. He possessed considerable charisma and was also a realist. Recognizing his limited strength and particularly Welles's opposition, he formed a military-student junta that replaced Céspedes with a provisional revolutionary government headed by the dean of the University of Havana's medical school, Doctor Ramón Grau San Martín.

Whether the Grau government would have effected the revolution it proclaimed is a moot question. Its radical intentions frightened Sumner Welles nearly to death, and if he failed in having marines landed to put things right, he succeeded in preventing Washington from recognizing the new government.[21] No Cuban government could long endure without Washington's approval, and no one recognized the fact more than Batista. After cementing his position as army chief—a nasty fracas that eliminated officer opposition—he installed a compromise president, Colonel Carlos Mendieta. He himself remained the real boss.

Thus began the Batista era. As with most dictatorships, a period of consolidation proved necessary to eliminate or at least neutralize active opposition. Batista possessed three allies during this crucial period: the Mendieta government, which he virtually ruled but which offered at least a façade of legitimate government; the army, which he did rule; and the Good Neighbor Policy, which caused the American Congress to abolish the Platt Amendment even while insuring American commercial dominance in Cuba.

Although Batista ruled as dictator, he somewhat mollified the Roosevelt administration (which had numerous other problems) by providing stability and continued protection of American investments. He also introduced a good many social reforms, including labor laws. If rule by army increased rather than decreased, he nonetheless permitted return of opposition groups; he not only allowed Communists a legitimate existence, but, in answer to middle-class and student opposition, he actively allied with them and with labor. Finally, he permitted election

20. Edmund A. Chester, *A Sergeant Named Batista* (New York: Henry Holt, 1954). This fulsome account must be read with care: Chester was Batista's public-relations adviser; see also, Herbert L. Matthews, *The Cuban Story* (New York: George Braziller, 1961). Hereafter cited as Matthews (*CS*); Herbert L. Matthews, *Castro—A Political Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969). Hereafter cited as Matthews (*Castro*).

21. Wood, op. cit.: Grau called Welles's non-recognition policy ". . . a new type of intervention—intervention by inertia," that ". . . intensifies the very ills it claims to pacify, maintaining a condition of intranquillity in our social and economic structure."

of a constituent assembly, which wrote the 1940 constitution: ". . . a real attempt at social democracy. It was, however, rarely read after it was written."[22]

Elected president in 1940, Batista continued a warm alliance with the United States and Great Britain. In the fever of war, no one seemed to notice that the new constitution became as dead as yesterday's newspaper. Bolstered by U.S. loans and huge sugar crops, the economy surged forward. In 1944, Batista stepped down. When his presidential candidate lost to Grau San Martín, head of the rival Auténtico party, Batista retired to his Florida holdings and a personal fortune estimated at about $20 million.

But not for long.

His successors, Grau and, in 1948, another Auténtico leader, Carlos Prío Socarrás, ruled in the Batista mold but without Batista's effectiveness. Corruption appeared in a thousand new forms, and, from corruption, grew violence, until government became a riddled mass of competing forces, legitimate and illegitimate. Grau's and Prío's Auténticos remained the leading party. Eduardo Chibás, scion of a wealthy family, had splintered to form the Ortodoxos, which attracted a liberal middle-class and student following. Grau alienated the Communists, who formed a separate political entity, as did Batista's followers. In addition to legitimate parties, political pressure groups existed such as the trade unions (CTC) and the students (FEU); so did a host of gangster groups, which infiltrated and sometimes controlled segments of political parties and pressure groups.[23]

Batista returned to this political maelstrom in 1948, as a newly elected senator. Three years later, he declared himself a candidate for President and began campaigning against Auténtico and Ortodoxo candidates. Two months before scheduled elections, he stole the government in a bloodless coup d'état carried out by a group of army officers that had remained loyal to him.

Batista might have emerged a Salazar or a Franco—even a Bolívar or a Martí. A number of factors favored him. He enjoyed considerable personal popularity despite former excesses. In general, the army supported him and, in turn, he cosseted officers and non-commissioned officers with increased pay and other perquisites.[24] The twelve-thousand-man army was becoming reasonably well organized, trained, and equipped—the work, largely, of a U.S. military mission that operated under the terms of a hemispheric Mutual Security Pact.[25]

Batista soon installed his own followers in other key departments,

22. Thomas, op. cit.
23. Ibid.
24. Goldenberg, op. cit.
25. Thomas, op. cit.; the agreement somewhat unrealistically forbade use of armor and B-26 bombers ". . . except in agreement and in defense of the hemisphere."

particularly in the enlarged police force, and he made considerable progress in neutralizing activities of gangster elements. Promise of stable government appealed to wealthy businessmen and landowners and to the Catholic Church, but a large and reasonably articulate middle class also was tired of corruption and inept government and probably would have supported a progressive administration. The small Communist Party, the PSP, was well disciplined; its main strength lay in trade unions whose leaders Batista had paid off, and it readily assumed a working relationship with Batista.[26]

The American Government almost immediately recognized the new regime—according to some experts, a fatal error—and promised to continue supplying it with arms and military advisers.[27] This was the McCarthy era, and Batista knew how to whisper the magic phrase "Communist threat"—little fear of the neighboring horn of plenty drying up, and almost none after the U.S.S.R. broke diplomatic relations with Cuba. As a boon, in 1953 the new President, Dwight Eisenhower, sent Ambassador Arthur Gardner to Havana. Gardner was an ". . . unabashed admirer and ardent abettor of Batista."[28] According to Mrs. Phillips, he was so pro-Batista as to embarrass even Batista![29]

Cuba itself was prosperous enough, though with shocking inequities. The sugar market had remained healthy since the early 1940s, and the Korean war had sustained it. Ample labor and American capital existed to expand and diversify the lopsided sugar economy. Despite the financial drain of a half century of venal rule, urban dwellers—57 per cent of the population—fared reasonably well. In terms of per-capita income, Cuba's six and a half million people ranked fourth in Latin America and also ranked high in percentage ownership of such material possessions as cars and radios.[30] Trade unions were bringing social security and other advantages to the working man. With proper leadership, the country could probably have advanced to a level sufficient to support major social, economic, and political reforms.[31]

26. Goldenberg, op. cit.

27. Draper (*CR*), *supra:* In 1945–60, U.S. military aid to Cuba totaled "only" $10.6 million; see also Frank Tannenbaum, "The United States and Latin America," *Political Science Quarterly*, June 1961; Robert Taber, *M-26—Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961): In 1956–58, Batista received from the United States 3,000 M-1 rifles, 50 machine guns, a large quantity of ammunition, several thousand rockets, and seven tanks.

28. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*

29. Phillips, op. cit.

30. Draper (*Castroism*), *supra;* but per-capita measure of income is often misleading; see also D. Seers, A. Bianchi, R. Jolly, and M. Nolff, *Cuba—The Economic and Social Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1964). Hereafter cited as Seers: In 1958, Cuba's per-capita income had risen from the 1952 figure, yet ". . . averaged about $500 or one-fifth as much as the average in the United States (far lower even than in any Southern state there)"; Goldenberg, op. cit.

31. Taber, op. cit.: ". . . Felipe Pazos, head of the Banco Cubano Continental, Cuba's largest private bank under the Batista administration, said that graft on

Batista nevertheless faced a number of problems that demanded urgent attention. Cuba's five hundred thousand peasants all too often lived in impoverished circumstances. Cuba's illiteracy rate was 11.6 per cent in the cities; in the countryside, it reached a shocking 41.7 per cent.[32] A team of non-Cuban economists later concluded:

> . . . in the countryside social conditions were very bad. About a third of the nation existed in squalor, eating rice, beans, bananas, and root vegetables (with hardly any meat, fish, eggs, or milk), living in huts, usually without electricity or toilet facilities, suffering from parasitic disease and lacking access to health services, denied education (their children received only a first grade education, if that). Particularly distressing was the lot of the *precaristas*—those squatting in makeshift quarters on public land.[33]

C. Wright Mills's not-so-mythical Cuban cries plaintively to the reader:

> . . . In our Caribbean paradise of violence and grief, of terror and misery, almost nine out of ten of the rural "homes" (although North Americans would scarcely call our *bohios* "homes") had only kerosene lighting. Less than 3 per cent had water piped into them. More than half did not even have—perhaps it is difficult for you to imagine this—over half did not even have an *outdoor* privy; only about 3 per cent had toilets indoors.
>
> Almost two-thirds of our children were *not* in any elementary school and most of those who did start in school soon dropped out. In 1950, for example, 180,000 children began the first grade, but less than 5,000 began the eighth grade. That figure is not for the countryside only; it is for the whole of Cuba, city and country.[34]

The peasants needed not only land, houses, schools, and hospitals, but also crop diversification to allow more than a few months' work each year harvesting the sugar crop. By ignoring the peasants' plight, Batista encouraged a rural dissidence that needed only to be harnessed to become a viable revolutionary force; perhaps as important, the peasants constituted the bulk of his army, a venal, corrupt, and factional body that offered the recruit no more pride in country than offered by his earlier, grim rural environment.[35]

Cuba also suffered a high rate of chronic unemployment and underemployment, with accompanying poverty in the towns:

> . . . Here, too, there were squatters living in shacks, and of course there were slum tenements. In 1953, no less than one-fifth of these families lived

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public works during the seven years of Batista's rule came close to 500 million pesos on a total public-works budget of less than eight hundred millions. . . ."

32. Draper (*Castroism*), *supra.*

33. Seers, op. cit.; see also Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, *Cuba—Anatomy of a Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

34. C. Wright Mills, *Castro's Cuba* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960).

35. Draper (*Castroism*), *supra.*

in single rooms, and the average size of those families was five, according to the census. Taking the urban and rural population together, 62 per cent of the economically active population had incomes of less than $75 a month.[36]

In cities, Batista faced considerable opposition from Auténticos, Ortodoxos, and students. His problem here was basically political. Batista seized power, he said, because Prío Socarrás was preparing his own *coup d'état*. He probably acted because it was the only way he could have gained office. He now faced the ugly fact that he, self-pronounced father of constitutional government, violated his own tenets. His pose as savior of democracy by rape possibly could have come off had he restored the 1940 constitution and implemented administrative reforms. He promised to do so. Pleading need for time, he promised elections in late 1953. But, in the interim, he abrogated civil rights and resorted to one-man rule. Although eventually permitting "cooked" elections, he retained authoritarian rule, his power dependent on police and army.[37]

But politics entered here as well. Batista's chief of staff, General Tabernilla Dolz, was a particularly unfortunate choice. Not only did he install sons and in-laws in senior command billets, but he actively engaged in the protection rackets, and the gambling and prostitution that made Havana, and indeed all of Cuba, a major tourist attraction, and here he collided with police interests.[38] Worse, however, was his administration of the army:

> . . . Soon the army was dominated by a net of intrigue and distrust, exacerbated by Tabernilla's recall of all officers dismissed by Grau in 1944–45, who were given their back pay over seven or eight years as well. Tabernilla was concerned to establish a network of officers loyal to him—an activity which made enemies not only of the professional group of officers, the *puros*, who had joined since 1945 but of those—the *tanquistas*—who had begun the conspiracy against Prío and who now were increasingly disillusioned, having hoped for a tougher, stricter, and more puritanical regime.[39]

Batista would have had a difficult time solving these various problems even had he exerted his considerable abilities. He did not do this, and he accomplished very few reforms. The why of his failure is not clear. Professor Hugh Thomas suggests that years of exile had made him lazy

36. Seers, *supra*.

37. Batista, op. cit.: He attempted to gain a semblance of legitimacy from an appointive Consultive Council of 80 members and a smaller Council of Ministers.

38. Taber, op. cit.: ". . . The officers of the general staff—Tabernilla and the rest—were notoriously Cuba's greatest smugglers of automobiles, refrigerators, cigarettes, whiskey; the police fattened on the brothels and invested their illicit gains in apartment houses; Batista himself received a slice of everything, including the fantastic revenue of the great gambling casinos run by American gangsters."

39. Thomas, op. cit.

and petty. Economic prosperity probably added to his fecklessness, as did American support of his armed forces and regime. As long as he could offer "stable" government, he would continue to attract American capital and thus insure mounting prosperity.

Batista also seems to have underestimated opposition. Cuba's security problem was not the Communist threat to the American hemisphere posed by the Soviet Union and preached by the Pentagon. It was an internal threat, and, as in the Philippines, Vietnam, and other trouble areas, it called for accurate recognition and intelligent suppression by small, specially trained units, as opposed to shiny battalions supported by armor and air and taught conventional tactics by conventionally minded American officers.

Most of all, however, it called for solution by good government. But Batista, from the beginning, refused the task of democratic government. Instead, like some fat slug, he retired into the official cocoon of the Presidential Palace seemingly secured by martial trappings of police and troops. The trappings would hold for a while. Intimidation and arrest and beatings and torture and murder would mute but not calm breezes of dissidence. When breezes swelled to winds of change, the trappings would waver and begin to snap until a final hurricane swept them away to demolish the cocoon they supported.

Enter Fidel Castro Ruz.

Castro was born in 1927, the illegitimate and eldest son of Ángel Castro, a hard-working and shrewd peasant.[40] Although Ángel became a landowner sufficiently wealthy to leave each of seven children a considerable sum, his house lacked both bathroom and running water, as did nearly all houses in Birán, in Oriente province, an impoverished area dominated by American fruit and mining companies.

Fidel attended good Jesuit schools, and, in 1945, went on to study law at the University of Havana. A poor student, he concentrated on politics, associating with campus branches of two gangster groups, the MSR and the UIR, and finally joining Chibás' Ortodoxo party; he may have participated in two political assassinations.[41] In 1947, he joined an MSR-sponsored expeditionary force that planned to overthrow the neighboring Trujillo regime, a plot foiled by the government. A year later, he headed a delegation to an anti-imperialist student congress in Bogotá; serious riots broke out—an estimated three thousand deaths resulted—and Castro escaped the country only with difficulty.

Returning to the university, he married and became active in the Ortodoxo Youth Movement. He graduated in 1950, joined a law firm, defended impoverished Cubans, and also entered politics. In 1952—he was twenty-five years old—he ran for Congress as an Ortodoxo. He

40. Matthews (*CS*), *supra;* see also Matthews (*Castro*), *supra.*
41. Goldenberg, op. cit.

protested Batista's coup as unconstitutional by filing briefs with two courts, a right granted by the 1940 constitution. After this courageous but futile demonstration of dissent, he became a full-time revolutionary and emerged as leader of various underground organizations. He had flirted with Marxism, but he had flirted with a lot else; his briefs, though powerful indictments of tyranny, do not suggest that he was a Marxist or a Communist.[42]

Castro spent nearly a year organizing and training a heterogeneous armed group with which he hoped to overthrow Batista. On July 26, 1953, his force attacked two military posts in Oriente province: Fort Moncada in Santiago and a smaller one at Bayamo, an ill-advised effort that resulted in his capture along with most of his 150-man army. Only a few on either side fell in the brief actions.[43] Batista's soldiers and police, however, tortured and killed a large number of rebel survivors—perhaps sixty-eight of them. Castro barely escaped death. At his trial, in October, he defended himself, a spirited effort concluding with his famous "History Will Absolve Me" speech, which became the hallmark of the 26th of July Movement. Castro's appeal failed to move his judges, who sentenced him to fifteen years' imprisonment on the Isle of Pines; brother Raúl, who was a Communist at this time, received a thirteen-year sentence.

The episode may have frightened Batista, but he did not seem to realize that government overreaction swung a considerable number of persons to Castro's cause. In addition to abrogating various civil rights and exercising press censorship, he outlawed the PSP, a curious move in that Blas Roca's Communists had nothing to do with the rebellion and even criticized Castro's tactics. Batista was already riding the anti-Communist bandwagon so popular in Washington. He now became one of the drivers: At Ambassador Gardner's urging and with CIA help, he established, in 1954, a special police section, BRAC (*Buró de Represión a los Actividades Comunistas*), designed particularly to suppress Communist activity.[44] Batista's confidence showed in May 1955, when, in an attempt to gain goodwill from dissident liberal parties, he declared a general amnesty—which freed the brothers Castro.

Prison had diminished none of Fidel's fire. From the Isle of Pines, he had sent a flow of organizational missives to various leaders of the Movement. He read a great deal and, though he quoted Marx, he seemed to prefer José Martí's inspiration. He early concluded that unity was essential. As he wrote to a friend:

. . . I must in the first place organize the men of the 26th of July and unite, into an unbreakable bundle, all the fighters, those in exile, those in

42. Taber, op. cit., cites the briefs.
43. Draper (*Castroism*), *supra;* see also Taber, op. cit.; Thomas, op. cit.
44. Thomas, op. cit.

prison, those free, who together amount to over eighty men implicated in the same historic day of sacrifice. . . . Conditions indispensable for the integration of a true civil movement are ideology, discipline, leadership. All are desirable, but leadership is essential. . . .[45]

45. Ibid.

Chapter 73

Castro in Mexico • Che Guevara joins • Return to Cuba • Early disaster • The fugitives • Sanctuary in Sierra Maestra • Castro's plan • Urban support • Early guerrilla operations • Castro's problems • The Matthews interview • A myth begins • Guerrilla tactics • Batista's countertactics • American army influence • Dissension in Washington • Ambassador Smith

IN LATE SPRING OF 1955, Fidel Castro traveled to the United States, where he raised several thousand dollars for "the cause."[1] In Mexico City, he rounded up other Cuban exiles, mostly middle-class dissidents belonging to the Movement, and put them on a ranch to train for invasion—the task of one Colonel Alberto Bayo, a former Cuban air force officer, a veteran of the Spanish civil war, and supposedly an expert in guerrilla fighting.[2]

Enter Ernesto Guevara Lynch.

Che Guevara was twenty-six years old when he met Castro, in Mexico. Son of a left-wing Argentinian architect, he had extended a medical career to revolutionary politics. He had participated in several unsuccessful attempts to depose Juan Perón, and the previous year had allegedly served in a minor capacity in Arbenz's Guatemalan Communist government. After Arbenz's overthrow, he went to Mexico and

1. Huberman and Sweezy, op. cit., put the figure at $50,000.
2. Taber, op. cit., offers details of this training.

was working either in a heart institute or as an itinerant photographer (the record is cloudy) when he met Castro. Politically, he was far left, though not necessarily a Communist. He was well read in Marx and Lenin—he carried their books with him—and he was anti-United States, mainly because of the CIA's role in Guatemala.[3] He enthusiastically joined the Movement and, despite chronic asthma, devoted himself to serious guerrilla training, serving also as the army's doctor.[4]

Castro himself paid little attention to operational matters. Instead, he continued to seek support both inside and outside Cuba. The internal situation was scarcely conducive to his plans. Batista seemed stronger than ever. After rigged elections returned him to the presidency, he received a fulsome Vice-President Nixon and, later, Allen Dulles, head of CIA. In early 1956, he offered an olive branch to opponents and began the short-lived *Diálogo Cívico*.[5] In Havana, ". . . there was widespread feeling among *Ortodoxo* and middle-class professional Cubans that negotiations with Batista were both possible and really the only viable way ahead."[6] Cuba's economy was expanding and, to the casual observer, Batista's government appeared stable.

Batista's refusal to negotiate in depth with opposition groups and to restore civil rights had created a good deal of dissidence, however, not only outside government but inside and particularly in the army. Serious incidents including assassination of Batista's intelligence chief plagued the government during 1955 and 1956. Splinter opposition groups formed and dissolved; students continued to protest through the FEU's newly formed militant group, the DR (Directorio Revolucionario), which agreed to support Castro. But most of these groups did not recognize Castro and the Movement as the key to Batista's overthrow. Commenting on the failure of Castro's later plan, Robert Taber noted:

> . . . The [opposition] parties were fragmented, and irretrievably discredited. Thus failure is found in their disunity, their weakness, their intramural rivalries, in the jealousies and personal ambitions and venality of the politicos, and in the skill with which the Batista regime used the means at its disposal—bribery, intimidation, murder, diplomacy, and *a careful adherence to the outward semblance of constitutional procedure,* to render all legal opposition impotent.[7]

Castro did gain some new allies from the remnant MNR, notably Frank País, a Baptist and former teacher in Santiago, whom Castro named as

3. Goldenberg, op. cit., himself a former Communist, described Che as a Marxist closely linked to international communism; see also Daniel James, *Che Guevara—a Biography* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970). Hereafter cited as James (*Che*).

4. Ernesto Che Guevara, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (New York: Grove Press, 1963). Tr. V. Ortiz. Hereafter cited as Guevara (*Reminiscences*).

5. Goldenberg, op. cit.

6. Thomas, op. cit.

7. Taber, op. cit.

head of all "action groups" in Cuba, and Armando Hart and Faustino Pérez in Havana. Cuban exiles in the United States and Mexico also supported him.

Castro was plagued by Batista's secret police, who arranged raids by Mexican police on his various headquarters and even arrested him.[8] But such were the vicissitudes of Cuban politics that Castro now gained an important temporary backer: Prío Socarrás, Cuba's former President, who was spending millions in trying to overthrow Batista, donated fifty thousand dollars to Castro.[9] Castro used fifteen thousand dollars to buy a battered yacht, *Granma;* he also procured arms and supply, the former including thirty-five rifles with telescopic sights. At end of November 1956, *Granma* sailed for Cuba with Castro and eighty-two guerrillas aboard.[10]

Castro's plan was slightly more complicated than either Wellington's expedition to Portugal in 1808 or MacArthur's return to the Philippines in 1944. Like these commanders, Castro planned to land with the help of local guerrillas. The new army would then attack Manzanillo garrison to capture arms and equipment. Simultaneously, urban terrorists would attack various targets, and finally a general strike would bring down the government. In case of a general uprising, Castro's force would arm the peasants and march on Havana; in case of trouble, it would escape to the mountain vastness of the Sierra Maestra to organize and train a volunteer army.[11]

This was an extremely optimistic plan. Frank País, Castro's agent in Santiago, had warned him against it. In the event, no local guerrillas met *Granma*. Badly overloaded, she landed late and off course, disgorging passengers in a swamp where much food and supply were lost. Even before she landed, País' people, some three hundred young rebels, had attacked various targets in Santiago, a fiasco, as it turned out. Most other "action groups" remained inactive.

8. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*

9. Some accounts state more.

10. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra;* see also Taber, op. cit.; Thomas, op. cit.

11. Taber, op. cit.; see also, Draper (*Castroism*), *supra,* who holds that Castro had no intention of achieving revolution by guerrilla warfare, but, rather, that events forced him into it. Taber argues that guerrilla training in Mexico, as well as purchasing rifles with telescopic sights, indicated the possibility of a guerrilla campaign in Castro's mind. I don't think the point is all that important. However, in refuting Castro's and Guevara's claim to having led an "agrarian revolution," Draper seems to me to denigrate Castro's abilities unnecessarily. Militarily (and even more, politically), Castro showed himself a flexible tactician, exploiting opportunities when they arose. I do not mention Wellington and MacArthur altogether with tongue in cheek. Each commander faced a disintegrating enemy army, as did Castro. It is farfetched to suggest that Castro shrewdly (albeit, perhaps, unknowingly) followed Wellington's lead: The French marshals, he said, ". . . planned their campaigns just as you might make a splendid set of harness. It looks very well, and answers very well, until it gets broken, and then you are done for. Now, I made my campaign of ropes. If anything went wrong, I tied a knot, and went on." Philip Guedalla, *Wellington* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931).

No general uprising—no local uprising.

A Cuban frigate spotted *Granma;* troops and planes rushed to the coast. With help of a turncoat guide, soldiers cornered the guerrillas in a cane field and killed or captured about seventy. Twelve men, including Castro, his brother Raúl, and Che Guevara, who was wounded, escaped to the Sierra Maestra.[12] For several weeks, they lived precariously, unable to trust most peasants, almost constantly hounded by army patrols.

But this was what Che later categorized as "favorable ground" for guerrillas, and though patrols often came close, they never captured the errants. The Sierra Maestra was too big, the terrain too difficult, for troops to plug all exits. Moreover, the peasants, including large numbers of *precaristas,* or squatters, were unusually impoverished and proved receptive to revolutionary propaganda, notably the old song Land to the Landless.[13] In time, Castro established a "safe" base and set to the task of revolution.

His original plan to overthrow Batista's government having failed, Castro now relied on a two-front strategy: warfare in cities and warfare in the country, the one (the *Llano*) to support the other (the *Sierra*)—or vice versa! Urban warfare—strikes, riots, and terrorism—fell to Civic Resistance (*Resistencia Cívica*) movements in Havana and Santiago, which forced the government to keep numerous army units in cities and thus ease pressure on guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra; urban units also sent money, arms, supply, and recruits to the mountain sanctuary.[14] Rural guerrillas, on the other hand, began to enlarge the mountain base by enlisting peasant co-operation while training a regular army. Simultaneously, Castro's guerrilla units began to strike small army outposts such as La Plata, which, in early January, yielded arms and ammunition. Just as important, this and other attacks goaded the army into ever more repressive measures that ensured revolutionary growth in both cities and countryside.[15]

As Theodore Draper has pointed out, for a long period the urban effort sustained the rebellion. The "peasant revolution" later claimed by Castro and publicized by Che Guevara, Régis Debray, and C. Wright Mills did not exist—neither at this time nor later.[16] The rural effort grew

12. Authorities differ on many of these figures: Thomas, op. cit., cites 15 survivors; Draper (*CR*), *supra,* cites 12, which ". . . dwindled at one point to only nine."

13. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra;* see also Draper (*Castroism*), *supra.* The approximately 50,000 peasants in the Sierra Maestra represented one tenth of Cuba's rural population, but a group ". . . notoriously the poorest, the most backward, the most illiterate of the Cuban peasants."

14. Batista, op. cit., stresses the extent of terrorist activity.

15. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra;* Taber, op. cit.

16. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra;* see also Ernesto Che Guevara, *Che Guevara Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?—Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); Huberman & Sweezy, op. cit.; Mills, op. cit.

very slowly. Unlike Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh, Castro had not prepared the peasantry; he and his lieutenants were intellectuals, and neither class easily identified with the other.[17] Rather than turning peasants of Oriente province into a grand army, Castro had all he could do to prevent peasants from turning him in. Life in the mountains also proved hard: morale plunged. Castro concerned himself more with security and sustenance than with fighting; three crimes, he declared, were punishable by death: insubordination, desertion, and defeatism. Che Guevara later wrote:

> . . . Our situation was not a happy one in those days. The column lacked cohesion. It had neither the spirit which comes from the experience of war nor a clear ideological consciousness. Now one comrade would leave us, now another; many requested assignments in the city which were sometimes much more dangerous but which meant an escape from the rugged conditions in the countryside. Nevertheless, our campaign continued on its course. . . .[18]

In Castro's later words:

> . . . We had yet to learn very bitter lessons in the months to come. We had to suffer the effects of the enemy's infiltration tactics. We had to suffer the consequences of treason and on more than one occasion our enemies were on the verge of exterminating us. It was a bitter apprenticeship, but it was a very useful apprenticeship.[19]

At this point, February 1957, the outside world knew little either of Fidel Castro or the rebellion. Taking the government's word, United Press and the New York *Times* had reported Castro's death in early December.[20] Batista, who, in private, referred to the guerrillas as "a bunch of bandits," seemed to control the situation, and the Eisenhower administration continued to bless him. An American military advisory group daily strengthened his army; Batista and his officers received American decorations, and American officers received Cuban decorations.[21] The Cuban economy was booming, with large increases in American investments. Batista's propaganda machine continued to insist that Castro was dead; his security forces added to the illusion by promptly and ruthlessly suppressing local outbreaks: On Christmas Day 1956, a provincial commander rounded up, tortured, and executed twenty-two men and boys at Holguín, a stupid act exploited by rebels as "Batista's Christmas Present."[22]

17. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*
18. Ibid.
19. Matthews (*Castro*), *supra.*
20. Phillips, op. cit.
21. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*
22. Taber, op. cit.: Rebels later assassinated the responsible officer, Colonel Fermín Cowley.

To dispel the notion of security and to broadcast his intentions to the world (following Grivas' example in Cyprus), Castro arranged a rendezvous with a senior New York *Times* editor, Herbert Matthews, a fifty-seven-year-old peripatetic reporter nudging the Richard Harding Davis tradition. Matthews later described the meeting in his book *The Cuban Story:*[23] In mid-February 1957, Castro agents shepherded Matthews to Castro's camp in the mountains. Castro immediately impressed him: ". . . a powerful six-footer, olive-skinned, full-faced, with a shapely beard. He was dressed in an olive grey fatigue uniform and carried a rifle with a telescopic sight of which he was very proud."[24] They spent the night talking, or, rather, whispering, since, according to Matthews' dramatic account, Batista's soldiers were hovering nearby. Castro evidently whispered persuasively: Matthews, who was with him less than a day, became as pro-Castro as Ambassador Gardner was pro-Batista.

Matthews' articles proved sensational. The first of three opened:

> Fidel Castro, the rebel leader of Cuba's youth, is alive and fighting hard and successfully in the rugged, almost impenetrable fastnesses of the Sierra Maestra. . . .

Matthews found Castro's personality ". . . overwhelming. It was easy to see that his men adored him. . . . Here was an educated, dedicated fanatic, a man of ideals, of courage and of remarkable qualities of leadership . . . one got a feeling that he is now invincible."

As for his aims:

> . . . His is a political mind rather than a military one. He has strong ideas of liberty, democracy, social justice, the need to restore the Constitution, to hold elections. He has strong ideas on economy too, but an economist would consider them weak. . . .

Matthews informed his readers:

> . . . Fidel Castro and his 26th of July Movement are the flaming symbol of the opposition to the regime. The organization, which is apart from the university students' opposition, is formed of youths of all kinds. It is a revolutionary movement that calls itself socialistic. It is also nationalistic, which generally in Latin America means anti-Yankee.
>
> The program is vague and couched in generalities, but it amounts to a new deal for Cuba, radical, democratic and therefore anti-Communist. . . .

Matthews also relayed Castro's comforting message to his northern neighbors: ". . . You can be sure that we have no animosity towards the United States and the American people . . . we are fighting for a democratic Cuba and an end to the dictatorship."

23. Matthews (*CS*) and Matthews (*Castro*), *supra;* Phillips, op. cit.

24. Matthews (*CS*), *supra;* but see also Irving Pflaum, *Tragic Island—How Communism Came to Cuba* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961): The author found Castro shorter than six feet, pudgy, and with sloping chin.

Castro's strength was daily growing in Oriente province, Matthews wrote:

> . . . Havana does not and cannot know that thousands of men and women are heart and soul with Fidel Castro and the new deal for which they think he stands.

Castro told the reporter:

> . . . We have been fighting for seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever. . . . The soldiers are fighting badly; their morale is low and ours could not be higher. We are killing many, but when we take prisoners they are never shot. We question them, talk kindly to them, take their arms and equipment, and then set them free.

Castro refused to tell Matthews his guerrilla strength:

> . . . Batista has 3,000 men in the field against us. I will not tell you how many we have, for obvious reasons. He works in columns of 200; we in groups of ten to forty, and we are winning. It is a battle against time and time is on our side.[25]

The articles caused a furor in the United States. Batista had recently lifted censorship, and they were also published in Cuba. Government officials immediately denied that a meeting had taken place; the New York *Times* replied by publishing a photo of Castro and Matthews in the mountains. Cuban dissidents reacted enthusiastically to the story, with many townspeople joining Civic Resistance units. Like the poet Keats, Castro and the Movement awoke famous. A CBS television documentary filmed in the mountains a few weeks later added to Castro's now considerable fame in North America.

Matthews had bought a gold brick.

No one, probably including Castro, knew his political loyalties at this time. A complex man, Castro: In Theodore Draper's words, ". . . as much demagogue as idealist, as much adventurer as revolutionary, as much anarchist as Communist or anything else"—superficially a bright man, but an undisciplined man whose brain was not to cope with challenge of democratic government, whose quixotic personality was to take refuge in the role of twentieth-century Leader, with the disaster it entailed. But all this lay ahead. At the time of the Matthews visitation, Castro's background was known. Despite relatively moderate social, economic, and political reforms called for in the "History Will Absolve Me" speech, he obviously was an angry young man who stroked and sometimes embraced far-left philosophies. Matthews found Raúl Castro "slight and pleasant" but said nothing of his known Communist background, nor did he mention Che Guevara, much less *his* background.

Matthews also falsely reported Castro's strength. What seemed an

25. Matthews (*CS*), *supra*.

endless flow of guerrillas in and out of the Castro camp was the same group, herded by brother Raúl. This was the force that ". . . had been fighting for seventy-nine days"—fighting mainly to stay alive. By Castro's later admission, his "army" at this time consisted of eighteen men![26]

Thus the foundation of a myth: in part, the result of sensational, as opposed to in-depth, reporting. How to explain this monumental aberration on the part of a senior New York *Times* editor? Matthews helped us when he later wrote:

> . . . I knew I had a sensational scoop. I exulted at the fact that at the age of fifty-seven I could still show a younger generation of newspapermen how to get a difficult and dangerous story, and how to write it. And I was moved, deeply moved, by that young man.[27]

Pride first, emotion second. But on what other grounds did Matthews justify his positive assertions? Where was the discipline of objectivity? Where were the follow-up investigations that accurate reporting demands? Matthews proved as biased as Gardner and as reluctant to discover and report facts conflicting with his bias. If Matthews had superiors on the newspaper, they were as lax as Gardner's superiors in Washington in not insisting on more objective appreciation, and the same may be said for superiors of other journalists and cameramen who subsequently reported on Castro. Matthews later tried to justify his reporting. The fact remains that it was cheap and tawdry stuff—a costly episode that should come to the minds of those persons who are fortunate enough to write words for publication and who are tempted to abnegate the tremendous responsibility involved.

Despite Matthews' publicity, Castro's situation remained precarious. Batista's new commander in Oriente, Colonel Barrera Pérez, had correctly analyzed the tactical problem and had started a pacification program designed to lure precarista and peasant loyalty. Once he had deprived Castro of their support, he planned to isolate the guerrillas in the mountains and eventually destroy them. He might have succeeded had command jealousies not brought his transfer, and had other military units, including the Rural Guard, ceased alienating the peasants. Not the least of his crosses was Senator Rolando Masferrer, an Oriente

26. Ibid.; see also Guevara (*Reminiscences*). This is scarcely an original *ruse de guerre*. While Castro at this time could have commanded a meaningful force, that was not proof that he *did* command one—and it was a reporter's responsibility to either discover the strength or report it with qualification.

27. Matthews (*CS*), *supra;* see also Thomas, op. cit.; Draper (*CR*), *supra:* On March 11, 1966, Draper wrote Matthews, ". . . I strongly doubt that your articles would have had such an electrifying effect if you had not personally vouched for Castro's large and winning force. You now claim that you 'guessed at the time that he had about forty men.' Then why did you report at the time, without any hint of skepticism, his boast that he had 'groups of ten to forty'? And you gave a different version of this matter in your book. . . ."

war lord whose private army of some two thousand uniformed thugs was particularly loathed throughout the province.[28]

Castro probably foresaw himself as commander of a vast peasant-guerrilla army. His cadres, however, remained middle-class city dwellers: The most marked reinforcement, fifty recruits (including three American youths) who joined Castro in March, came from Santiago—recruited, organized, and partially armed by his principal urban lieutenant, Frank País.[29] Castro now reorganized his force into platoons which often lived and fought independently. These units worked hard in winning over local peasants, but their support, including recruits, probably depended as much on repressive army counterguerrilla measures and on landlords seizing land temporarily vacated by precaristas (at army orders) as on Castro's blandishments. This does not detract from the work and accomplishments of the various columns, and Che Guevara's account of life in the mountains is well worth reading as a primer on guerrilla warfare.[30]

Castro and Che claim to have developed guerrilla techniques independent of either Mao's or Giap's teachings.[31] Whatever the truth, they bore a marked resemblance to these teachings. They concentrated on agitation and propaganda techniques to win over peasants and gain their support, both active and passive—what Guevara called ". . . dressing the guerrillas in palm leaves."[32] Small bands raided army outposts and ambushed army columns and convoys to gain arms and supply and prisoners (treated well and released) and to provoke the government to extreme countermeasures. In May, the guerrillas were strong enough to carry out a successful frontal attack in daylight against Uvero.

The main accomplishment, however, was survival during a critical period—what Guevara called the nomadic phase. Whether we like it or not, Castro was (and is) a charismatic figure with tremendous appeal to a large number of his countrymen. By keeping the standard of revolt flying in the Sierra Maestra, he succeeded in polarizing opposition elements that daily became more daring in the cities. But, as in the countryside, urban guerrilla tactics proved a two-edged weapon, particularly

28. Taber, op. cit.

29. Draper (*CR*), *supra:* 58 recruits ". . . many of them armed with weapons stolen from the U. S. Naval Base at Guantanamo . . ."; see also Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*

30. In addition to his works cited, see also, Ernesto Che Guevara, *Che Guevara on Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961). Ed. Harries-Clichy Peterson; see also Debray, op. cit., who repeats many of Che's axioms.

31. Debray, op. cit.: Castro relied politically on Marx, Martí, Lenin; militarily, on Engels and Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* [see my Chapter 30, Volume I] ". . . not so much as sources as . . . coincidences; Fidel found in them only what he was looking for. Mao Tse-tung's *Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan* [sic] came into Fidel's and Che's hands after the 1958 summer offensive: to their surprise, they found in this book what they had been practising under pressure of necessity."

32. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*

when they were unco-ordinated and lacked single political purpose, and various urban movements suffered some serious defeats. A senseless frontal attack on the presidential palace by a group of DR terrorists, in March 1957, not only failed but brought a great deal of influential support to Batista.[33] The government's reaction to this attempt to kill the President as well as to other acts of selective terrorism was so violent, however, that in time it lost the considerable support previously claimed. Batista later described the invidious process:

> . . . As the crimes and cruelties of the terrorists grew, so did the necessary repressive measures. New excesses would take place, followed by another wave of slogan propaganda. Public sensibility would be offended, and corrective action would be the responsibility of the Batista government (always in his name) and not that of the provocateurs. . . . In this way the unscrupulous groups headed by Fidel Castro, who ordered assassinations and massacres, succeeded in being represented as fighters for the liberty which they themselves assaulted and mutilated.[34]

Matters thus seesawed into summer of 1957. Time favored the guerrillas only because Batista failed to cope intelligently with the situation. Political mistakes aside (though here lay the key to his ultimate defeat), his counterguerrilla tactics proved inept. Although he returned Barrera Pérez to the Sierra Maestra, he also approved Tabernilla's plan to evacuate peasants and create free-fire zones. Instead of winning over precaristas and thus depriving Castro of support while simultaneously keeping him on the run by small, mobile columns, Tabernilla thought to "seal" the guerrillas in the mountains and bomb and starve them into submission.[35]

The plan had more holes than a Swiss cheese. Summary evacuation of precaristas played into landlord hands and increased already widespread dissatisfaction, bringing more security, more recruits, and more aid to Castro. Tabernilla's five thousand soldiers could not seal the vast range from outside supply. Nor could Castro be bombed or starved to death. His strength amounted to only about two hundred guerrillas operating in small units that defied the keenest bombardier's eye. The guerrillas daily were growing tougher and, for some time, had existed, when necessary, on one meal a day. As with other guerrilla units throughout history, Castro's people were becoming increasingly self-sufficient. Small workshops appeared, a dispensary, armory, a shoe factory; the guerrillas printed and circulated a mimeographed newspaper and, in time, built

33. Batista, op. cit.

34. Ibid.; see also, Matthews (*CS*), *supra:* ". . . Americans had no conception in those last two years of the Batista dictatorship of the fierceness and viciousness with which the General was fighting back against the terrorism and the rising wave of revolutionary opposition. Death for plotters was not only the normal rule; in cases like this torture always came first. . . ."

35. Taber, op. cit.; see also, Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*

a cigar factory! And all in remote mountain valleys approachable only through most difficult and hostile terrain.[36]

No easy way existed to smoke out Castro. The situation called for conventional-force pressures augmented by specially trained counter-guerrilla units to go in after him. The troops who maintained checkpoints and outposts around the Sierra Maestra and who plodded without purpose through valleys and up ridges were the least satisfactory answer—next to the bombings, which were ludicrous. Cuban pilots were not sufficiently trained for this type of warfare (is anyone ever so trained?), and evidence exists that some of them did not wish to bomb fellow Cubans any more than Chiang Kai-shek's pilots wished to bomb fellow Chinese in 1946–47. As Castro not only survived but grew in strength, soldiers in Oriente grew discouraged and finally demoralized, their commanders at each other's throats, the men too often uncaring.

The American army cannot escape a certain amount of responsibility for this state of affairs. The role of the advisory mission at this crucial time is hazy, but American military advisers do not seem to have influenced the tactical situation favorably. Until relevant Pentagon files are released, we won't know the extent of the mission's participation in the Oriente campaigns. We do know that, in 1957, the lessons of Korea, as opposed to those of contemporary insurgencies, ruled American military thinking. The size and shape of Batista's army suggests that he was receiving conventional advice from American advisers.

More important was American political involvement. By early 1957, some U.S. officials were vigorously objecting to Batista's dictatorial government. Press and television coverage was making Cuba a domestic political issue, and Castro was rapidly emerging as Hero against Villain Batista. Writing of the period in his memoirs, President Eisenhower noted ". . . the universal revulsion against the Batista government."[37] That spring, Eisenhower removed Ambassador Gardner (no easy task) in favor of a generous Republican backer, Earl Smith, a fifty-four-year-old investment broker with Ivy League background—his first wife was Consuelo Vanderbilt—who lacked diplomatic experience.

Eisenhower's choice was unfortunate. The situation demanded a master, not a student. The American ambassador occupied a unique role. Smith later told a Senate committee that ". . . the American Ambassador was the second most important man in Cuba, sometimes even more important than the President."[38] To use this power wisely and to persuade the American Government to a sound course of action, the ambassador needed both a mind trained in professional diplomacy and considerable local knowledge to unravel the complex political snarl.

Even the best diplomat would have found the task difficult and frus-

36. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*
37. Eisenhower (*Waging Peace*), *supra.*
38. Taber, op. cit.; see also Earl E. T. Smith, *The Fourth Floor—An Account of the Castro Communist Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1962).

trating. The Administration was veering toward what it called a "neutral" attitude. Smith was instructed to ". . . alter the prevailing notion in Cuba that the American Ambassador was intervening on behalf of the government of Cuba to perpetuate the Batista dictatorship."[39] Considering decades of involvement, American neutrality was as ludicrous as the attempted "neutral" role of the British in Palestine after World War II—a fact that a competent ambassador would have stressed to the Secretary of State. It perhaps would have done no good. The Administration, the State Department, and the military were split into pro- and anti-Batista factions, a split that carried to the Havana embassy, where the CIA was operating virtually independently of the ambassador. The situation called for a united stand on the part of his embassy—and perhaps no one could have achieved this, considering the military-political schisms of the day and the bewildered man in the White House.

Despite Eisenhower's later words, he apparently did not realize the rotten structure of Batista's government. Batista's crusade against "communism," his expanding economy and so-called stable rule were daily attracting diverse American investments, which only added to the strength of the pro-Batista lobby in Washington.[40] And yet American officials, diplomats, CIA agents, and newspapermen were reporting the sordid facts. Robert Taber later wrote that, despite the façade of business as usual in spring of 1957, ". . . it was impossible for the observer who made it his business to look behind the facade *not* to discover the truth."[41]

The Eisenhower administration continued to be friendly to Batista when it should have been suspicious. Positive action in mid-1957 might not have salvaged anything in the end, but it was the only hope: To let matters continue on a disaster course, to pursue a policy of diplomatic "neutrality" not only solved nothing but caused considerable harm. For "neutrality," as defined by the Administration, meant arms and shipments to Batista and harassment of anti-Batista forces in the United States; it meant continued presence of the American military mission in Havana—and all this, in Cuban minds, spelled support of the regime. This, in turn, produced two results: So long as Batista felt that he could count on continued American support, he refused to change his ways. Yet his regime was growing so distasteful that theretofore moderate and *attentiste* Cubans were veering toward the opposition, which meant that they would regard the American Government as hostile.

The American Government would not necessarily have had to come

39. Thomas, op. cit.

40. Draper (*Castroism*), *supra:* The Communist Party (PSP) played a minimal opposition role at this time and objected to Castro's revolutionary tactics; see also Matthews (*CS*), *supra.*

41. Taber, op. cit.

to terms with Castro at this time. As early as March 1957, Robert Taber, who was in Havana, noted in his notebook:

. . . With regard to Batista's opposition, the U. S. Embassy in Havana feels that the oppositionists are divided among themselves principally by fear of the political demands that Fidel Castro might make, were he to emerge as the hero of a popular revolution. They don't want him on their team; they feel that he's too young, fiery, militaristic, anti-Yanqui; in their opinion, a potential dictator worse than the present one.[42]

Here was the nucleus of a reasonable third-party alternative, and the Eisenhower administration's failure to develop it was fatal. Theodore Draper later concluded:

. . . It would appear that American policy in this period was so inept and ineffectual that it was pro-Batista to Castro and pro-Castro to Batista. On the whole, however, Batista was favored as long as he was capable of benefiting from favors, and this period constitutes a sorry and sometimes shameful interlude in the history of recent Cuban-United States relations.[43]

42. Ibid.
43. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*

Chapter 74

Pact of the Sierra • Urban guerrillas • War in the countryside • The balance sheet • The American position • Eisenhower's arms embargo • The climax approaches • Operation Summer fails • Castro's counterattack • The revolution spreads • Batista exits • Castro takes over • Che Guevara on guerrilla warfare • His heterodoxy • His exodus • Che's Bolivian expedition • Capture and execution • Che's failure anlayzed

THROUGHOUT SUMMER OF 1957, the threat to Batista's government steadily grew in scope. In July, two opposition leaders from Havana, Raúl Chibás, of the Ortodoxos, and Felipe Pazos, a respected economist, visited Castro to work out an alliance. The Pact of the Sierra called for a united revolutionary front to oust Batista in favor of free elections and democratic government. Significantly, it asked Washington to stop sending arms to Batista and otherwise not to intervene in Cuban affairs.[1]

Meanwhile, terror in the towns continued to do Castro's work for him. Toward the end of July, his chief organizer, Frank País, fell to police bullets in Santiago. The funeral brought a massive and impressive demonstration by Santiago mothers. Ambassador Smith witnessed this sad

1. Manuel Urrutia Lleó, *Fidel Castro and Company, Inc.—Communist Tyranny in Cuba* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964); see also Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra,* who details the program, a compromise that he and Castro later called a "minimal" program of social reform.

group, which Batista's police broke up with a violence that caused the new ambassador's public protest (and, in turn, elicited Batista's protest against Smith's statement). A strike followed, which police and troops savagely broke within a week.

By autumn of 1957, civil war existed in Cuba. In September, dissident naval elements working with the 26th of July Movement (and probably the CIA) attempted a mutiny, an abortive effort called off at the last minute. Not getting the word, Cienfuegos rebels rose, captured the base, and seized most of the town. Troops, supported by armor and aircraft, arrived in the afternoon and soon eliminated all opposition, killing perhaps three hundred rebels. The revolt made headlines in the United States. A small anti-Batista bloc in Congress objected to American arms being used to suppress internal disorders.[2] The State Department demanded an explanation from Batista. When none came, some officials began talking about prohibiting further arms shipments to Cuba. Influential voices spoke just as loudly in defense of such shipments, and there the matter rested—for the moment. The Washington *Post,* however, noted in a pertinent editorial:

> . . . In the past few months, Cuba has witnessed an assassination attempt on the presidential palace, an abortive general strike, police terror in Santiago, midnight bombings and shootings in Havana, and a blackout of the Cuban press. General Batista deceives no one by blaming the unrest on the Communists. He has pledged a free election in June of 1958, but his repressive policies weaken faith in his promise. It seems clear that if Batista does not accede to an orderly transfer of power, trouble and revolt will continue to plague the freedom-hungry island of Cuba.[3]

Castro's guerrillas meanwhile were not idle and had made several successful, if small, attacks on outposts, and at least one ambush of a relief column. Castro now controlled about two thousand square miles of Oriente province and was strong enough to send two columns from the mountains: one, seventy men, of whom only twenty-eight were armed, under Juan Almeida, to work slowly toward Santiago; the other, sixty-five partially armed men under brother Raúl, to work north toward the Central Highway.[4] Local columns, one commanded by Che Guevara, continued to expand the Oriente base, striking at army outposts in fringe areas.

All was not roses for Castro, however. His people remained desperately short of arms, and supply was also difficult. In early 1958, the American reporter Dickey Chapelle visited Castro: ". . . at one point I lived on raw sugar cane for two days, and at another time I ate only

2. Taber, op. cit.: Senator Wayne Morse and Representatives Adam Clayton Powell and Charles Porter.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

one meal a day for five days in a row."[5] Contrary to sensational reporting by American correspondents, Castro's total force numbered closer to three hundred, than to the several thousand alleged. His army lacked discipline, while a good many peasants refused his blandishments and had to be coerced and (foreshadowing the future) sometimes executed.[6] In December, he ordered widespread burning of the sugar crop, a mistake that caused considerable resentment and was later canceled. Finally, representatives of various opposition groups meeting in Florida presented him with the Miami Pact, which called for a joint resistance effort under a Council of Liberation, a notion he angrily rejected while criticizing Prío Socarrás' followers for storing arms in Havana, where they most likely would be captured, when they were needed in the countryside.

Batista, on the other hand, counted some positive gains. Despite bombings and murders and the fighting in Oriente, the Cuban economy continued to prosper and more capital to flow in, mostly from the United States.[7] The U.S.A. was also providing weapons, and he had placed orders for more, including armored vehicles; he had also declared that the army would recruit another seven thousand men.[8] Security forces in cities kept terrorists splintered and frequently on the run. He was rapidly weaning Ambassador Smith from "neutrality." Though appalled at Batista's strong-arm methods, Smith had always been impressed with the dictator's peculiar anti-Communist organization BRAC. Its influence was evident a few months later when Smith, ". . . becoming rapidly less inclined to believe the State Department or his own embassy advisers, telegraphed Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, recommending the placing of an agent with Castro in the Sierra 'to discover the extent of Communist control' in the 26 July Movement. Apparently this could not be done and anyway the CIA in Cuba itself remained favorable to, rather than opposed to, the 26 July. . . ."[9]

Neither CIA nor State Department officials favored Castro so much as they condemned Batista. To what extent condemnation stemmed from democratic bias, to what extent from realistic appreciation of the power situation, we are not likely to learn. A black-and-white situation probably did not exist. William Wieland, a Cuban specialist in the

5. Dickey Chapelle, "How Castro Won." In T. N. Greene (ed.), *supra.*

6. Guevara (*Reminiscences*), *supra.*

7. Matthews (*CS*), *supra:* ". . . in 1958, United States interests controlled 80 per cent of Cuban utilities, 90 per cent of the mines, 90 per cent of the cattle ranches, all of the oil refining and distribution (with the Royal Dutch Shell) and 40 per cent of the sugar industry"; see also Draper (*Castroism*), *supra;* Mills, op. cit.

8. Taber, op. cit.

9. Thomas, op. cit.; see also Smith, op. cit.: The CIA sent an American journalist, Andrew St. George, to Castro's camp—surely an inferior effort, in that the situation required a sophisticated intelligence operation, for example "turning" a member of the Movement and having him infiltrate Castro's headquarters.

State Department, later greatly criticized for pro-Castro sympathies, told a *Newsweek* correspondent at this time:

> . . . I know Batista is considered by many as a son of a bitch . . . but American interests come first . . . at least he is our son of a bitch, he is not playing ball with the Communists. . . . On the other hand, Fidel Castro is surrounded by commies. I don't know whether he is himself a communist. . . . [But] I am certain he is subject to communist influences.[10]

Wieland and his superior, Roy Rubottom, U. S. Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American affairs, could not ignore field reports that showed Batista losing ground. Castro was no longer a semimyth to Cubans; he might have been weak in numbers and otherwise disorganized, but he was creating havoc in Oriente province. In February 1958, Radio Rebelde began broadcasting from the Sierra, and it was difficult, if not impossible, for the government to refute facts and figures that came over the air.

The key, however, remained Batista's reaction. While he burbled on about spring elections, police and troops continued to operate with such undisguised violence that theretofore-neutral agencies began to swing over to the revolutionary cause. The Communists, whom Batista had been blaming all along, only started to veer toward Castro's support in February 1958. Significantly, prominent church leaders and judges also began protesting. In mid-March, a Havana magistrate ordered indictment of two of Batista's hatchet men (and barely escaped with his life). Batista suspended constitutional guarantees, reimposed censorship, and postponed scheduled elections. The university long had been closed; secondary schools now closed. Urged by resistance leaders in the city, Castro ordered a general strike for early April, to be followed by a massive civil-disobedience campaign throughout the country.[11]

A blow to Batista far worse than these was about to fall. The American public had become increasingly upset by Batista's brutality; simultaneously, Herbert Matthews and other reporters had built Castro into a romantic figure of considerable appeal to liberal elements. Castro effectively played the liberator's role. According to an article in the February 1958 issue of *Coronet* magazine, he promised ". . . genuine representative government," ". . . truly honest general elections within twelve months," and restoration of all personal and political liberties guaranteed by the 1940 constitution.[12]

The 26th of July Movement had established a series of "clubs" in American cities that were disseminating pro-Castro propaganda while

10. Thomas, op. cit.

11. Draper (*Castroism*), *supra,* quotes the March manifesto; Castro would have been wise had he read Chorley on the efficacy of the general strike in the history of revolutionary warfare: K. C. Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1943).

12. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*

collecting funds, and the Movement had also established a vociferous lobby in Washington, where Castro was already served by several congressmen and by a secret agent in the Cuban embassy.[13] Cuba had become a domestic political issue. Eisenhower no longer could watch, he had to act: Citing the charter of the Organization of American States, he placed an embargo on further arms shipments to Batista.

The arms themselves were not so important as the moral effect of the deed. Batista at once placed orders on the continent and in England.[14] He could not replace the tacit support of the Eisenhower administration, even though, ambiguously enough, the Administration bowed to Pentagon pressures and left the military advisory mission in Havana. Ambassador Smith remained close to Batista, and the U. S. Army tactlessly decorated Colonel Tabernilla with the Legion of Merit (for prior services on the Inter-American Defense Board).

The arms embargo nonetheless proved a welcome shot in the arm to the rebels, who hastened plans for a general strike. They may have moved too rapidly. Some evidence suggests that Castro himself did not really favor the tactic, perhaps because of its organizational difficulties, perhaps because success would have allowed a junta to take over.[15] Whatever the case, the strike failed. Trade-union leaders, most of them in Batista's pocket, refused to call out workers; urban leaders of the Movement did not consult Communist leaders and thus lost their cooperation. Failure in Havana and Santiago perforce nullified Castro's orders for country-wide civil disobedience.

Failure of the April strike, what Hugh Thomas more accurately calls an urban uprising, caused Castro to resume guerrilla tactics in both cities and countryside. Batista answered in two ways, the first being counterterror:

> . . . The army and secret police struck back blindly, indiscriminately, senselessly. The students, blamed as the main troublemakers, were their chief victims. It became safer for young men to take to the hills than to walk in the streets. The orgy of murders, tortures, and brutalities sent tremors of fear and horror through the entire Cuban people and especially the middle-class parents of the middle-class students.[16]

The second way was Operation Summer, the biggest military operation in Cuban history, launched toward end of May and designed to eliminate Castro. Thirteen combat teams of about three hundred fifty men each—some forty-five hundred troops—supported by tanks, artillery,

13. Taber, op. cit.
14. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*
15. Ibid.: Draper vigorously dissents, citing Castro's March manifesto; see also Urrutia Lleó, op. cit.
16. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*

naval gunfire, and aircraft, and supplemented by Rural Guard units, pushed in from two directions toward Castro's headquarters.[17]

Although progressing satisfactorily for a few weeks, the attacks failed, for a variety of reasons. Batista's two senior commanders, Río Chaviano and Cantillo, loathed each other. Like Rennenkampf and Samsonov, who brought the Russian armies to disaster at Tannenberg in 1914, they refused to co-operate, either with each other or with the General Staff.[18] Batista's orders tied up about a quarter of the troops in guarding coffee and sugar plantations in Oriente. Army morale, in general, was poor; most units were untrained for guerrilla warfare: Upon leaving the lowlands, they succumbed to fatigue and disease; the rainy season slowed them even more.[19] They pushed on, however, and, by mid-June, had boxed Castro into a four-square-mile area; in his later words: ". . . Our territory was reduced and reduced until we could not reduce any further."[20] But now columns lacked sufficient strength to deliver a *coup de grâce,* nor were reinforcements available to help them.

Even worse, the push had not fragmented the guerrillas. Learning of Batista's plans in ample time, Castro had pulled in his outposts and his roving units. As soldiers advanced, he retreated. Knowing literally every move made by the army, he kept one step ahead.[21] When the columns reached the end of their tether, he attacked. One army column, nearly a thousand men, lost two thirds of its strength in killed and wounded, not to mention loss of arms, radios, and code books.[22] This success triggered a series of attacks in which Castro ably exploited intelligence and mobility and, in addition, rubbed salt in the wound by transmitting false orders in code on a captured radio. Rebel attacks shortly routed the army, with many soldiers and even some units deserting.[23] Besides deserters and prisoners (over four hundred, well treated and released to the Red Cross), the retreat yielded Castro rifles, machine guns, mortars and bazookas, even a 14-ton tank.[24] The entire action cost him perhaps twenty-seven killed and fifty wounded.

Batista's army was still extricating itself from the Sierra Maestra when guerrillas under Raúl Castro struck in the north. Toward the end of June, to protest American delivery of rockets to the army, his group kidnaped a number of American and Canadian mining employees, along with twenty-seven American sailors and marines from Guantánamo and several officials of United Fruit Company. This bold act caused ranking officials in Washington to argue for armed interven-

17. Taber, op. cit.
18. Batista, op. cit.
19. Jay Mallin, "Castro's Guerrilla Campaign," *Marine Corps Gazette,* January 1962.
20. Thomas, op. cit.; see also Matthews (*Castro*), *supra.*
21. Chapelle, op. cit.
22. Thomas, op. cit.
23. Batista, op. cit.; see also Taber, op. cit.
24. Thomas, op. cit.; see also Taber, op. cit.

tion against the guerrillas, but the storm blew over when Raúl released them and they reported that they had been well treated.[25]

Batista's failure in the countryside, graphically described to the Cuban people by Radio Rebelde, brought near panic in top government circles. He attempted to counter Castro's growing popularity with incessant propaganda and large rewards, such as a hundred thousand dollars offered for the capture of the bearded guerrilla leader. In cities, police rounded up thousands of "suspects" in a desperate attempt to quell growing revolution.

Castro's popularity continued to increase as his clandestine radio broadcast victorious communiqués, only some of which were true. In July, in Caracas, agents of the Movement brought together representatives of other underground groups (Communists excluded) to form a Junta of Unity (Frente Cívico Revolucionario Democrático), which designated Castro commander in chief of revolutionary forces and issued a revolutionary manifesto. Although Batista prevented publication in Cuba, it was published in the United States and elsewhere in the hemisphere and was broadcast in Cuba both from stations in Caracas and from Radio Rebelde.[26] About this same time, the Communists, who had been edging closer to Castro and the Movement since early in the year, saw the light and sent a representative to the Sierra, much to the delight, no doubt, of Raúl Castro and Che Guevara.[27]

Failure of Operation Summer sounded the knell to Batista's hope of restoring control in southern Oriente. A large part of the area now lay under Castro's direct or indirect command, to the extent that local mills paid him a tribute of fifteen cents per 250-pound bag of sugar shipped to Havana—an income, according to Batista, of millions of dollars, used to bribe more soldiers and buy more weapons.

In August, Castro established central headquarters in the hills above La Plata. A few weeks later, his units started toward the coastal city of Santiago. Simultaneously, Guevara and another lieutenant, Cienfuegos, led columns west, toward Las Villas province, where Guevara was to establish a new base and take command of Directorio guerrilla groups fighting in the Escambray area. Both Guevara and Cienfuegos have written graphically of the hardships of this forty-day march. Although the enemy shot up one of Guevara's units, the guerrillas received con-

25. Matthews (*Castro*), *supra;* see also Taber, op. cit.; Mallin, op. cit.: From the guerrilla standpoint, the kidnapings made sense: Raúl's idea was to force the United States to negotiate and thus grant the rebels a sort of diplomatic recognition important for propaganda purposes; the diverse kidnapings also demonstrated widespread geurrilla control of the area.

26. SORO, op. cit.: ". . . The agreement called for co-operation in the common cause, continued co-operation after victory, the arming of the people, and the co-operation of labor and business in a general strike to be called to aid the military front when needed. The manifesto called on the soldiers to desert, and on everybody else to support the revolution. Above all, it stressed the theme of unity."

27. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*

siderable help from local Communists; they may also have bribed Batista's local commander in Camagüey—the suggested figure is one hundred thousand dollars—to let them transit the province. By end of October, Guevara and Cienfuegos had absorbed the Directorio and Communist units and were controlling a large portion of Las Villas, even going so far as to distribute privately owned land to local peasants.[28] Guevara now began working across the island to sever the government's east-west communications.

Castro's columns meanwhile had snaked toward Santiago and other towns and were cutting communications and ambushing increasingly demoralized army units, a situation that brings to mind Mao's guerrillas in 1946, when they were isolating Chiang's garrisons in Manchuria. In camp at La Plata, Castro increasingly resembled an army theater commander more than a provincial guerrilla leader. Political envoys, couriers, and foreign correspondents arrived and left in a steady stream. The guerrillas were on the offensive and would remain so until Batista's fall.

Batista fell with surprising swiftness. He later wrote feelingly of conditions in that crucial autumn:

> . . . Some of the sugar mills were not operating because the cane had been burned, and others because it was believed that, no matter how great the effort, labor crews would not be protected while trying to reconstruct the railways and the bombed-out roads. The ranchers could not transport their steers to the markets. . . . The coffee harvest faced the same risks. . . . A similar situation faced the miners and harvesters of rice, tobacco and other agricultural products.
>
> These conditions brought about greater efforts for a fast settlement, and even hints that the Government yield its power to the rebels. . . .[29]

A rigged election of a new President in November, a Batista candidate, Rivero Agüero, fooled no one. Although Rivero attracted limited American support, mainly from the pro-Batista lobby, the government's situation was deteriorating beyond salvation. Batista later wrote:

> . . . Panic was growing among the commercial interests and, apparently, in several important sectors of the Armed Forces. . . .
>
> Military affairs went from bad to worse. . . .
>
> With the elections over . . . Sabotage ran wild, people were slain and wounded by the rebels. Government forces were unable to stop them.
>
> The military operations carried out in the Sierra Maestra and its valleys dragged along without satisfactory results. The Command and the Chief of Operations were changed several times. . . .
>
> The delay in fighting the guerrillas with adequate tactics created anxiety in the population. Terrorism, indiscriminately and unscrupulously carried on

28. Thomas, op. cit.
29. Batista, op. cit.

in the whole country but especially in the capital, was the contagion that became known as "the cancer of the Sierra Maestra. . . ."[30]

To the uneducated observer, the crisis was not immediately apparent. A reporter, Irving Pflaum, later wrote:

. . . I remember Havana in the final months of 1958, while the thieves and gangsters prepared to flee, as a dying city, scarcely breathing, bruised and sullen behind a facade of wholly synthetic gaiety in the near-empty hotels and casinos.[31]

In the second week in December, Senator Ellender of Louisiana asked newsmen in Havana: ". . . Is there a revolution here?"[32]

Behind the scenes, Batista was desperately reshuffling senior commanders, but this was only riding tired horses. Che Guevara's campaign in Las Villas caught him and his commanders off guard. In a desperate attempt to keep roads open, the government expanded its highway patrol: ". . . patrol cars manned by a crew of four, each fully armed. They made their run in pairs, staying only one kilometer apart and communicating by radio-telephone."[33] The army backed this effort with another twelve hundred troops sent from Havana along with an armored train to protect repair crews. But, by mid-December, villages and towns were falling to guerrillas, the small army garrisons in most cases surrendering.

Panic in Havana washed over Washington. Eisenhower's later words unintentionally emphasized the poverty of his Cuba policy:

. . . During the rush of these last events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the best interests of the United States. (Earlier reports which I had received of Castro's possible Communism were suspect because they originated with people who favored Batista.)

"Communists and other extreme radicals appear to have penetrated the Castro movement," Allen Dulles said. "If Castro takes over, they will probably participate in the government." When I heard this estimate, I was provoked that such a conclusion had not been given earlier.

One of my advisers recommended that the United States should now back Batista as the lesser of two evils. I rejected that course. If Castro turned out to be as bad as our intelligence now suggested, our only hope, if any, lay with some kind of non-dictatorial "third force," neither Castroite nor Batistiano.[34]

30. Ibid.
31. Pflaum, op. cit.
32. Taber, op. cit.
33. Batista, op. cit.
34. Eisenhower (*Waging Peace*); see also Matthews (*CS*), *supra:* The Deputy Director of CIA, General C. P. Cabell, testified to the Senate Internal Security Committee on November 5, 1959, that his organization believed that Castro was

Eisenhower was about five years too late. When Ambassador Smith flew to Washington in mid-December, he received only negative instructions ". . . instructions to disabuse Batista of any idea that Rivero Agüero might receive the backing of the U.S. government."[35] This effectively finished Batista. Castro's guerrillas had surrounded Santiago and were negotiating surrender of Batista's senior commanders. Guevara's guerrillas had isolated the armored train, whose garrison surrendered. Guevara now cut the island in half and continued to receive surrender of principal city garrisons.[36]

At year's end, Batista gathered wife and children and, with a personal entourage ". . . of bodyguards, retainers, and erstwhile military and political accomplices" who filled five airplanes, flew into an exile that would end in Florida—no great hardship, in view of a personal fortune estimated as high as $300 million.[37]

Batista's exodus was Castro's victory. In early January 1959, Che Guevara and his ragged band entered Havana and took control of government. A few days later, Castro triumphantly followed, the Liberator claiming the country for the Movement.

The political revolution was over, the social revolution about to begin—with results disastrous to Cuba and her long-suffering people.

From the standpoint of guerrilla warfare, Che Guevara's expedition to Bolivia constitutes an important postscript to the Cuban revolution. Daniel James, who translated and edited Che's captured diaries, offers an excellent account of this ill-fated expedition in his book *The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Ché Guevara,* on which the following brief account is largely based.[38]

Almost immediately upon assuming power, Castro began to alter facts of the multifaceted revolutionary experience. A combination of arrogance of ignorance and political opportunism caused him and cohorts to insist that they had carried off a "peasant revolution"—a vast oversimplification, as we have briefly discussed. As early as spring of 1959, Castro and Che were developing a theme that, by means of a peasant uprising, the rebels had established a peculiar "Latin American way"

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not a member of the Communist Party, and did not consider himself to be a Communist; Draper (*CR*), *supra,* quotes Senators Eastland and Dodd of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee: ". . . Cuba was handed to Castro and the Communists by a combination of Americans in the same way that China was handed to the Communists."

35. Thomas, op. cit.

36. Guevara, op. cit.

37. Thomas, op. cit.; see also Matthews (*CS*), *supra.*

38. Daniel James (ed.), *The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Ché Guevara—and Other Captured Documents* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968). Hereafter cited as James (*Diaries*); see also James (*Che*), *supra;* Ernesto Che Guevara, *Bolivian Diary* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968). Tr. Carlos Hansen and Andrew Sinclair.

to revolution.[39] In 1961, in a book called *Guerrilla Warfare,*[40] and in 1963, in a long article, "Guerrilla Warfare: A Method,"[41] in *Cuba Socialista,* Che Guevara developed the theme:

. . . We consider that the Cuban Revolution made three fundamental contributions to the laws of the revolutionary movement in the current situation in America [i.e., Central and South America]. They are: Firstly, people's forces can win a war against the army. Secondly, we need not always wait for all the revolutionary conditions to be present; the insurrection itself can create them. Thirdly, in the underdeveloped parts of America the battleground for armed struggle should in the main be the countryside.[42]

Che foresaw a continental struggle brought on by a series of local insurrections—the famous *foco insurreccional:*

. . . The prediction of the continental character of the struggle is borne out by analysis of the strength of each contender, but this does not in the least exclude independent outbreaks. Just as the beginning of the struggle in one part of a country is bound to develop it throughout its area, the beginning of a revolutionary war contributes to the development of new conditions in the neighboring countries.[43]

Here was a sort of revolutionary *tache d'huile* concept that, in time, Che supposed would result in a large revolutionary base from which to carry on the armed struggle:

. . . As Fidel said, the Andes will be the Sierra Maestra of America, and all the immense territories that make up this continent will become the scene of a life-and-death struggle against the power of imperialism.[44]

The United States inevitably would react to the threat, and the Southern Hemisphere, in time, would become a second Vietnam.

This grandiose dream might have died, except for a peculiar combination of factors. One was Castro's and Che's belief, probably genuine, in historical determinism:

. . . We cannot tell when this struggle will acquire a continental character nor how long it will last; but we can predict its advent and its triumph, because it is the inevitable result of historical, economic and political conditions and its direction cannot be changed.[45]

39. George Lavan (ed.), *Che Guevara Speaks—Selected Speeches and Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1967). See his interview by two Chinese Communist journalists in April 1959.
40. *Supra.*
41. Lavan, op. cit.
42. Ibid.
43. James (*Diaries*), *supra.*
44. Lavan, op. cit.
45. Ibid.

Allied to this factor was Castro's determination to retain his own revolutionary personality, particularly as regards Soviet influence. Castro and Che's revolutionary thesis was a synthesis owing much more to Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh than to the Soviets. This was all right so long as Castro did not have to depend on the U.S.S.R. for survival. When that unhappy state of affairs arose, the unorthodox revolutionary line could scarcely be tolerated, and, indeed, from 1961 onward, Guevara found himself in nasty fights with doctrinaire Communists at home and abroad.

Add to this Che's own performance as president of the Cuban National Bank and as Minister of Industry. Dr. Guevara's treatment of the Cuban economy very nearly killed the patient. His ineptness both in economics and in politics brought him into increasing conflict with Castro, whom he was beginning to criticize, albeit guardedly, and who saw him as a rival in any event.

In late 1964, Che evidently fell from grace, leaving Havana and becoming a sort of revolutionary ambassador without portfolio, in some ways a romantic figure—a Walt Whitman with machine gun. In New York, he delivered a fiery address to the United Nations attacking both the United States and the Soviet Union as imperialist powers; he went on to Africa, made more bellicose speeches, and returned to Havana in March 1965, apparently impressed with the revolutionary possibilities offered by Congo troubles. He now went underground, resigning all official positions and renouncing Cuban citizenship, his goal to carry revolution abroad.[46]

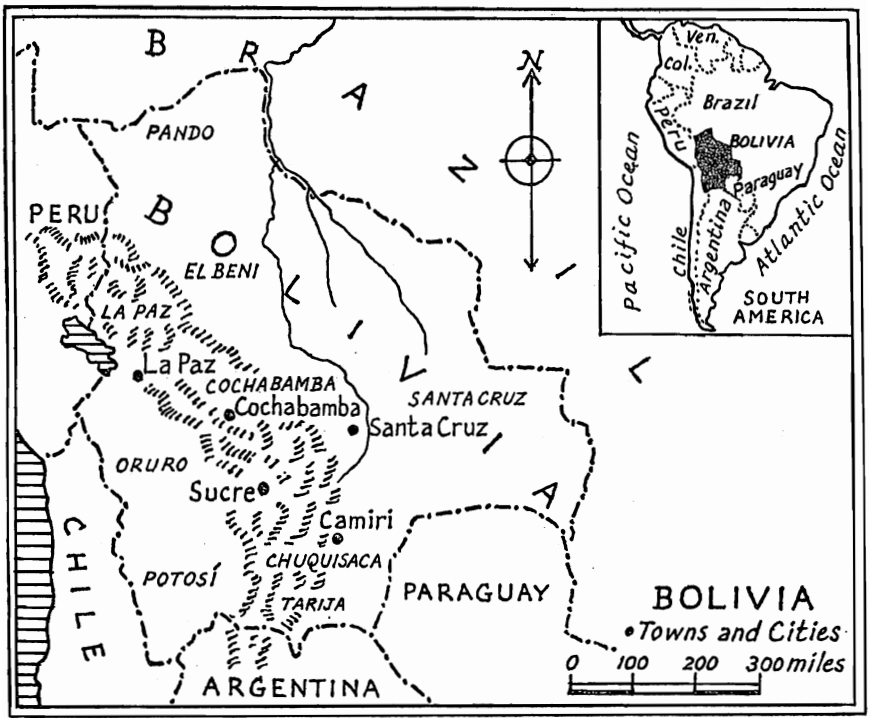
Backed by Castro, he took 125 Cuban guerrillas to join the Kinshasa rebellion in the Congo. This effort totally failed, and he returned to Havana in autumn of 1965. He next decided to carry revolution to South America by establishing an insurrectional *foco* in Bolivia—a plan approved by Castro, who allowed him to recruit and train some twenty Cuban guerrillas and also supported him financially.

At first glance, Bolivia seemed just the country in which to launch an agrarian revolution. The population was predominantly peasant. Terrain favored guerrilla warfare. The Barrientos government was authoritarian and seemed to Che and Castro to resemble Batista's government. The army was small and ill-trained. A local Communist Party existed to carry revolution to the cities.

Disguised as a traveling salesman, Che arrived in Bolivia in November 1966. The young French Communist Régis Debray had arrived earlier ". . . to make a geopolitical study of the selected zone."[47] Che now organized a headquarters for his small group, which included twenty-nine Bolivians. After a short training program, he started his force, about fifty, on a training march designed to learn the terrain, to

46. Ibid.: See his "Farewell Letter to Fidel": ". . . Other nations of the world call for my modest efforts."

47. James (*Diaries*), *supra.*



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perfect guerrilla tactics, and to recruit local peasants. In late March, the guerrillas successfully ambushed an army patrol, a success repeated in April.

But, also in April, an army patrol elsewhere captured Régis Debray and two followers, and the Barrientos government agreed to accept a sixteen-man team of American Special Forces advisers to train a regiment of Rangers in counterinsurgency tactics. By May, considerable steam had gone out of Che's operations. Che had been recording frequent quarrels in the ranks; lack of food and general illness were slowing his movements; he had recruited no peasants. Although he remained optimistic and, in July, briefly "captured" a town, he was forced to split his group and, in general, to keep moving. By now, army intelligence had closed in on his earlier headquarters and had identified him and most of his lieutenants. By August, he admitted he was in ". . . a difficult situation." Matters steadily worsened, and, in early October, units of the 2nd Rangers surrounded his small group. He was wounded, captured, and presumably summarily executed.

What went wrong?

Castro's and Che's estimate of the situation was nearly as faulty as

that made by Lyndon Johnson, Eugene Staley, Maxwell Taylor, and Walt Rostow in Vietnam in 1961 (see following chapter). The terrain in southeastern Bolivia favored guerrilla warfare only so long as one *knew* the terrain. Neither Che nor his Cubans nor his Bolivians knew the terrain, which meant that they had to depend largely on the peasants.

Che miscalculated badly here. The peasants, in this case Indians, who constituted more than two thirds of Bolivia's 4.25 million people, were not to be stirred. As Daniel James noted,

> . . . The National Revolution had radically transformed the life of the Bolivian Indian . . . and that was probably its greatest single accomplishment. It had done so, first, through an agrarian reform law enacted in 1953, which made landholders of the virtually landless Indian peasantry and gave them pride of ownership, even if it was but a little plot they were given. Second, the whole body of revolutionary legislation had the effect of raising the Indian out of age-old serfdom and enabling him to exert his rights as a citizen. . . .[48]

Guevara's chief selling point of revolution—Land to the Landless—automatically fell flat when pitched to Indians with land. But, more than that, in Che's area of operations, his *foco insurreccional* in southeastern Bolivia, the Indians were a particular sort, parochial and suspicious of any outsiders. Che and his guerrillas had studied the dominant Indian language, Quechua, but, in the Southeast, the Indians spoke Guaraní: ". . . Not one of the guerrillas, including the Bolivians, could speak it. . . ."[49]

Lacking a valid sales pitch and easy communication, Che failed not only to win over peasants but to gain even limited co-operation. His monthly analysis for April included the ominous statement: ". . . The peasant base has not yet been developed although it appears that through planned terror we can neutralize some of them; support will come later. Not one enlistment has been obtained." The May analysis included this statement: ". . . Complete lack of peasant recruitment, although they are losing their fear of us and we are beginning to win their admiration. It is a slow and patient task. . . ." In June, he noted: ". . . The lack of peasant recruits continues. It is a vicious circle: to get this enlistment we need to settle in a populated area, and for this we need men." And the last analysis, in September: ". . . the peasants do not give us any help and are turning into informers."[50]

Peasants had been informing all along. Though no great shakes, the Barrientos government and the Bolivian army impressed the peasants far more than did Che's guerrillas. This was partly because of land reforms, partly an "ingrained fear and respect" of the army, and partly

48. Ibid.; see also J. E. Fagg, *Latin America—A General History* (London: Macmillan, 1969).
49. James (*Diaries*), *supra*.
50. Ibid.

because it was a peasant army and its recruits were aware that the government had been trying to help peasants. American army advisers had been on hand since 1958, their influence evident in a Civic Action Program which, by late 1963, had the army spending 20 per cent of its time in civil works, most in the countryside. When Che's early successes were reported,

> . . . peasant organizations throughout the country held meetings at which they not only denounced the invaders but proceeded to organize armed peasant detachments to send into battle against them.
>
> In July 1967 the Fourth Peasant National Congress was held, representing the vast majority of Bolivian peasants. It called upon its followers to back the government against the guerrillas with arms if necessary. This was supplemented by a formal "Pacto Campesino-Militar," an alliance of the peasantry with the Armed Forces, which itself is made up almost entirely of peasant conscripts.[51]

For this reason, the army gained intelligence it needed to run down guerrillas; guerrillas lacked intelligence needed to survive, prosper, and grow.

Che fared no better with local revolutionary groups. Two such could have helped him: the Communist Party, or PCB, headed by Mario Monje, with primarily an intellectual-student following; and the miners, helped by one Guevara (no relation).

Castro and Che alienated Monje with their initial decision to use Bolivia as a revolutionary comfort station, a decision taken without consulting the Communist chief. Che's words to his small guerrilla group were scarcely calculated to appeal to nationalism:

> . . . Bolivia will sacrifice itself so that conditions [for revolution] can be created in neighboring countries. We have to make [Latin] America another Viet Nam, with its center in Bolivia.[52]

Debray added to conflict by dealing with miners instead of with Monje—a futile gesture that resulted in only a few, undesirable recruits for Che. Che's own insistence on leading a rural revolution with the military struggle predominant over the political struggle completed Monje's alienation. Monje ". . . saw the revolution in more orthodox Leninist terms, as emerging from a mass uprising in the cities."[53] In a December meeting with Che Guevara, he presented a plan that called for ". . . coordination of simultaneous actions in the cities, mines, countryside, and mountains," as soon as a national crisis occurred. Monje, moreover, felt that he should lead the effort, and, when Che refused to consider this, the two fell out—to Guevara's great cost.

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.

Even had Monje remained co-operative, he could have offered only limited help. He could have supplied Bolivian recruits, but whether they would have known terrain and Indians any better than Che is problematical. He also could have kept open a line of communications to Che, but whether Fidel Castro would have filled that line with revolutionary needs—arms, supply, and money—is also problematical: Daniel James suggests that Castro was not sorry to be rid of his old lieutenant.

That his old lieutenant was failing, seems to have been the case. From his arrival in Bolivia, he had begun violating his own basic tenets of guerrilla warfare. By June, he was a sick man gradually losing control of himself and his group. It is possible that he wanted to die a martyr. He had seen his economic theories refuted. He might have believed that Castro was compromising Marxism-Leninism by accepting an imperialistic Soviet presence. He had failed in the Congo, and almost daily, despite various euphoric diary entries, he was seeing his theories fail in the Bolivian wilderness. Whether asthma and general debilitation dulled his senses or whether he underestimated the army, he refused to cut out for the border in time to avoid capture. On the basis of diary entries, not to mention his previous behavior and personality in general, we can conclude that Che's ego overcame his common sense. We don't know where his body lies, but, if ever a plaque is erected, it should bear only two words, as fatal to a guerrilla as to those who fight guerrillas: VANITAS VANITATUM.

Chapter 75

John Kennedy inherits a war • General Lansdale's estimate of the situation • Kennedy's strategic appraisal • His early errors • Lyndon Johnson's report • Hawks versus doves • Military versus political strategy • The Staley Plan • The Taylor mission • The military solution • Kennedy's reservations • Roger Hilsman dissents • De Gaulle's warning • Kennedy acts • His relations with Diem

SINCE 1951, John Kennedy had interested himself in the Vietnam scene, on several occasions pressing his views on fellow legislators and the nation.[1] For nearly ten years, protests of dissident officials had claimed his ear. He had listened to such Saigon veterans as Robert Blum and Edward Gullion, and he knew and approved of some of Colonel Edward Lansdale's views.

In June 1956, the young senator told a meeting of American Friends of Vietnam: ". . . What we must offer [the Vietnamese people] is a revolution—a political, economic, and social revolution far superior to anything the Communists can offer—far more peaceful, far more democratic, and far more locally controlled."[2]

1. John F. Kennedy, *The Strategy of Peace* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

2. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Tanya Matthews, op. cit.: In July 1957, Senator Kennedy introduced a resolution in the Senate ". . . calling on the President and the Secretary of State to use American influence to achieve a solution which would recognize the independent personality of Algeria."

Kennedy's error, and that of hundreds of influential and well-intentioned Americans, was the assumption that President Ngo Dinh Diem both wished and was able to effect such a revolution—an assumption unfortunately voided by Diem's behavior, which increasingly caused some of his most enthusiastic American supporters to begin having second thoughts on his performance. Although the Eisenhower administration was preparing to send more advisers and more aid, Ambassador Durbrow ". . . had been required to bear so many messages of disapproval from the United States that he had not been welcome at the presidential palace in Saigon for several months."[3] Nor did Diem's belief that Durbrow was privy to the November 1960 coup attempt, and had failed to warn Diem, help matters.

Although Vietnam played no prominent role in 1960 U.S. presidential elections, Kennedy entered office displeased with the situation in Indochina. He was scarcely reassured when, in early February 1961, presidential assistant Walt Rostow handed him a memorandum prepared by Lansdale, now a brigadier general:

> . . . Lansdale's paper, on the basis of his earlier experience in Vietnam, dealt with what he regarded as the American failures to use political power for what it was worth in backing the cause of real nationalism and in conducting the war in ways that would counter the increasingly successful guerrilla effort of the Vietcong. As a man who understood the nature of guerrilla warfare, and who at the time was recognized as the Pentagon's leading expert on the subject, Lansdale felt that the Vietnamese military structure and military methods of operation (which the Americans, in their pale advisory role, were countenancing) were all wrong. He felt that if the bitter conflict stood any chance of being won, we would have to be firm in insisting on a complete reorganization of the government's fighting machine; we would have to make it a force capable of dealing with Communist subversion in a meaningful and imaginative way, much as Magsaysay had done in the Philippines in 1951–52.[4]

Kennedy read the paper through and turned to Rostow: "This is the worst yet," he said. "You know, Ike never briefed me about Vietnam."[5]

3. Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation—The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967).

4. Shaplen, op. cit.

5. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965). Hereafter cited as Schlesinger (*Days*); see also Hugh Sidey, *John F. Kennedy, President* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), for a slightly different version; but see also Clark M. Clifford, "A Viet Nam Reappraisal," *Foreign Affairs,* July 1969: As Kennedy's "transition planner," Clifford arranged a briefing on Southeast Asia on January 19, 1961. He later wrote: ". . . Most of the time, the discussion centered on Southeast Asia, with emphasis upon Laos. At that particular time, January 1961, Laos had come sharply into focus and appeared to constitute the major danger in the area.

No matter the new President's lack of information on Vietnam, he entered office fully aware of the deteriorating position in Southeast Asia, particularly in Laos. Kennedy did not regard this as an isolated problem area, but, rather, as symptomatic of a new strategic threat. He saw guerrilla warfare—what he called "internal" or "subterranean" war—as the real challenge of the sixties. As he was soon to tell the American Society of Newspaper Editors:

> . . . it is clearer than ever that we face a relentless struggle in every corner of the globe that goes far beyond the clash of armies or even nuclear armaments. The armies are there, and in large number. The nuclear armaments are there. But they serve primarily as the shield behind which subversion, infiltration, and a host of other tactics steadily advance, picking off valuable areas one by one in situations which do not permit our armed intervention.[6]

Almost as soon as he took office, he ordered Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to begin weaning the United States from dependence on the massive-retaliation strategy of nuclear warfare: ". . . I instructed the Secretary of Defense to reappraise our entire defense strategy, capacity, commitments and needs in the light of present and future dangers."[7]

The Lansdale report thus found a receptive mind. It so impressed Kennedy that he decided to send its author back to Vietnam as American ambassador, an intention shortly announced to a select group of officials. It would have been a healthy move. Although Lansdale had overrated Diem's potential, he had remained on good terms with the man and possibly could have separated him from the destructive embrace of the Nhus and persuaded him to a more productive course. He could also have spelled out the insurgency problem to the White House and recommended specific reforms needed in the South Vietnamese army (ARVN), MAAG, and perhaps even in various American civil-aid and intelligence missions. But the threat of Lansdale's disruptive presence to sacrosanct bureaucratic and particularly military empires caused a storm of protest from Washington and Saigon officialdom.[8]

"My notes disclose the following comments by the President [Eisenhower]:

At this point, President Eisenhower said, with considerable emotion, that Laos was the key to the entire area of Southeast Asia.

He said if we permitted Laos to fall, then we would have to write off all the area. He stated we must not permit a Communist take-over. . . ."

6. John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of John F. Kennedy* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Hereafter cited as Kennedy (*Public Papers*); see also Hilsman, op. cit.

7. Kennedy (*Public Papers*), *supra.*

8. John Mecklin, *Mission in Torment* (New York: Doubleday, 1965); see also Hilsman, op. cit.: The State Department recommended sending Lansdale out on three subsequent occasions without success; in 1965, Lodge finally insisted on his presence.

Unfortunately, the young President succumbed to these forces (which he would never quite tame).

Uncertain as to the situation in South Vietnam—an uncertainty inherited from the Eisenhower administration, itself victim to false reports from the field regarding Diem's indispensability—Kennedy yielded to military and civil advisers, including Dean Rusk, and, in March 1961, sent out Frederick E. Nolting as his new ambassador. A soft-spoken Virginian, Nolting was a fifty-year-old former philosophy professor turned diplomat, a man without experience in Southeast Asia. Roger Hilsman later offered an interesting insight into the President's thinking at this time:

> . . . Nolting was a big, soft-spoken man who was so comfortable to be with that almost everyone used his nickname, Fritz. He was ideal for the job of restoring good relations with Diem and attempting to influence him toward concessions that would bring his regime wider support from within Vietnam and make it politically easier for the United States to give him the aid he requested.[9]

Instead of getting off to a good start, then, Kennedy, by these negative actions, kept the pot of South Vietnam bubbling as it had been for the previous five years. A change of faces and significant increases in personnel, both civil and military, meant no fundamental improvement of a worsening situation. Instead, it meant privately compounding past and present errors while publicly defending them as a viable program.

A number of reasons exist for Kennedy's disappointing performance in this troubled area, and we shall discuss them in due course. But first we must present in brief the turbulent events of these crucial years of the insurgency.

In spring of 1961, Kennedy and his advisers were still deeply concerned about the American role in Vietnam and particularly in Laos, where the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had recommended committing American ground troops. General James Gavin, whom Kennedy had appointed ambassador to France, later described a meeting with the President in mid-May:

> . . . The talk soon shifted to Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam and Laos. At that time Laos appeared the more volatile situation of the two. I argued strongly against committing any U.S. troops to Laos. I pointed out that Laos was a landlocked area in which it would be very difficult to bring U.S. power to bear in any meaningful way, even if it should be in the U.S. interest to do so. I felt Laos would turn into a bottomless pit into which we would pour soldier after soldier. I recounted for the President the history of the debate inside the Pentagon after Dien Bien Phu and said I felt this new

9. Hilsman, op. cit.

situation was similar. There was little to be gained and a great deal to be risked by U.S. military action.

In the discussion President Kennedy indicated strongly that he believed sending U.S. troops to Laos was the wrong course of action. He also implied that if he asked the Pentagon for advice they would recommend dispatching troops. . . .[10]

While a special task force—the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, State Department, Defense Department, and CIA and USIA officials—studied the problem, Kennedy sent Vice-President Lyndon Johnson on a general tour of Southeast Asia. In Saigon, the lanky Texan talked to Diem and his officials, promised increased aid, and stated the Administration's confidence in the Diem government. Ngo Dinh Diem, he told reporters, was the Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia—a remark that must have brought an interesting comment from Sir Winston.

Back in Washington, Johnson reported to Kennedy that

. . . the basic decision in Southeast Asia is here. We must decide whether to help these countries to the best of our ability or throw in the towel in the area and pull back our defenses to San Francisco and a "Fortress America" concept. More important, we would say to the world in this case that we don't live up to our treaties and don't stand by our friends. This is not my concept. I recommend that we move forward promptly with a major effort to help these countries defend themselves.[11]

Johnson told the President that

. . . he did not consider Southeast Asia lost, "and it is by no means inevitable that it must be lost." In each country, he said, it was possible to "build a sound structure capable of withstanding and turning the Communist surge." But this could only be done if the nations of Southeast Asia had "knowledge and faith in United States power, will and understanding. . . ."[12]

Johnson found Diem

. . . a complex figure beset by many problems. "He has admirable qualities, but he is remote from the people, is surrounded by persons less admirable than he. The country can be saved—if we move quickly and wisely."[13]

Johnson's mission produced varied, generally unfortunate results. Perhaps the most harmful was to reinforce the concept of South Vietnam as a "strategic necessity" to the United States, along with the notion of

10. James Gavin, *Crisis Now* (New York: Random House, 1968).
11. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra;* see also L. B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point—Perspectives of the Presidency 1963–1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971).
12. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra.*
13. Ibid.

Diem's indispensability—not only in his and his intimates' minds but in those of the Administration and the American public. Johnson made plain his attitude, on the plane flying from Saigon, when a reporter started discussing Diem and his faults. ". . . Don't tell me about Diem," Johnson answered. "He's all we've got out there."[14]

Kennedy simultaneously fell victim to another pernicious influence, his Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, a small man in a big job:

> . . . While the President and a number of his advisers saw the insurgency primarily as a civil war . . . Rusk tended to ignore the highly complex causes and history of the insurgency and developed the theme of "aggression from the North," which was to become increasingly prominent as the American-sponsored efforts of the Saigon regime proved ineffective against the rebellion. As early as 1961, Rusk was speaking of "the determined and ruthless campaign of propaganda, infiltration, and subversion by the Communist regime in north Viet-Nam to destroy the Republic of Viet-Nam."[15]

Rusk's indignation was shared by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and, to a lesser degree, by Kennedy's national-security adviser, McGeorge Bundy. All apparently favored a military strategy. Bundy's deputy, Walt Rostow, was particularly hawkish. Forty-five years old, he was a Yale man, a Rhodes scholar, an economist and historian long associated with government; in World War II, he had served with the OSS in Burma. Rostow shared Rusk's belief in "aggression from the North" (or perhaps Rusk shared Rostow's belief). Rostow made his thinking known publicly at West Point, in spring of 1961, where he argued that emerging nations must be protected against external Communist aggression to the point that it might be necessary to ". . . seek out and engage the ultimate source of aggression."[16] Rostow's argument failed to respect internal differences in the emerging country; it was a lovely black-and-white interpretation in which GOOD would attack the forces of EVIL. Although Hanoi at this time was helping insurgents in the South, the effort nowhere near approached that claimed by Rusk and Rostow, and they were as much at fault for preaching this as others were for denying its existence.[17]

Still other presidential advisers, most of them close to Kennedy, though admitting the North's unsavory role in the South, wanted to counter it, along with the actual insurgency, with a political strategy that would have sharply subordinated military operations. This group, who could be called doves and of whom we shortly will hear more, included

14. David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire* (New York: Random House, 1965).

15. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

16. W. W. Rostow, "Guerrilla Warfare in Underdeveloped Areas." In T. N. Greene (ed.), op. cit.

17. Pike, op. cit.

Robert Kennedy, Averell Harriman, George Ball, Roger Hilsman, and Michael Forrestal.

The hawks—Johnson, Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, and the JCS—formed a formidable pressure group. Although Kennedy, in general, favored a political strategy, he could not ride roughshod over those who favored a military strategy. Moreover, he grew increasingly incensed, as did many Americans, with Viet Cong terrorist tactics. Finally, implementing a political policy would probably involve military aspects, and this posed the problem of preparing the nation to follow him. Heretofore restrained in public utterances on the subject, he now began emphasizing the theme of Communist revolutionary warfare and external aggression. Speaking before a joint session of Congress in late May, the President sounded remarkably like an indignant Winston Churchill scorching Lenin's tactics in Poland in 1920 (see Chapter 23, Volume I):

> . . . Yet their aggression is more often concealed than open. They have fired no missiles; and their troops are seldom seen. They send arms, agitators, aid, technicians and propaganda to every troubled area. But where fighting is required, it is usually done by others, by guerrillas striking at night, by assassins striking alone, assassins who have taken the lives of 4,000 civil officers in the last 12 months in Vietnam, by subversives and saboteurs and insurrectionists, who in some cases control whole areas inside of independent nations.[18]

Equally unfortunate, Johnson's visit, as Robert Shaplen later wrote, stiffened

> . . . the resistance of the Vietnamese to carrying out a number of things we wanted them to do—things which the American Embassy had thought they were on the verge of doing as a result of patient pressure. This included the devaluation of the piastre and relinquishing of full Vietnamese control over income from American economic aid imports. After Johnson left, the Vietnamese would no longer even discuss these matters.[19]

Kennedy next dispatched Professor Eugene Staley, who spent summer of 1961 preparing a report on Diem's needs. Although not made public, Staley's recommendations included ". . . a number of changes in the administration of aid, as well as certain reforms of a political nature."[20] He also allegedly recommended increasing Vietnamese army strength to 170,000, doubling the Civil Guard to a total 120,000, equipping the Self-Defense Corps with modern small arms and radios, and constructing a network of fortified, or strategic, hamlets.[21]

Kennedy was mulling over the Staley Plan when Diem sent an an-

18. Kennedy (*Public Papers*), *supra.*
19. Shaplen, op. cit.
20. Ibid.
21. Fall (*The Two Viet-Nams*), *supra;* see also Lacouture, op. cit.

guished plea for help. Kennedy now dispatched a larger mission, headed by sixty-year-old General Maxwell Taylor, a former army chief of staff whom he had consulted in the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Walt Rostow served as Taylor's deputy. Kennedy, in particular, wanted to know if the Diem government could be "saved." Taylor (and Rostow) reported that it could be, but Taylor

> . . . was dismayed by a number of things he thought were wrong with the Diem regime and he recommended a tougher American approach. He drew up a list of some thirty subjects on which he suggested the Americans should act forcefully in its [sic] relations with the Diem regime. They include, among other things, recommendations that we stand firm on our demand that Diem and Nhu decentralize their administration, both in its civilian and its military aspects, and that we insist on a revamping of the muddled system of collecting and interpreting intelligence about the Vietcong. Taylor also felt strongly that certain political reforms should be instituted and that bona fide nationalist leaders who were in jail should be freed.[22]

On the positive side:

> . . . their collective answer to Kennedy's question was that South Vietnam had enough vitality to justify a major United States effort. The trouble, as Taylor and Rostow diagnosed it, was a double crisis of confidence: doubt that the U.S. was really determined to save Southeast Asia; doubt that Diem's methods could really defeat the Viet Cong. To halt the decline, they recommended increased American intervention—in effect, a shift from arm's length advice to limited partnership. While only the Vietnamese could finally beat the Viet Cong, Americans at all levels, Taylor and Rostow argued, could show them how the job was to be done.[23]

Taylor's recommendations meant openly refuting the manpower ceiling laid down by the Geneva Agreements. The American role would be enlarged, ". . . essentially through the penetration of the South Vietnamese army and government by American 'advisers,' attached to Vietnamese military units or government offices and designed to improve the level of local performance"[24]; these included American helicopter and air-reconnaissance units for logistics-support purposes. The report also called for committing American ground troops (which the JCS had

22. Shaplen, op. cit.; see also, Halberstam, op. cit.; Hilsman, op. cit.; Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

23. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra;* see also Daniel Ellsberg, *Escalating in a Quagmire* (Boston: Center of International Studies, MIT, 1970), who points out that the report called for the short-run goal of "frustrating" the Communists; i.e. ". . . halting or reversing a current downward trend or spiral of deterioration," and the long-run goal of "defeating" them, i.e. the ". . . ultimate goal of eliminating the Communist threat."

24. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage—Vietnam and American Democracy 1941–1966* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967). Hereafter cited as Schlesinger (*Bitter*); see also Hilsman, op. cit.

recommended a few months earlier): an eight-to-ten-thousand-man task force would be committed as "engineers" to help in flood-control work; such a force, in addition to raising Vietnamese morale and demonstrating United States determination to Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow, would be capable of conducting ". . . combat operations for self-defense and perimeter security and, if the Vietnamese Army were hard pressed, of providing an emergency reserve."[25] In case this force provoked invasion from the North, additional troops would be required. Moreover—and here was Catch-22—". . . Taylor and Rostow *hoped* that *this* program would suffice to win the civil war—and were sure it would *if only* the infiltration from the north could be stopped. But if it continued, then they could see no end to the war. . . ."[26] Finally, ". . . the whole program was only an important first step in the direction of the longer-run goal, eventually to contain and eliminate the threat to the independence of South Vietnam . . . for final victory the U.S. might have to strike the source of the aggression (though this decision could be deferred)."[27]

Here was a qualitative change in addition to a quantitative change of means to realize the grand ambition: *stop communism*. Maxwell Taylor, one analyst wrote,

> . . . described it to the President at the time as "essential" if we were to reverse the present downward trend of events. In fact, he reported, "I do not believe that our program to save South Vietnam will succeed without it." Elsewhere his view is recorded that it was very doubtful that the remainder of the program, less the proposed U. S. Task Force, would even avoid a further deterioration of the situation in South Vietnam.[28]

Taylor's rationale was as fascinating as it was dangerous. Instead of appreciating the political nature of an insurgency, he was attempting to change the rules. As Roger Hilsman later noted,

> . . . The mission of these American troops—revealing the continued focus in General Taylor's mind on the possibility of a conventional, Korea-type attack—would be to hold the ring against invasion from the north by regular

25. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra;* see also Hilsman, op. cit.
26. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra.*
27. Ellsberg, op. cit.; see also Hilsman, op. cit.
28. Ellsberg, op. cit.: ". . . Taylor underlined the urgency by making explicit his recognition of an impressive list of disadvantages of the proposed move, including weakness of the U.S. strategic reserve; increased engagement of U.S. prestige; difficulty of resisting pressure to reinforce the first contingent if it were not enough (with no limit to the possible commitment, unless we attacked the source in Hanoi, if we sought ultimately to clean up the insurgents); and the risk of escalation into a major war in Asia. It was in the face of all these possible drawbacks that he made his recommendation to introduce a Task Force without delay: made it on the grounds that a U.S. program to save South Vietnam simply would not succeed without it"; see also Hilsman, op. cit.

North Vietnamese divisions and to man the northern borders against infiltrators, while the South Vietnamese dealt with the guerrillas in the rear.[29]

Far from being the far-sighted strategist that Kennedy needed, Taylor might as well have donned an air force uniform and stood in the public pulpit to preach the virtues of massive retaliation. Far from approaching the problem with imagination and flexibility (and caution), he was thinking primarily in conventional-force terms.

Apparently, Taylor and his fellows were either ignorant of or oblivious to the estimate of the situation that General Matthew Ridgway had presented in 1954 (see Chapter 63) and that emphasized incompatibility between the American military machine and the tactical environment of Vietnam. In 1961, highest American military councils unfortunately lacked any semblance of Ridgway's intelligent restraint. Only that spring, General Lyman Lemnitzer, chairman of the JCS, had returned from an inspection trip to Vietnam and, according to newspaper reports, ". . . felt that the new administration was 'oversold' on the importance of guerrilla warfare and that too much emphasis on counter-guerrilla measures would impair the ability of the South Vietnamese Army to meet a conventional assault like the attack on South Korea by the ten or more regular North Vietnamese divisions."[30] In early November, speaking at Fordham University, General Earle G. Wheeler, army chief of staff, told his audience

. . . that what the United States was committed to support in Vietnam was "military action. . . . Despite the fact that the conflict is conducted as guerrilla warfare," Wheeler went on to say, "it is nonetheless a military action. . . . It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic rather than military. I do not agree. The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military."[31]

Now Taylor was proposing a course of action consonant with Lemnitzer's and Wheeler's antiquated reasoning—a course of action that, if it did provoke the enemy to conventional counteraction, would lead to escalation noted by the JCS in a report on Laos: If landing American troops in Thailand, South Vietnam, and government-held portions of the Laotian panhandle did not produce a cease-fire, the JCS

. . . recommended an air attack on Pathet Lao positions and tactical nuclear weapons on the ground. If North Vietnamese or Chinese then moved in, their homelands would be bombed. If massive Red troops were then mobilized, nuclear bombings would be threatened and, if necessary, carried out. If the Soviets then intervened, we should "be prepared to accept the pos-

29. Hilsman, op. cit.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

sibility of general war." But the Soviet Union, they assured the President, "can hardly wish to see an uncontrollable situation develop."[32]

Taylor's plan contained no less a number of "x" factors. Rostow was an even more outspoken advocate of escalation, arguing ". . . for a contingency policy of retaliation against the north, graduated to match the intensity of Hanoi's support of the Viet Cong. . . ."[33] Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara also reported to the President a conclusion shared by his deputy secretary Roswell Gilpatric, and by the JCS,

. . . that the chances were against, probably sharply against, preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism by any measures short of the introduction of U.S. forces on a substantial scale. McNamara explicitly judged, in agreement with General Taylor, that the various other measures proposed by Taylor short of this (i.e., the set of measures eventually accepted by the President) would not by themselves do the job of restoring confidence and setting Diem on the way to winning his fight.

Indeed, though of great help to Diem, even the initial U.S. task force of about 8,000 men, would not convince the other side that we meant business, unless we accompanied the introduction of the initial force with a clear commitment to the full objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism and warned Hanoi through some channel that continued support of the VC would lead to punitive retaliation against North Vietnam. Lacking this commitment and warning, the initial force by itself (let alone, the program without this force) would probably not tip the scales decisively; we would be almost certain to get increasingly mired down in an inconclusive struggle.

If the proposed commitment and force deployment were undertaken, the President was warned of the possibility that Hanoi and Peiping might intervene openly, in which case as many as, but (given logistic difficulties of the other side) not more than six U.S. divisions, or about 205,000 men would be required.[34]

The Taylor-Rostow mission evoked several responses. Not long after the mission's return, President Kennedy met with his close friend and adviser Arthur Schlesinger:

". . . They want a force of American troops," he told me early in November. "They say it's necessary in order to restore confidence and maintain morale. But it will be just like Berlin. The troops will march in; the bands will play; the crowds will cheer; and in four days everyone will have forgotten. Then we will be told we have to send in more troops. It's like taking a drink. The effect wears off, and you have to take another." The war in

32. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
33. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra;* see also Halberstam, op. cit.
34. Ellsberg, op. cit.

Vietnam, he added, could be won only so long as it was *their* war. If it were ever converted into a white man's war, we would lose as the French had lost a decade earlier.[35]

Although pressured by the JCS and by ". . . all his principal advisers on Viet-Nam" to commit a task force of troops,[36] Kennedy refused. This is not surprising, and for three reasons. The Bay of Pigs fiasco had made Kennedy ". . . far more skeptical of the experts, their reputations, their recommendations, their promises, premises and facts. . . ."[37] Added to this was another school of thought, whose major teacher was Roger Hilsman, aided by Michael Forrestal and backed by Averell Harriman, Chester Bowles, and other important Kennedy advisers. A West Pointer ('43) from Texas, forty-one-year-old Hilsman had served with OSS in Burma; after the war, he had gotten a Ph.D. from Yale, left the army, and taught international affairs until entering the State Department, in 1961, as director of its intelligence section. Hilsman differed sharply with the Pentagon and with Rusk and Rostow as to Vietnam. He saw the challenge as political—as a war of ideas that demanded essentially a political strategy designed to gain popular support:

> . . . that government existed for the benefit of the people, that a government could really *care,* was as revolutionary in most of Asia as anything the Communists had to offer. . . .[38]

He concluded that a viable strategy ". . . would require an emphasis on political, economic, and social action into which very carefully calibrated military measures were interwoven."[39] Militarily, guerrillas must be fought with guerrilla, rather than conventional, tactics. This opinion, shared by other experts, military and civil, struck a responsive note with the President, who long since had recognized the futility of a foreign power (France) trying to polarize national forces.

> . . . "Without the support of the native population," he said, "there is no hope of success in any of the countries of Southeast Asia." To try to oppose

35. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra;* see also Sorensen, op. cit.: ". . . He had watched the French, with a courageous well-equipped army numbering hundreds of thousands, suffer a humiliating defeat and more than ninety thousand casualties. Now the choice was his. If the United States took over the conduct of the war on the ground, he asked, would that not make it easier for the Communists to say we were the neo-colonialist successors of the French? Would we be better able to win support of the villagers and farmers so essential to guerrilla warfare—than Vietnamese troops of the same color and culture? No one knew whether the South Vietnamese officers would be encouraged or resentful, or whether massive troop landings would provoke a massive Communist invasion—an invasion inevitably leading either to nuclear war, Western retreat or an endless and exhausting battle on the worst battleground he could choose."

36. Sorensen, op. cit.

37. Ibid.

38. Hilsman, op. cit.

39. Ibid.

Communist advances "apart from and in defiance of innately nationalistic aims spells foredoomed failure."[40]

Finally—and this reason is speculative—Kennedy a few months earlier had received some frank advice from an elder statesman, Charles de Gaulle. The young President not only admired De Gaulle but also respected him, and his blunt words at their Paris meeting must at least have raised a caution flag in Kennedy's mind. In spring of 1961, as Charles de Gaulle wrote in recently published memoirs:

. . . John Kennedy made it clear to me that a breakwater would be set up in the Indo-Chinese peninsula to resist the Soviets. But instead of giving him the approval he desired I told the President that he was taking the wrong road.

"For you," I said to him, "to intervene in this region will be to catch yourself in the cogs of a machine. From the moment that a nation awakes to its nationalism no foreign State, no matter how great its power, has any chance of imposing its will. That you will discover for yourself. For, if you find a Government there ready in its own interest to take your orders, the people will not agree to it.

"Ideological reasons which you put forward will change nothing. Moreover the masses will think it is your desire for power and not your ideology which counts. That is why the more you become involved there fighting Communism, the more Communists will appear as champions of national independence. They will get more support; despair will bring them support.

"We, the French, have experience of that. You, the Americans, wanted to take our place in Indo-China. Now you want to take over where we left off and restart the war which we ended. I predict that you will sink bit by bit into a bottomless military and political swamp however much you pay in men and money.

"What we and others ought to do for unhappy Asia is not to interfere in her affairs but to give her the means to escape from misery and humiliation which are, as they are elsewhere, the causes of totalitarian regimes. I speak to you in the name of the West."[41]

Kennedy had turned down action recommended in the Laos report, both because its contents, in part, struck him as specious and because —and this is one of his greatnesses—he realized the catastrophe that an atomic war would create and had no intention of risking same over the strategic non-entity of Laos. As for the Vietnam recommendations, Sorensen tells us that the President

. . . wanted more questions answered and more alternatives presented. The military proposals for Vietnam, he said, were based on assumptions and predictions that could not be verified—on help from Laos and Cambodia to

40. Ibid.

41. *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), November 11, 1970. Tr. Ronald Payne; see also Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope, supra.*

halt infiltration from the North, on agreement by Diem to reorganization in his army and government, on more popular support for Diem in the countryside and on sealing off Communist supply routes. Estimates of both time and cost were either absent or wholly unrealistic.[42]

Kennedy did accept the rest of the plan—though, for what purpose, remains something of a mystery. He probably hoped that the psychological effect of committing more "advisers" and logistics-support troops such as helicopter units would warn Hanoi that he meant business, would revive South Vietnamese morale, and would cause Diem to reform his government; he probably hoped that such action would satisfy administration hawks. He also retained the option of committing ground troops: ". . . He ordered the departments [of the armed forces] to be prepared for the introduction of combat troops, should they prove necessary."[43] In addition, he remained committed to a covert effort that in time would yield bitter fruit. We know now from the Pentagon Papers that, in June 1961, Kennedy authorized continued CIA support of agents infiltrated into North Vietnam and Laos to work up covert resistance against the Communists, a program started in the Eisenhower administration.[44]

What he did not do—and this is one of his great failures—was to pursue his doubts. What he did not do was to call for a re-examination of what was passing for political policy and military strategy. He badly needed a devil's advocate with intelligence and courage sufficient to question underlying assumptions held by the majority of his advisers. He turned down recommendations to commit troops in Laos and Vietnam partly because the JCS and CIA had misjudged the Cuban situation so badly. What made him think that prevailing notions of policy and strategy in Southeast Asia were any more valid, particularly in view of General Ridgway's earlier dissent? That the domino theory could hold up under intelligent analysis? That the Pentagon would be content to remain in an advisory role? That Diem was indispensable? That Nolting and Harkins could manage Diem? That he himself could foist the Diem regime on the world as free, democratic government? That, had the American people been properly informed, they would not have trusted him and backed him in a "risk" strategy necessary to straighten out the Diem regime?

Instead, he remained a prisoner to this regime, and to his own bellicose advisers. In late October, when Taylor was still in Saigon, Kennedy wrote Diem an extremely sympathetic letter: ". . . Let me assure you again that the United States is determined to help Vietnam preserve its independence, protect its people against Communist assassins, and build a better life through economic growth."[45]

42. Sorensen, op. cit.
43. Ibid.; see also Hilsman, op. cit.
44. *The Times* (London), June 23, 1971.
45. Kennedy (*Public Papers*), *supra*.

In December, he again wrote Diem to describe what an aide called ". . . the limited and somewhat ambiguous extent" of the American commitment:

. . . The United States, like the Republic of Viet-Nam, remains devoted to the cause of peace and our primary purpose is to help your people maintain their independence. If the Communist authorities in North Viet-Nam will stop their campaign to destroy the Republic of Viet-Nam, the measures we are taking to assist your defense efforts will no longer be necessary. We shall seek to persuade the Communists to give up their attempts of force and subversion. In any case, we are confident that the Vietnamese people will preserve their independence and gain the peace and prosperity for which they have sought so hard and so long.[46]

He also compounded earlier diplomatic failure, by ordering General Paul D. Harkins, allegedly on Taylor's recommendation, to Saigon, where he would arrive, in March 1962, as chief of the new Military Assistance Command Vietnam, or MACV, and where he would prove about as effective in the military field as Nolting was proving in the civil field.

A more explosive response to the Taylor report came from the Diem government in Saigon and the Vietnam lobby in the United States. Stung by Taylor's criticisms and prompted by brother Nhu, the Vietnamese President huffed and puffed about his country's sovereignty. In Shaplen's words, ". . . what followed over a period of several weeks was a game of bluff, which the Vietnamese won hands down."[47] Instead of pressing the issue to final conclusions, the Administration yielded and pretended to find solace in Diem's empty promises.[48]

This was a vital error. Diem had consistently refused to allow either a political opposition or a coalition government in order to broaden his support. Diem was incapable of understanding representative government, and, by 1962, this fact was obvious. The cult of "personalism" preached by brother Nhu was a specious doctrine, a euphemism for an authoritarianism as severe as anything practiced by Khrushchev, Mao, Tito, Castro, or Trujillo. Theodore Draper's later words describing Castro's and Trujillo's forms of government were equally applicable to Diem:

. . . At bottom all these "neo" and "direct" democracies rest on a simple proposition: that the Leader and his people are one and indivisible. Hence they need no representative institutions, no elections, no loyal or disloyal oppositions, no free or partially critical press, none of the rights and safeguards traditionally associated with a democracy.

The horror of this thinking is that it wipes out the lessons to be learned

46. Ibid.
47. Shaplen, op. cit.
48. Halberstam, op. cit.

from the most desperate and tragic experiences of our time. If there is anything that should have burned itself into our consciousness, it is the excruciating evil of the popular despot, the beloved dictator, the mass leader.[49]

As David Halberstam concluded:

. . . Eventually, South Vietnam became, for all intents and purposes, a Communist-type country without Communism. It had all the controls, all the oppressions and all the frustrating, grim aspects of the modern totalitarian state—without the dynamism, efficiency and motivation that Communism had brought to the North. It was a police state, but it was unique in that its priorities were so haphazard; as a result, it was hopelessly inefficient. It was likely to pick up people for the wrong reasons; it had a strong enough police force to shake the loyalty and allegiance of the population, but not efficient enough to make them truly afraid.[50]

49. Draper (*CR*), *supra.*
50. Halberstam, op. cit.

Chapter 76

The situation in South Vietnam • NLF organization • The People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) • Hanoi's influence in the South • NLF aims • "The Struggle Movement" • Agit-prop techniques • Diem's failings • Increased American aid • American military influence • Viet Cong setbacks • American optimism • Tactical chimeras • The Viet Cong recovers • Disaster at Ap Bac • ARVN failures • The strategic-hamlet program • Diem's increasing intransigence • The American commitment increases • Buddhist revolts • Shifting NLF strategy • Washington changes direction • Diem's death

BY 1962, THEN, the dismal picture in Vietnam had changed but slightly. Despite such sops as a National Economic Council and provincial councils, Diem and his ruling oligarchy had refused to relinquish any real powers.[1] Millions of American dollars continued to fall into their hands—$300 million in army credits alone in 1961[2]—and, either in cash or kind, precious little of these funds reached the countryside, where the war was being fought. U.S. protests aroused only further threats from Diem and his advisers. At Ambassador Nolting's urging, the Administration agreed to a "soft" approach in hope that Diem would change his ways.

Instead of political reforms, Diem pushed through his rubber-stamp assembly such restrictive legislation as the Public Meetings Law, ". . . a law that forbade all kinds of meetings unless they were authorized by the government,"[3] and the Bill for the Protection of Morality, a piece

1. Lacouture, op. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. Shaplen, op. cit.

of legislative nonsense sponsored by Mme. Nhu and one comparable to Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement. Total censorship prevailed and Nhu's secret police prowled everywhere to pounce on dissidence:

> . . . by 1962 there were some thirty thousand prisoners in about fifty jails throughout the country, about two-thirds of whom were classified as political prisoners. Many were captured Vietcong insurgents, but there were also a lot of "suspects" who had languished in jails for months or even years. Among the prisoners were some three hundred non-Communist liberals arrested solely for having expressed anti-Diem views or for being suspected of having spoken out in favor of the abortive 1960 coup.[4]

The regime's suspicions extended to the army, which continued to stir restlessly despite Diem's efforts to control it:

> . . . Promotion on the basis of personal loyalty rather than ability, the use of informers, the banishment of men of integrity and initiative, and the domination of all strategy had not made the Army more loyal; these methods had merely brought about a tenuous control, and badly compromised and diluted a military force which was in a fight to the death with a tough enemy.[5]

A confused and demoralized army not only could not fight a successful counterinsurgency, but its ranks became increasingly vulnerable to the enemy's proselyting effort, the *binh van* program, which one expert believed was ". . . the most deadly weapon" in the Viet Cong arsenal.[6] The regime's innate xenophobia had made suspect the American presence since 1954. Subsequent American attempts to pressure Diem into various reforms had only brought increased resentment.

The outlook, then, was bleak. As Halberstam concluded:

> . . . a government was fighting a complicated war, suspicious of its own army and attempting to minimize its effectiveness; at the same time remaining suspicious of its major ally and attempting to minimize its influence.[7]

Halberstam might have added that in emphasizing the Communist and northern-aggression themes that so appealed to American officials, Diem steadfastly refused to recognize his real enemy, the NLF, and the emphasis it placed on the "armed struggle," particularly the political struggle. In Douglas Pike's words,

> . . . The GVN [Government of Vietnam] had no national policy or even official attitude toward the NLF's struggle movement, nor was there any systematic effort at the district and village operational levels to develop techniques designed either to head off a struggle movement as it was being

4. Ibid.; see also Halberstam, op. cit.
5. Halberstam, op. cit.
6. Pike, op. cit.
7. Halberstam, op. cit.

launched or to blunt it once under way. The posture of the Diem government was to pretend it did not exist or, if forced to take notice, to characterize it as an insignificant and ineffectual Communist effort to create disorder. District and village officials were left to their own resources when confronted by a struggle movement, and their responses depended largely on their personalities. Some officials attempted to ameliorate the situation if in their power to do so; others simply ordered their police and troops to disperse the crowds. Occasionally an official was politically astute enough to regard the struggle movement as an opportunity to seize the initiative from the NLF and would alleviate a genuine grievance and turn the crowd's attitude from hostility to amity; this was a difficult manipulation for it involved both acquiescing to a demand without appearing to surrender in the face of force and structuring the solution so as to maneuver the NLF out of credit for the change.[8]

What of the enemy, which General Myers and Ambassador Durbrow had written off so comfortingly in 1959? As we have seen, in December 1960, the National Liberation Front, or NLF, appeared in the South, published a "Ten-Point Manifesto" that called for a democratic, coalition government, and embarked on an "action program" to achieve this end. A year later, it gained a leader in the person of Nguyen Huu Tho, a fifty-two-year-old Saigon lawyer and Marxist who had escaped after five years of imprisonment for political activities.

The interworkings of NLF leadership in these years are not particularly well documented in the West (despite the capture, in 1966, of some six thousand NLF documents). NLF leaders remained underground. They did not reside at a permanent headquarters, they met infrequently, and those of their records later captured are sketchy:

. . . The actual headquarters of the NLF was believed to be in Laos . . . deep in Pathet Lao country. Periodically, from 1961 to 1964, the Central Committee convened in the sparsely populated area of northern Tay Ninh province. When the central Committee was not in session, and this was most of the time, the NLF was managed by the Presidium and its Secretariat. The secretary-general undoubtedly was the most powerful individual in the NLF. The military high command, which was responsible for the violence program, reported directly to the Presidium. All other activity went through the Secretariat, dominated by the secretary-general.[9]

By the time Tho joined his comrades, Communists both in the South and in Hanoi apparently were worried about ultimate control of the liberation movement. In January 1962, militant Communist elements of NLF established a revolutionary front, the People's Revolutionary Party, or PRP—the old Lao Dong, or Communist Party—which now

8. Pike, op. cit.
9. Ibid.

became the radical branch of the movement, the "vanguard" of the revolution.

Hanoi's exact role in this development is not clear: Ho Chi Minh apparently blessed the PRP as a control instrument of the movement; he may, at China's insistence, even have ordered northern Communists to organize it. According to Donald Zagoria, and most experts agree, ". . . evidence is overwhelming that the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) . . . is, in fact, the Southern branch of the Lao Dong Party which rules Hanoi."

> . . . In sum, the main function of the PRP is to insure political control of the military arm of the NLF and to guide the movement's political struggle. According to captured NLF documents, PRP secretary-general, Tram Nam Trung [who came South in 1963], has overall responsibility for the NLF armed forces. PRP chairman Vo Chi Cong supervises agitprop and indoctrination, recruitment, and organization building. . . .

This does not mean, as asserted by South Vietnamese and American officials at the time, that Hanoi either absorbed the movement or thenceforth directly controlled it. Zagoria, among other experts, concluded that

> . . . there are non-Communist individuals and forces in the Front, some of whom unquestionably believe that they can push the NLF toward democracy, and many of whom do not want to subordinate themselves to the North. . . . On several key issues, at any rate, there have been persistent signs of disagreement between the North and the NLF. . . .

Again,

> . . . Notwithstanding this elaborate control machinery [of the PRP], whose threads all lead back to Hanoi, the NLF has emerged as a viable movement in its own right . . . Certainly the NLF includes very significant political forces that are not Communist and still harbor long-held apprehensions about both Communist domination and domination by Northerners.[10]

In other words, the NLF remained a specific political entity, and, despite the extent of Hanoi's control, it might have been wiser to recognize it as such if only to influence its non-Communist and even some of its Communist members.

Two months later, in March 1962, the NLF held its first congress, which elected Nguyen Huu Tho president and Nguyen Van Hieu, a mathematics professor believed by many to be the real driving force of NLF, secretary-general of the Central Committee. The congress also announced a new objective: independence of South Vietnam, an objective extended in July to making ". . . south Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia a neutral zone with all three states enjoying sovereign

10. Zagoria, op. cit.; see also Pike, op. cit.; Shaplen, op. cit.

rights."[11] Simultaneously, the NLF continued appealing to all ". . . parties, sects, and groups representing all political tendencies, social strata, religions, and nationalities of South Vietnam."[12] The Geneva Agreements of 1962, which resulted in a neutralized Laos (in theory), strengthened the NLF (and Hanoi) in demands for a neutral, coalition government in the South.

No matter the ultimate NLF and PRP intention, which Communist leadership cunningly concealed during formative years: At a time when Diem was adamantly refusing representative government, his enemy was stressing its desire for such, a brilliant tactic in the propaganda war. Continued U.S. association with and support of the Diem regime also offered a superb propaganda target for Communists to exploit. In 1962, NLF leaders introduced the term *special war*—". . . described as a form of neocolonialism in which a colonial power, no longer able to use expeditionary forces to assert its control, worked through a clique of compradors whom it 'advised,' with the rank-and-file military force being supplied by the colonialized nation."[13]

The NLF, or anyway its Communist leadership, sought to gain either direct control of the South Vietnam Government through a general uprising, or to gain indirect control by establishing a coalition government and working on from there. Essential to the process was "the struggle movement," a two-pronged program well described by Douglas Pike:

> . . . Within the generic term "struggle," there were two types of struggle movements: The political struggle (*dau tranh chinh tri*) and the armed, or military struggle (*dau tranh vu trang*). To the NLF, as to the Viet Minh and Chinese Communists before it, victory would be achieved through the proper balance of political and military activities or, in Communist terms, by the proper combination of the political struggle and the armed struggle.[14]

The political struggle, which, in accordance with Mao's teachings, gained primary ascendancy, called for a three-pronged program: consolidation of areas already controlled by Viet Cong; the "liberated areas" or base sanctuaries so essential to further revolutionary activity (the *dan van,* or "action among the people"); organization of the countryside under GVN control, the agit-prop task discussed earlier (the *dich van,* or "action among the enemy"); proselyting of ARVN and the GVN civil service (the *binh van,* or "action among the troops").

The military struggle, which at first remained subordinate to the political struggle, consisted ". . . not simply [of] guerrilla military attacks but kidnappings, assassinations, executions, sabotage"—what Pike succinctly calls the "violence program." Military organization strongly

11. Lacouture, op. cit.
12. Ibid.
13. Pike, op. cit.
14. Ibid.

resembled that of the Viet Minh earlier discussed (see Chapter 54). Operations remained the responsibility of the "People's Self-Defense Armed Forces Committee." As with other national committees, this extended downward through provincial and district organizations. The Liberation Army consisted of two parts: Main Force regiments, or what might be called regulars; the Guerrilla Popular Army or paramilitary forces—peasants by day, guerrillas by night—organized in small units that varied in function from village militia duty (generally covert) to active combat often in conjunction with Main Force or regional units. The Guerrilla Popular Army formed the reservoir of men that supplied the regular units. It also maintained three-man "special activity cells," which

> . . . would strike anywhere at any time. From the roster of these cells were drawn the assassination teams, the volunteer grenade hurlers, the death or suicide squads. Most of the spectacular acts of sabotage, assassinations of province chiefs, or daring military escapades were the work of a special activity cell, sometimes working with demolition experts or other military specialists supplied by the provincial-level central committee.[15]

Although the importance of the political and military struggles would vary, each complemented the grand design.

> . . . Vo Nguyen Giap wrote that if an uprising was an art, the chief characteristic of its leadership was the ability to change the struggle form in accordance with changed events. At the beginning, he said, the political struggle dominated and the armed struggle was secondary. Gradually the two assumed equal roles. Then the armed struggle dominated. In the end came the return to the political struggle. Struggle was *the word*. Its goal, toward which the cadres pledged themselves, toward which each Vietnamese was expected daily to contribute a little, was the General Uprising, the nationwide, simultaneous grand struggle movement.[16]

By 1962, the NLF controlled large areas of South Vietnam, including two rich areas in the Mekong Delta. While they busily converted these into "liberated areas," Viet Cong units continued to ambush ARVN columns and attack ARVN and police outposts. Terrorists struck at government officials whenever possible:

> . . . They also made schoolteachers a prime target; hundreds were murdered. Between 1959 and the end of 1961, the Government was forced to close six hundred and thirty-six schools, either because of intimidation, or because the Vietcong were using them for propaganda. Again and again the story was the same: brutal murders, decapitation of village officials and teachers in front of an entire village; hidden Vietcong cadres coming slowly to the

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

surface. These spotlighted the corruption of officials, and by wholesale murders demonstrated that a government which could not protect its own officials certainly could not protect its people.[17]

Hideous tactics these, but not often promiscuous and no more hideous in final result than quantitative military tactics: mass artillery bombardment or aerial bombings. Above all, tactics with a purpose, tactics that formed part of a relentless propaganda war designed to consolidate and expand a peasant base that Communist leaders realized was essential to future operations.

The song had not changed, and now, after over twenty years of singing, the voices were good. The communism that Kennedy was endeavoring to stop did not enter the picture. Human misery did. John Mecklin later described the Communist target, a typical Vietnamese hamlet of fewer than a thousand people:

. . . a cluster of straw and bamboo huts with earthen floors and straw sleeping mats. The land between the huts was a quagmire of ankle-deep black mud in the rainy season, choking dust in the dry season. The peasant's wife or children often walked as much as three or four miles and then waited in line an hour or two for the daily drinking water. In the dry season the distance was often further because the regular well became saline. There was seldom electricity, frequently no road of any sort to the outside world, and no communication except by foot.

He was beset by insects, by rats that could literally make a hamlet uninhabitable and become fierce enough to attack humans (in one province alone, some five million rats were killed in a two-month, U.S.-sponsored drive in 1962), by floods and by droughts. He was seared by the sun and whipped by the rain, and his bare feet became calloused, unfeeling boards. The beauty of his women was destroyed by their mid-twenties, and by the mid-thirties they were hags, wracked by years of merciless burden, and often by disease.

And forever there were the flies, chiltering the stinking fish at the village market, swarming the open sores in the skin of his infant son, harassing his sleep. To survive his mind became numb, reconciled forever to submission and pain without end.[18]

17. Halberstam, op. cit.

18. Mecklin, op. cit.; see also Pike, op. cit.: ". . . Vietnamese villages vary greatly. There is the long narrow village strung out, one house wide, along a canal in the Mekong delta; the village of houses widely scattered through the deep shadows of a rain forest in the Massif Plain; the ancient village of Central Vietnam with its worn paths and closely grouped houses; the sun-baked village in the near-desert country of the west; the fishing village, resolutely turning its back on the land in favor of the South China Sea. Some were rich, a few poor, but almost all enjoyed a basic self-sufficiency. Life within the village may have been simple, but it was good." One may ask, were they in the same country? Other personal observations, my own included, not to mention sociological statistics, favor Mecklin's report.

Then strangers appeared. In the night, strangers came to the hamlet and to the peasant. They brought no gifts, no money, no food. Sometimes they asked for food, paying if they could. They sat by the fire, they talked, they listened, and because they had once been of these hamlets themselves, they soon did not seem strange. They identified with the peasant before they proselyted:

> . . . They made every grievance theirs: long-standing historical antagonisms, whether against Asians or Caucasians, became *their* grievances, as were economic inequities, the division of land, the arbitrary system of tax collection—even the ravages of disease.[19]

The newcomers brought sympathy and understanding and compassion. They brought what no one had ever brought before: genuine interest in the peasant's welfare. They presented themselves ". . . as nationalists continuing the war against the foreigners and their lackeys." They explained that the fight was being carried on by the National Liberation Front. They preached

> . . . not Communism, but "real" independence, peace, a neutral Vietnam, political freedom, extensive land reform, and other popularistic economic policies.[20]

They preached more. They carried a materialistic bible with thousands of appealing verses. Here is part of a directive to cadres of secret self-defense units:

> . . . Show them [the peasants] how hard they are forced to work, from three o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon, and for low wages . . . are forced to attend "Denunciation of Communism classes" and other Diem-sponsored meetings, are drafted into the army. Workers have poor and miserable working conditions. . . . Secret police follow workers and sometimes threaten them. . . . Show them that the wealth of a society is produced by the workers and the farmers and then taken by the imperialists [pure Marx, that]. Support the National Liberation Association [one of the many "tailored" fronts]. Show the great leadership role assumed by the Party in the NLF and describe its great prestige. Counter the distorting propaganda of the enemy against the Party and the Revolution. . . . Describe the successes of the socialist countries. . . . Use concrete details in talking with the masses. In rubber plantations point out the great burden of the workers in tapping up to 500 trees from early morning to noon and then having to carry ten kilos [twenty-two pounds] of latex for five to seven kilometers [3–4 miles], having to negotiate slippery slopes in the rain, and for which they are paid only 44 piasters [fifty cents] a day.[21]

19. Halberstam, op. cit.
20. Scigliano (*Nation Under Stress*), *supra.*
21. Pike, op. cit.

Propaganda agents did not hesitate to exploit targets of opportunity. Preparatory bombing and strafing offered natural subject matter, particularly when villagers were killed. If an epidemic suddenly broke out in an area (and epidemics frequently did) and if defoliants had been dropped in that area—well, then, they had caused the epidemic.

Agit-prop agents did not hurry to convert the listener. At first they settled for passive acceptance. Their continued interest and honeyed words of promise in time often produced the desired effect, and that was to arouse hope and, with it, new-found dignity. The peasant now had something to fight for.[22] Now he would lend his children to the Viet Cong, the younger as messengers, the older as fighters. Now he would donate to the cause, now he would pay taxes, now he would supply food and sanctuary and guides who would help guerrillas transit twenty-five miles of tortuous terrain in five hours of night marches. The agent recruited the female as well. He organized the guerrilla version of a Fem-Lib movement. He stressed the ghastly lot of woman during the French colonial regime and the Diem regime. The PRP pledged itself to liberate the Vietnamese woman from ". . . the life of the water buffalo": ". . . We stand for total liberation of women in every respect . . . for economic equality, political equality, cultural equality, social equality . . . and equality in the family."[23]

Having aroused the peasant, the Viet Cong kept him aroused: "struggle meetings," "denunciation meetings," "ceremonial meetings," "people's conventions"; dozens of front organizations, each tailored to a specific target; newspapers, leaflets, theatrical troupes, cultural teams, radio, motion pictures—an altogether-well-organized, massive propaganda effort almost constantly misunderstood and underrated by South Vietnamese and American officials.

As the American-Diem military effort provided weapons and supply to the Viet Cong, so did it sustain the propaganda effort. Each bomb dropped, each machine-gun bullet fired, each gallon of defoliant, was worth a thousand persuasive words.

Probably not one Viet Cong agent in a thousand could read English, yet each knew the truth long-before written by Lawrence of Arabia:

> . . . A province would be won when we had taught the civilians in it to die for our ideal of freedom. The presence of the enemy was secondary. Final victory seemed certain, if the war lasted long enough for us to work it out.[24]

22. George Tanham, *War Without Guns* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966). Hereafter cited as Tanham (*Guns*): On one occasion, Dr. Tanham interviewed a guerrilla prisoner in Thailand. The man said he had become dissatisfied with his government in June 1959. Pressed as to why the date was so specific, he answered: ". . . A man told me I was unhappy with certain things and I suddenly realized he was right."

23. Pike, op. cit.

24. Lawrence (*Seven Pillars*), *supra*.

The prevailing political atmosphere in Saigon could hardly have engendered a national will so necessary to combating Communist influence in the countryside. Diem's continued failure to allow urgently needed economic, agrarian, and social reforms and to decentralize political control meant an apathetic peasantry who remained peculiarly prone to propaganda and blandishments offered by NLF and PRP cadres.[25]

So long as peasants remained apathetic or hostile, the military effort against the Viet Cong could not succeed—no matter how expansive it became. Unfortunately, this unpalatable truth, emphasized repeatedly since 1945 and preached by vigorous and intelligent voices, did not wash against the American military priesthood, who were well on their way to the fateful formula for disaster that combined arrogance of ignorance with arrogance of power. As Douglas Pike wrote:

> . . . We assumed that the Vietnamese, because they were Vietnamese, would know how to defeat Vietnamese guerrillas if they had the means to do so. We assumed a charismatic leader was required. We assumed the solution was simply some combination of military force and welfare work. We assumed there was a high correlation between helping villagers in economic aid programs and their hostility toward the guerrilla. We assumed that methods used in other counterinsurgencies could be put to work in Vietnam. All of these assumptions, we discovered, were partially or wholly wrong. Error continued because of lack of information. . . .[26]

Kennedy's decision to go along at least in part with the Staley and Taylor-Rostow recommendations tipped an expansion that by early 1962 reached impressive proportions. The Vietnamese task force already existed. The Pentagon soon opened an Office on Counter-Insurgency and Special Activities, headed by Major General V. H. Krulak, a marine officer who enjoyed direct access to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and also to McNamara. The State Department set up a "counter-insurgency course" to train civil officials; the armed forces began similar specialized training.[27]

In Saigon, Ambassador Nolting headed the Country Team of civil and military officials, and he also headed the Country Task Force, which, in theory, functioned ". . . as an extension of the Vietnam Task Force in Washington." In reality, General Paul Harkins, who arrived in March 1962 as head of the new MACV, which absorbed MAAG, almost at once became the dominant figure, which meant, among other things, that the military effort continued to receive priority over the civil effort. John Mecklin, who arrived in Saigon in the spring of 1962

25. Tanham (*Guns*), *supra,* spells out some of these; see also Pike, op. cit.: Diem's land-reform program lasted only ". . . 3 years and aided only about 10 per cent of the landless."

26. Pike, op. cit.

27. Hilsman, op. cit.; see also Mecklin, op. cit.

as Public Affairs Officer and later wrote a disturbed book, *Mission in Torment,* that is well worth reading, also found ". . . a number of specialized, inter-agency committees to coordinate such activities as intelligence, economic development and psychological operations."[28]

By early 1962, the United States was funding a hefty increase in South Vietnam's armed forces, including the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, and it was also financing what it hoped would prove to be a widespread "strategic hamlet" program. American army and marine helicopters began ferrying Vietnamese troops to and from "combat areas." By spring, some six thousand Americans were serving in Vietnam; a significant portion of field advisers and helicopter crews were being shot at; some military advisers were beginning to shoot back, as were armed helicopter crews. Special Forces teams working with the CIA were active in the central highlands and in the North, trying to woo heterogeneous Montagnards to fight on the government's side. Other advisers worked in the South, in the Mekong Delta area, where the Vietnamese began fighting a different kind of war, one much more in tune with contemporary American military thinking.

Here the infusion of weapons and material sparked a great series of "offensives," of "search-and-destroy" operations, of regimental and division sweeps supported by T-28 and B-26 aircraft strafing and bombing (too often on speculation) and burning out "enemy" complexes with napalm.

Communiqués sounded like those issued by the French in the late 1940s. According to one source, Vietnamese battle deaths were running between four hundred and five hundred a month, with another thousand men being wounded or taken prisoner. Mobility offered by helicopters allowed ARVN forces to catch numerous units off guard and posed a tactical challenge not immediately met by the Viet Cong. Captured NLF and PRP documents showed Communist consternation, as did increased terrorist tactics including kidnapings and assassinations. In some areas, the Viet Cong forcibly recruited guerrilla replacements and kept them in line by threatening reprisals against their families; they kept families in line by threatening to punish the sons.[29] Wilfred Burchett, the peripatetic Australian Communist reporter in Hanoi at the time, later wrote that the Viet Cong were on the point of yielding the Mekong Delta and withdrawing to the mountains.[30]

All this was heady stuff that impressed a good many American officials. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara returned from Vietnam, in May 1962, and stated: ". . . Every quantitative measurement we have shows we're winning this war."[31] General Maxwell Taylor

28. Mecklin, op. cit.
29. Pike, op. cit.
30. W. G. Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War* (New York: International Publishers, 1965).
31. Schlesinger (*Bitter*), *supra.*

returned from a second trip to Saigon impressed by "a great national movement" that would destroy the Viet Cong.[32] In January 1963—the American presence in Vietnam had increased to nearly ten thousand—President Kennedy, in his State of the Union message, said: ". . . The spearhead of aggression has been blunted in South Vietnam."[33]

Unfortunately, these statements and the reports on which they were based were unduly optimistic. Tactical gains amounted to little more than a gossamer sheen woven by temporary technological superiority. Despite intensification of fighting, it remained essentially guerrilla warfare, and, for this, the Vietnamese army and a large proportion of American advisers proved singularly ill-prepared, not only showing themselves unable to adjust tactically but, perhaps as important, unable to exploit tactical gains by a forceful and effective civil-affairs program.

Not understanding basic tenets of guerrilla warfare, Vietnamese and American senior officers converted fatalities into "victories." This was a great mistake: Dead bodies do not mean destroyed infrastructure. Dead bodies, particularly those of innocent peasants, mean a strengthening, not a weakening, of the insurgent cause. The NLF and PRP were down, but scarcely out. They may have been hurt, but a retreat to the mountains would not necessarily have spelled an end of insurgency. At the time retreat was being discussed, an NLF delegation headed by Nguyen Van Hieu, secretary-general of the NLF Central Committee, was touring Eastern Europe to introduce the NLF to the world. Also at the same time, southern cadres who had been living in the North took to what was to become famous as the Ho Chi Minh Trail to infiltrate back to the South. About thirty-seven hundred had arrived in 1961, according to Douglas Pike, who studied available evidence with great care; he suggests that in 1962 another fifty-eight hundred arrived.[34] More would arrive the next year.

As 1962 turned to autumn, the Viet Cong seemed more elusive than ever, and also began to display a new and disturbing aggressiveness. If they were not yet actively picking fights with ARVN troops, they were not avoiding them either. And they were continuing to strike Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps outposts, both to supply themselves with new American arms and to prove their power to the peasants. Such was their success that, to American advisers, the outposts became known as Viet Cong PXs.[35]

Nor was ARVN showing well. As the Viet Cong recovered and began to shoot back, Diem's army seemed reluctant to fight. The battle of Ap Bac, in January 1963, exposed the awkward truth.[36] A task force of more than three South Vietnamese battalions, lifted in part by heli-

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Pike, op. cit.
35. Mecklin, op. cit.
36. Hilsman, op. cit.

copters and armored personnel carriers, failed to destroy a Viet Cong battalion though having had it surrounded and greatly outgunned. David Halberstam, who covered the action for the New York *Times,* later wrote:

> . . . To us [American reporters] and to the American military advisers involved, Ap Bac epitomized all the deficiencies of the [South Vietnamese] system: lack of aggressiveness, hesitancy about taking casualties, lack of battlefield leadership, a non-existent chain of command. The failures at Ap Bac had been repeated on a smaller scale every day for the past year.[37]

ARVN's big problem was trying to fight a guerrilla war with a conventionally organized and trained army that lacked both will and know-how essential to combat an insurgency. The U. S. Army's training program had denied it necessary flexibility. Armored personnel carriers and artillery had eliminated cross-country mobility. Confined to roads, ARVN units, just like French units formerly, remained vulnerable to ambush. Units lifted by helicopter could not long sustain themselves in the field without logistic support they had been taught to expect. ARVN staff work remained haphazard, particularly in vital intelligence sections. Operations remained unco-ordinated. Diem refused to establish a supreme commander and general staff. Instead, like Chiang Kai-shek, whose personal command on occasion extended to regimental level, he continued to run what virtually amounted to a war-lord arrangement:

> . . . Operations were mounted in the field by President Diem, or by his immediate staff, more often by whim and hunch than by planning and coordination with the various corps commanders. Some of President Diem's favorite division commanders or province chiefs were able to persuade him to approve of actions that simply suited their particular needs or their egos.[38]

Such a command arrangement meant spotty military operations with slow response to hit-and-run guerrilla tactics. Intelligence, the vital ingredient in counterguerrilla warfare, was missing to a disastrous degree, the inevitable result of governmental failure to identify with peasants. Lacking intelligence on which to base small, selective, surprise raids, army units resorted to "sweeps," which often damaged and destroyed crops and hamlets but generally failed to kill or capture significant numbers of enemy. Troop looting and torture of villagers to obtain information nullified any psychological gain from show of force. If ARVN did clear an area of enemy, failure to occupy, consolidate, and protect villagers soon brought back the Viet Cong. U. S. Army advisers, with few exceptions and almost none at senior levels, could not be persuaded to adopt a proper counterinsurgency strategy: viable search-and-hold op-

37. Halberstam, op. cit.
38. Shaplen, op. cit.

erations with concomitant political and military pressure on Diem to force his government to initiate a genuine strategic-hamlet program.

Over-all failure only sapped ARVN of remaining will and made its ranks more prone to enemy propaganda—the *binh van* (proselyting) program. Although the Viet Cong sought to induce desertions whenever possible, they also relied on internal disintegration, on the process the French called *pourrissement*. Douglas Pike described one of their more invidious tactics:

> . . . Particularly in insecure areas and especially to low-ranking civil servants, the NLF would convey the idea that it would not harm a GVN representative providing he arranged that the programs for which he was responsible were not implemented in any effective way. This could be done by a slowdown, by snarling the program in red tape, or by outright falsification of reports to higher headquarters. For instance, a strategic-hamlet chief could go through the motions of creating a village security apparatus that only appeared to have succeeded in separating the guerrillas from the villagers. Vietnamese Information Service posters and leaflets arriving from Saigon could be distributed only superficially, in areas where district officials would be likely to notice them, and the rest destroyed. A military patrol leader could lead his patrol noisily down a well-travelled path and after an hour return to the hamlet, never having made a serious effort to determine whether guerrillas were in the area but with his superiors being none the wiser. The effect was to place a premium on mediocrity in low-level administration at a time when excellence was vital. A civil servant would imagine he could enjoy the best of both worlds: He could perform well enough not to arouse the suspicions of his superior but not so well as to earn the hostility of the NLF. He might even be in contact with the NLF so as to be certain that they understood his position; many ARVN military operations were ruined by Vietnamese military or civil servants gratuitously passing on information to NLF agents or persons they presumed to be in contact with the NLF, simply in an effort to ingratiate themselves with the NLF—as a sort of life insurance policy.[39]

Neither did complementary governmental measures prosper.

The CIA and Special Forces found lucrative operational possibilities in the central highlands, where more than a hundred thousand Montagnards had fled their villages, the result of NLF failure to capture their loyalty.[40] American teams began recruiting and training Montagnard units to return to the hills to fight the Viet Cong. Initial successes here also proved illusory: The Montagnards, while willing in some instances to fight as mercenaries in American pay, refused to transfer loyalty to the Diem government; to the South Vietnamese, they were known as *moi,*

39. Pike, op. cit.
40. Ibid.

or savages, treated similarly, and responded predictably.[41] So long as Americans remained, the effort prospered; with their departure, it failed.

By the end of 1962, the highly touted "strategic hamlet" program, which aimed to fortify eleven thousand, or two thirds, of the country's hamlets by 1963, had also bogged down.[42] In theory, this was an excellent idea. Its genesis traces not to Eugene Staley but to the head of the British Advisory Mission to Viet-Nam, Robert Thompson, who arrived in Saigon in autumn of 1961.[43] A veteran of Orde Wingate's operations in Burma in World War II and of the later Malayan Emergency, Thompson had been instrumental in relocating Chinese villages in order to cut insurgents from intelligence, supply, and recruits (see Chapter 61).[44]

The idea was not original. As Gallieni and Lyautey realized, protection is an essential part of pacification. Area clearance had been used subsequently in emergencies, for example by General Weyler in Cuba, by the American army in the Philippines, by Kitchener in the Boer war, more recently by the French in Indochina and Algeria, and by the British in Malaya and Kenya. The present concept called for the army to clear and hold an area while the government helped villagers fortify hamlets into defensive complexes defended with militia, civil guards, and police, with regular troops on call. The Diem government refused Thompson's original suggestion, because brother Nhu did not like it. When Staley favored it, which spelled American financing, Nhu swung around and made it his own project—something quite different from what Thompson or Roger Hilsman had in mind.

Though valid enough, the concept, at best, was no panacea, which Thompson would have been the first to point out. Like most pacification measures, it called for a patient, methodical, and selective approach best illustrated by Lyautey's phrase *tache d'huile*. It had several drawbacks: The Mekong Delta, for example, was rich enough to feed guerrillas, fortified hamlets or no; the concept demanded efficient administration, and particularly effective internal and external security arrangements. But when it worked, it worked well. In Douglas Pike's words:

> . . . This program not only forced NLF village leaders to flee but it offered alternative social and political organizations to the villagers. It eliminated the village as a base for guerrilla support. Moreover, since the program relocated villagers and thus mixed people from different villages, efforts by NLF agents to rebuild the network inside the strategic hamlet became increasingly complicated and less successful. It was difficult for an agent to

41. Mecklin, op. cit.: In 1963, Special Forces took over the program and eventually trained 20,000 troops with varying success; see also Pike, op. cit.

42. Scigliano, op. cit.

43. Robert Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency*), *supra;* op. cit.; see also Mecklin, op. cit.; Tanham (*Guns*), *supra.*

44. Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency*), *supra;* see also Clutterbuck, op. cit.

get into and operate inside a strategic hamlet, and the leadership could no longer simply send back to a village that was being organized a native whose only recommendation was that he had been born and raised there . . . in a mixed village the organizers faced strangers, and dealing with them required organizational and persuasive talents and skills that most of them did not possess. The drain on organizational and recruiter manpower was great, and the difficulties faced by the NLF grew steadily.[45]

Here was some real progress. Properly implemented, the program might have proved the key to solving the pacification problem. But two major defects marred the halcyon picture drawn by Pike.

The first was a failure to integrate the strategic-hamlet program into a single, over-all strategy evolved by Hilsman and others and discussed above. Thompson and Hilsman wanted the program to start in the heavily populated Mekong Delta and work slowly out from there. Instead, under Nhu's aegis, strategic hamlets sprang up like rice shoots. The government could not possibly provide enough civic action and security teams necessary to revamp hamlets and to organize and train peasant militia, nor did police exist in sufficient quantity to ferret out Viet Cong agents and sympathizers from within defended complexes. Once again, massive American aid, dollar and material, filtered through venal fingers to lose intended impact. In most areas, the program mired in ooze of bureaucratic corruption and ineptitude.

This was bad enough in its own right. But, as it was happening, the enemy was admitting the threat and, once again, was adjusting tactics. NLF leadership judged the threat of such proportions that it began subordinating the political struggle to the armed struggle and made the strategic-hamlet program a priority tactical target—at a time when ARVN and local militias were particularly vulnerable. Many of the hastily constructed complexes lacked adequate fortifications and remained physically vulnerable to Viet Cong propaganda, infiltration, and attacks. Rudimentary communications and regular army inefficiency slowed reaction time and thus lowered promised protection. Battery-operated transmitter-receiver radios copiously distributed by AID improved village-to-garrison communications, a slight gain, however, since ". . . calls for help were so rarely answered [by ARVN], or answered so slowly as to be useless."[46]

A second major defect centered on Nhu's ulterior motives. As with the previously unsuccessful *agrovilles* and "fighting hamlets," Nhu saw fortified hamlets as a convenient form of population control, with neighbor reporting on neighbor.[47] In places, they became little more than concentration camps full of unwilling guests. These were peasants who,

45. Pike, op. cit.
46. Mecklin, op. cit.; see also Tanham (*Guns*), *supra.*
47. Pike, op. cit.; see also Halberstam, op. cit.; W. R. Warne, "Vinh Binh Province." In Tanham (*Guns*), *supra.*

until the government-enforced move, had been listening to a siren song. No matter how false the notes, the peasant listened, his deception the greater because his ears had never before heard music. Then, suddenly, he was scooped up, placed in a strategic hamlet—and found the same miserable life of old, the same arrogant and corrupt officials, the same squeeze, the same sicknesses. A song became a nightmare and a program went to pot.

Here was the real failing, not alone of the strategic-hamlet program but of the entire counterinsurgency effort. The Diem government and its foreign advisers may not have known it, but they were fighting essentially an idea, and fortifications, in the long run, are invalid against ideas. As Hilsman had discerned, the only valid weapon against an idea is a better idea—and Ngo Dinh Diem's abortive doctrine of Personalism, which the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations kept trying to insist was democracy, did not fill the bill. The Diem government may have given peasants barbed wire and advisers and even a civil-guard unit, but failure to provide vigorous counterideas—to give the peasant something to fight for—left hamlets and villages as vulnerable as ever to vigorous NLF and PRP propaganda. Unfortunately, much of this propaganda was based on fact. In 1962, a Vietnamese ". . . with a keen understanding of the peasant problem" told Robert Shaplen:

> . . . To the peasants, the government is not what it says it is. Words are not enough. It's the people who represent the government in the peasants' daily life who count—the soldier, the village or district chief, the tax collector. They are the image of the government, as they always have been, and unfortunately most of them continue to put the government in a bad light. Because official pay is so low, corruption is customary and is accepted. Each man, all the way to the province chief, owes his job and influence to someone else, and favors and kickbacks are paid all the way along the line.[48]

The evil of the system transcended mere corruption. A later AID report noted:

> . . . From the very inception it was apparent that many of the provincial officials did not fully understand the concept [of the strategic-hamlet program] and were so frightened by the pressures from the President [Diem] and his brother [Nhu] that they would employ any measures, from forced labor and confiscation to false reporting, to achieve the quantitative goals set.[49]

Far from protecting the peasant, the strategic-hamlet program frequently alienated him. Despite strenuous efforts of some American field advisers and a good many Vietnamese officers and officials, this unhealthy situation continued into 1963. Whether the situation could have

48. Shaplen, op. cit.
49. Halberstam, op. cit.

been retrieved then is debatable; if Diem could have brought himself to initiate legitimate reforms, it is possible that he still could have claimed the upper hand.

But this was not to be. Diem continued to rule on the basis of fear. A natural corollary of fear is dissembling, and this is what happened in these crucial years. In David Halberstam's words:

> . . . Local officials and commanders became dependent on lying their way out of situations. For instance, because Diem did not want the ARVN to risk casualties and because Colonel Dam had reported that the war was going well, it became impossible for Dam to meet the enemy challenge. To do so would have required taking casualties, and then Diem would have demanded to know why there need be casualties in an area which, according to Dam, the Government had long controlled. Thus, potentially good men became prisoners of their past mistakes, and in the early months of 1963 the Vietcong took over the Delta countryside virtually unchallenged.[50]

Kennedy's kid-glove treatment of the Diem hierarchy, meanwhile, was also backfiring. Diem and his circle of intimate advisers grew increasingly difficult to deal with. At times, Diem held himself practically inaccessible; on other occasions, he granted audiences and then submitted ranking callers such as Nolting or Harkins to hours-long monologues. To most observers, he appeared firmly under the thumb of brother Nhu and Mme. Nhu, and, to some observers, the former was as mad as the latter was corrupt and ambitious.

What was the official American reaction?

In March 1963, the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, stated that the war was ". . . turning an important corner . . . Government forces clearly have the initiative in most areas of the country."[51] In April,

> . . . he discerned a "steady movement toward a constitutional system resting upon popular consent," declared that "the 'strategic hamlet' program is producing excellent results," added that "morale in the countryside has begun to rise," assured his listeners that "to the Vietnamese peasant" the Viet Cong "look less and less like winners" and concluded, "The Vietnamese are on their way to success. . . ."[52]

Roger Hilsman later reported an April meeting in Honolulu between Harkins and McNamara:

> . . . General Harkins gave us all the facts and figures—the number of strategic hamlets established, number of Viet Cong killed, operations initiated by government forces, and so on. He could not, of course, he said, give any guarantee, but he thought he could say that by Christmas it would be

50. Ibid.; see also Staff of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, *The War in Vietnam* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1967).
51. Schlesinger (*Bitter*), *supra.*
52. Ibid.

all over. The Secretary of Defense was elated. He reminded me that I had attended one of the very first of these meetings, when it had all looked so black—and that had been only a year and a half ago.[53]

In May, when the NLF was collecting taxes in forty-one of South Vietnam's forty-four provinces, Harkins told Saigon reporters that the war would be won ". . . within a year." In Washington, a Defense Department spokesman announced that ". . . the corner has been turned in Viet-Nam." A month later—American troops in Vietnam now numbered over fifteen thousand—Ambassador Nolting told Saigon reporters: ". . . South Viet-Nam is on its way to victory over communist guerrillas."[54] To gain that victory, the administration had progressively raised its commitment from six hundred to thirteen hundred to six thousand to ten thousand to fifteen thousand troops; as an adviser had warned Dean Acheson in 1950: ". . . These things have a way of snowballing."

The brilliance of official statements suddenly dimmed in the flare of Buddhist revolts. The Buddhist problem had been building for a long time. Like the peasant problem, it was essentially political, although it held religious overtones. South Vietnam is overwhelmingly Buddhist, with some eleven million persons carrying the appellation. But, like all great religious movements, Buddhism had splintered into many variations, and perhaps four million could be called orthodox Buddhists.[55] The disillusionment of this majority bloc began when Diem installed northern, Catholic refugees in the more important and lucrative administrative posts and otherwise favored the minority (1.5 million) Catholic population. Buddhist grumblings grew increasingly severe in 1961. Instead of righting wrongs and admitting Buddhist leadership into his government, Diem, as usual, relied on repression:

> . . . Sometime around mid-1962, as the Saigon regime grew more and more frightened, the campaign against the Buddhists did take on the aspect of persecution, religious as well as social and political. And where there had been only a smoldering discontent and a growing malaise, by the spring of 1963 a burning anger against the authoritarian actions and attitudes of the government had begun to roll across the countryside.[56]

Open rebellion broke out in May, in Hué, when government troops, attempting to disperse a Buddhist crowd, opened fire and killed nine Buddhists. Although the Diem government blamed this on Communist agitators, it gave in to some Buddhist demands. During negotiations, a Buddhist fanatic, following an ancient sacrificial custom, burned himself to death in a public ceremony in Saigon, an act photographed by Mal-

53. Hilsman, op. cit.
54. Schlesinger (*Bitter*), *supra.*
55. Shaplen, op. cit.
56. Ibid.

colm Browne and one that helped turn world opinion sharply against the Diem regime.[57] Subsequent immolations kept the issue alive and brought continuing demands from the Kennedy administration for a settlement. Instead, Nhu, prodded by his wife (who heartlessly described the suicides as "barbecues"), persuaded Diem, in August, to declare martial law, which he followed by police raids of Buddhist pagodas throughout South Vietnam—his police supplemented by Vietnamese Special Forces, a unit organized with CIA aid and one supposedly dedicated to counterguerrilla warfare.

With these acts, Diem and Nhu signed the death warrant of their government and, as it turned out, themselves. The raids brought thousands of protesting students into Saigon and Hué streets, where their arrest by army troops caused additional thousands of vociferous protests. Meanwhile, the NLF was shifting emphasis to the armed struggle. This was partly at the instigation of its own leaders and of the PRP, partly at Hanoi's instigation. Hopes in the South and in the North for an early settlement on Laotian lines had increasingly faded during the previous year. Once the NLF recovered from the tactical surprise of American intervention, it had turned increasingly to the military struggle. In April 1963, in Hanoi, the secretary-general of the Lao Dong, Le Duan, ". . . made the case for a violent versus a peaceful path to power [in the South]."[58] Hanoi also sent south a particularly skillful leader, Tran Nam Trung (an alias), who became secretary-general of the PRP, which held responsibility for the armed struggle. Probably on the advice of two generals from Hanoi, who allegedly came South in August

57. *The Times* (London), January 29, 1971: ". . . The ancient custom which Thich Quang Duc [the 73-year-old monk who burned himself to death] revived takes its origins in a Mahayana Buddhist text written in India in the first century A.D. Called the Saddharma-pundarika-sutra, it tells the story of Bhaishayja-raja, who ate incense, drank oils, and bathed in essences for 12 years before setting fire to himself as an offering to Buddha.

"This text was translated into Chinese (about 223 A.D.) and the cult first became established in China and Vietnam in the fifth century A.D. In the next 500 years there are records of at least 25 Buddhists (including two nuns and one layman) ceremonially burning themselves. The fanatics commonly dieted before igniting themselves, to make their bodies more combustible. Others made more modest offerings by cutting off and burning fingers or hands"; see also Lacouture, op. cit., whose authority is M. Folliozat, a specialist in the tradition of Indian Buddhism: ". . . One may see in these acts primarily an affirmation of eminent dignity and purification. By burning his arm—which is the most traditional gesture—or his body, the initiate, who is 'free' or 'awakened,' freely disposes of what he has come to know to be simple appearance. No longer attached to things, he heroically demonstrates that he understands real values, a deeper order, and in this fashion condemns the attitude of those who persecute his co-religionists.

"F. adds that such cremations could also be gestures of protest, condemnation, or vengeance; he states, too, that these acts constitute exploits of an extraordinary psychosomatic technique which, it seems, reduces the sufferings caused by the sacrifice. . . ."

58. Zagoria, op. cit.

or September, the NLF continued to step up guerrilla operations—the armed struggle was about to command the political struggle.[59] The situation was far from simple, and the exact power relationships are still not known in the West. At this time, however, dissident groups existed in the NLF and also in Hanoi. Moscow did not want the war escalated, but Peking did. Apparently, moderates in both South and North still controlled the situation—in any event, the NLF and Hanoi now released peace proposals sufficiently concrete to cause General de Gaulle to ask for neutralization of the area.

At the same time, President Kennedy dispatched a new ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, who was instructed to maintain a ". . . posture of silent disapproval" vis-à-vis the Diem government. Kennedy now suspended $12 million of monthly aid. As a particular snub to Nhu, Lodge arranged for recall of the CIA chief, John Richardson, who was overtly sympathetic to the regime.

The move toward neutralization, and the American government's new firmness, began jelling an incipient army revolt that had been brewing for over a year and now joined hands, albeit obliquely, with a more recently formed generals' plot.

Although the Kennedy administration, and the President himself, would willingly have continued to support Diem in return for sincere political and economic reforms, Diem's continued intransigence and particularly the anti-American raillery indulged in by Nhu and his vicious wife finally wore Kennedy's patience thin. In his famous speech of early October 1963, he told a television audience that ". . . a change of policy and perhaps personnel" was required in the Saigon government.

Rightly or wrongly, the generals plotting a coup regarded the President's words as a green light, and they seem to have been further encouraged by some American officials, both in Washington and Saigon, who had been made aware of their plans:

> . . . On October 10th, the American go-between informed Minh that the United States would not stand in the way of a coup if it took place, and that if it was successful and if a new regime could improve military morale and effectiveness, could obtain popular support, and could deal on a practical basis with the American government, it would receive aid.[60]

Plots and counterplots developed during the next three weeks. The interested reader will find lucid recitals and analyses of these sordid events in several fine books such as Robert Shaplen's *The Lost Revolution,* David Halberstam's *The Making of a Quagmire,* and Roger Hilsman's *To Move a Nation.* Finally, on the first day of November, the coup began in earnest. Diem activists, such as Colonel Tung, who commanded the dreaded Special Forces, lost their lives on the first day;

59. Pike, op. cit.
60. Shaplen, op. cit.

Diem and Nhu refused Ambassador Lodge's offer of sanctuary and flight and, on the following day, were arrested and summarily executed by army officers.

The coup might have solved many problems, particularly had the American administration followed with a firm policy vigorously pursued. Unfortunately, less than three weeks after Diem and Nhu met their deaths, President Kennedy was assassinated.

Chapter 77

Kennedy's failure analyzed • The administration's ignorance concerning South Vietnam • Ambition versus policy • Vietnam's low priority • Pentagon and CIA influence • False reports • Kennedy's advisers • Guerrilla warfare and American armed forces • Special Forces (the Green Berets) • CIA's role • The tactical problem analyzed • General Griffith's warning • Quantitative versus qualitative warfare • The inevitable result

WHY DID JOHN KENNEDY fail in Vietnam?

The reasons are several and complex. Taken together, they do not compliment the man's historical image, nor do they present a comforting picture of American officialdom, military or civil, and the decision-making process. Taken together, they unfortunately emphasize the theme of this book—the arrogance of ignorance—and they must be analyzed, if only briefly, for us to understand subsequent events in Vietnam, the growing rift in present American political, diplomatic, and military circles, the resultant widening, and in many ways dangerous, schism between government and people, and the precarious moral position in which the United States finds herself vis-à-vis the world today.

Although Kennedy had interested himself in Indochina since 1951, his was a politician's interest, in his case a well-meaning, liberal desire to put matters right, but scarcely a profound understanding of basic issues. We have heard his plaintive comment to Rostow: ". . . You know, Ike never briefed me about Vietnam."

Kennedy never recovered sufficiently from initial ignorance to give Indochina the priority attention it required. The situation demanded a dynamic, imaginative, courageous, and even incautious policy on Kennedy's part. Instead, he remained wedded to what he had inherited: an ambition—what the Tasmanian Minister for External Affairs, Paul Haslack, later called a wish, when he warned fellow Australians:

> . . . We need to see the difference between a wish and a policy. We all wish for peace, prosperity, world understanding and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These are not policies but wishes. A policy is a planned course of conduct devised by a government to serve an identified purpose and put into effect by its own efforts. If it is put into effect by the efforts of others it is not a policy but a hope. If it is proclaimed but not associated with any measures of any kind for putting it into effect it is a piece of humbug.[1]

A good many of the officially stated goals of the Kennedy administration were a sugar coating to the grand and inherited ambition: *stop communism.* This presupposed that communism is a physical thing like a tank or a division of troops or a bullet, and not an abstract idea so theoretically appealing as to survive elaborate corruptions placed upon it by a dozen pinchpenny dictators.

Much less a policy or even an objective, *stop communism* is an ambition—one that disallows occasional short-term "defeat" in the process of winning long-term "victory." Hinder communism while proving the virtues and strengths of democracy is a policy—one that realistically determines "strategic necessities" as opposed to "strategic conveniences" and one that accepts temporary setbacks, even "defeat" (whatever that means) in the process of insuring healthy survival.

Kennedy inherited the negative ambition of stopping communism as opposed to hindering it and letting it evolve into civilized society while further developing and strengthening his own political organism. A tense domestic political situation—in Theodore White's words: ". . . The margin of voices that proclaimed him President was so thin as to be almost an accident of counting"[2]—dissuaded him from disowning his inheritance. Instead, he bowed to forces of fear, both Republican and Democratic—and, almost to the end, remained prisoner to the Diem regime and to those officials who favored a predominantly military approach to a political problem.

Thus his early backdown on sending Lansdale to Saigon; the appointment of Mr. Nolting, a stranger to the Far East; the presence of Maxwell Taylor, an old man steeped in Western military convention, and of Walt Rostow, an academician and historian who, presumably from

1. A. Vandenbosch and M. B. Vandenbosch, *Australia Faces Southeast Asia—The Emergence of a Foreign Policy* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1967).

2. T. H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Atheneum, 1961).

OSS service, had fallen in love with force to the extent that Kennedy later referred to him derisively as the air marshal; the later appointment of General Harkins, like Taylor an old man, a military conventionalist, but, unlike Taylor, with no experience in the Far East.

Two other bonds added to ignorance.

The first was Vietnam's relatively low priority in international affairs. Kennedy no sooner entered the White House than, like Truman and Eisenhower before him, he faced a host of major international and domestic problems. Speaking to Congress on January 30, 1961—his State of the Union address—he reviewed some severe domestic problems, then told his audience:

> . . . No man entering upon this office, regardless of his party, regardless of his previous service in Washington, could fail to be staggered upon learning—even in this brief 10 day period—the harsh enormity of the trials through which we must pass in the next four years. Each day the crises multiply. Each day their solution grows more difficult. Each day we draw nearer the hour of maximum danger, as weapons spread and hostile forces grow stronger. I feel I must inform the Congress that our analyses over the last ten days make it clear that—in each of the principal areas of crisis—the tide of events had been running out and time has not been our friend.[3]

Kennedy assumed office during the Laotian blow-up, with Vietnam a secondary problem. Before he could come to grips with Vietnam, he was involved in the Berlin crisis, with resultant political strains at home. Then the moratorium on nuclear testing, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the missile challenge, the 1962 Congressional elections, the quarrel with Great Britain over Skybolt, the De Gaulle crisis, the civil-rights battle, the confrontation with the Soviet Union over Cuba—one followed the other, a political TV serial, a house of troubles with the Vietnam issue now and again popping in like an unwanted relative. Only with the Buddhist revolts in spring of 1963 did Vietnam become an administration "crisis area." Until late 1963, only three American news media—Associated Press, United Press International, and the New York *Times*—maintained full-time staff correspondents in Vietnam.[4]

A second bond strengthened the first. Kennedy, essentially, was a positive person. He entered office as a young and healthy man with a sincere belief in himself and his philosophy of government. This was one of the most appealing things about the man: his belief in America and America's greatness. Unfortunately, he had not yet defined the meaning of or need for humility. He had not yet defined sufficiently the word "force" to realize that, in addition to virtues, it contained defects; that it was a word of nuance and limit; indeed, that use of force is en-

3. Kennedy (*Public Papers*), *supra*.

4. Mecklin, op. cit.; Robert Shaplen also covered the area, for *The New Yorker* Magazine.

gendered by fear, a subtle truth that explains, among other things, the remarkable success of judo.

I have said that Kennedy refused to disown his inheritance of an impractical ambition. This was in part due to the tense domestic political situation—the genesis was the fall of Chiang Kai-shek—but it was also due in part to Kennedy's insistence on a crusader role. At a time when polarized communism was defrosting, Kennedy embraced the monolithic theory, which threatened the engulfment of the "free" world.[5] On April 28, 1961, for example, his words to Cook County Democrats sounded this alarmist note:

> . . . The Russians and the Chinese, containing within their borders nearly a billion people, totally mobilized for the advance of the Communist system, operating from narrow, interior lines of communication, pressuring on Southeast Asia with the masses of the Chinese armies potentially ready to move. . . .[6]

The image is there—the Red Menace of yesteryear—the infidels to be destroyed by still another crusade, this one in the form of a "relentless struggle," a "no greater task": protect the "Free World" from EVIL: *stop communism.*

At this time, Kennedy was full of himself and his country, and insisted on having that confidence justified. He wanted to believe reports of responsible officials who, when it came to insurgency warfare, were as enthusiastic, confident . . . and ignorant as he himself—and for some time, for too long, he believed them.

Kennedy welcomed dissent no more than most of us. Despite severe and persevering contradictions offered by the historical record and presented by such able writer-participants as Jean Lacouture, Donald Lancaster, Ellen Hammer, Bernard Fall, George Tanham, and Matthew Ridgway; despite advice from such qualified persons as Chester Bowles, John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, Averell Harriman, Roger Hilsman, and George Ball; despite contemporary writings (and warnings) of such talented, courageous, and knowledgeable correspondents as Bernard Fall, Robert Shaplen, Homer Bigart, later David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Malcolm Browne, François Sully, and Jim Robertson—despite this cumulative body of intelligent opinion derived from historical and contemporary experience, President Kennedy refused what President Eisenhower had refused before him: to

5. Zagoria, op. cit.: ". . . During the decade in which the triangular relationship [between Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi] replaced the bipolar, the United States was slow to appreciate its own role in the triangle. Top American officials recognized the existence of the Sino-Soviet dispute only belatedly, then were extremely cautious about acknowledging it, and were always at a loss to know whether or how to exacerbate it."

6. Kennedy (*Public Papers*), *supra.*

force a political settlement to what was in essence a political, not a military, problem.[7]

In 1961, Kennedy was still under the Pentagon's and CIA's influence. The Bay of Pigs fiasco and the unsuitable report on Laos had begun a doubting, more than a disillusioning, process. In late autumn of 1961, when he accepted the Taylor recommendations in part, he was suspicious but still respectful of his senior military and intelligence advisers. As Roger Hilsman later pointed out, the Taylor mission was essentially military, not political:

> . . . General Lansdale, for example, was a member of the mission, and his experience with the political undercurrents in Vietnam was probably greater than any other American's, as were his sources of information. But much to his disgust, he was put to work estimating the costs and number of men required to "seal off" the 250-mile borders of jungle and mountains through which the infiltrators came—a question that he thought itself revealed a misunderstanding of guerrilla warfare. Lansdale did in fact see Diem and Nhu while he was in Vietnam, and he noted that some of the disturbing signs that he had noticed on his January trip was [sic] aggravated.[8]

The man who was supposed to prepare a political assessment, Walt Rostow, unfortunately forsook academic objectivity in favor of deductive thinking. Rostow had sometime before embraced the "aggression from the North" school, as we have discussed. In Vietnam,

> . . . he was preoccupied with the problem of the infiltration routes. His argument was that these routes of access made the situation different from the guerrilla terrorism that had been defeated in Malaya and the Philippines. He noted that the guerrillas in Greece had been beaten only after the Yugoslavs closed the border, and he argued that unless a way could be found to close the Vietnamese border political reforms would do nothing but buy a little time. This view, in fact, was a basic premise in Rostow's thinking. . . .[9]

If the reader will refer to Chapter 57, he will discover the trap that ensnared Rostow and so many of his associates, civil and military: The closing of the Yugoslav border was *not* the major factor in the Greek Communist defeat; failure of insurgents to identify with the Greek people was the primary cause. Rostow's specious conclusion was doubly

7. Ellsberg, op. cit.: ". . . In early 1962, writing to the President to argue against sending combat units to Vietnam or otherwise deepening our involvement, J. K. Galbraith spoke of his fears that the bright hopes of the New Frontier would be sunk in the ricepaddies of Southeast Asia"; see also Hilsman, op. cit.: Chester Bowles argued for extending the area of neutrality beyond Laos to include Vietnam, Burma, Thailand, and Malaya; although Kennedy took no action, he seemed to favor a neutral Southeast Asia as a long-term goal.

8. Hilsman, op. cit.

9. Ibid., but see also Otto Heilbrunn, "Counter-Insurgency Tactics: A Question of Priorities," *Army Quarterly*, January 1967.

unfortunate, for in finding facts to fit his thesis—a deductive approach surprising for one of his academic background—he neglected his real responsibility to ascertain the political environment of the target area, and this abetted a lopsided report whose military bias unduly influenced important minds.

By allowing the military mastiff to grow alongside the political cat, Kennedy erred egregiously. It was partly his own fault, in that he had appointed a man of limited stature as Secretary of State—"a hawk in sheep's clothing," as a critic, borrowing from Churchill, unkindly referred to him—thus insuring ". . . the State Department's inability to compete with the Pentagon."[10] This would have been difficult in any case; as Roger Hilsman has pointed out, Dean Rusk ". . . regarded Vietnam as essentially a military problem even though a number of his colleagues in the State Department disagreed."[11]

Neither McNamara nor Taylor served the President well. Not understanding the complexities of insurgency warfare himself, he could not know that they had escaped the conventional mind of Taylor and the computer mind of McNamara, both of whom accepted false reports that continued to come in from the field, quantitative reports presenting a dangerously inaccurate picture.

Perpetrators of these reports at first intended no deception. Alike untrained in insurgency warfare, military and civil advisers and observers, with some splendid exceptions, misread field developments to report extravagant tactical gains that so excited Washington officialdom in 1962. This is understandable if scarcely commendable. Top officials, military and civil, were putting careers on the line. Vanity was at work and so was ambition, but over these rode an appalling ignorance that produced an unhealthy, indeed fatal, arrogance that would admit of no error. When the bloom wore off, these people refused to accept that the tactical flower had died, and when mourners turned up for the funeral, they were brusquely advised there was no funeral.

Although several factors combine to explain this unfortunate fact, it was due primarily to American military ascendancy in Vietnam affairs since 1954 and concomitant insistence on seeking a military solution to an essentially political problem. Once the military began to rule the American presence, arrogance of ignorance asserted itself to begin eliminating rational thought. And when rational thought disappears, error multiplies finally to explode into catastrophe—which is what happened to the U.S. effort in Vietnam.

To understand this, is to understand something of the American military profile at the time. We discussed earlier some brief American forays into guerrilla actions, a generally unimpressive record that furnished no particular operational doctrine (see Chapters 12–14 and 30, Volume I).

10. Sorensen, op. cit.
11. Hilsman, op. cit.

This should not be surprising. Guerrilla warfare is an inevitable corollary of empire and expansion; thus, the American army fought guerrilla actions against Indians, Filipinos, and, to a lesser degree, Mexicans; American marines fought in the Philippine campaign as well, and then against Santo Domingan rebels, Haitian *cocos,* and Nicaraguan insurgents. That ended in 1932. World War II, as we have discussed, offered but slight opportunity for American armed forces to fight guerrilla warfare, and, in Korea, they encountered guerrillas only in secondary operations, ancillary to the conventional battlefield.[12]

No more did most senior American military commanders grasp the concept of limited war; their excursion into it in Korea, thanks largely to MacArthur's inept strategy, proved a disaster. Though holding to a "victory" claim, American military leaders privately agreed that a limited ground war in Asia must be avoided in the future, that the requirement demanded an all-or-nothing strategy.

The post-Korean international situation raised two challenges that the American armed forces deemed more important than guerrilla expertise. The first is difficult to fault: survival. In the government's pathetic search for cheap security, in the "bigger bang for a buck" days, the air force gained budgetary supremacy over the other three services to the extent of sharp curtailment of army, navy, and marine operating forces. Instead of joining hands to fight the airmen's voracious appetite, the other services continued to fight for the remaining dollars—an altogether unseemly demonstration (but one that continues). The upshot of this was a "massive retaliation" strategy, which continued into the 1960s. In Theodore Sorensen's words,

> . . . Unfortunately in the 1950's, as the Communists increasingly achieved a military posture that made the threat of massive retaliation less and less credible, the United States had moved increasingly to a strategy based on that threat. Kennedy inherited in 1961 a 1956 National Security Council directive relying chiefly on nuclear retaliation to any Communist action larger than a brush fire in general and to any serious Soviet military action whatsoever in Western Europe. "If you could win a big one," Eisenhower had said, "you would certainly win a little one." Because NATO strategy had a similar basis, no serious effort had been made to bring its force levels up to full strength, and our own Army had been sharply reduced in size.[13]

The second challenge faced by the services was to fight in an atomic environment. The air force answered this challenge with Strategic Air Command, or SAC, the expensive counterforce weapon that claimed

12. Griffith (CPLA), *supra;* see also Lynn Montross, *U. S. Marine Operations in Korea 1950–53* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1957), Vol. 3 of 3 vols.; R. B. Asprey, "Guerrilla Warfare" and "Jungle Warfare." In Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1969; R. B. Asprey, "Tactics." In Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1971.

13. Sorensen, op. cit.

so much of the military budget. The navy opted for submarines and supercarriers. The army sought to controvert the new danger by reorganization, at first into pentomic divisions, and when these proved unsatisfactory, into brigades and battle groups with troops protected by armor and shielded personnel carriers. The marines, which logically should have become the American counterguerrilla force, were ". . . not eager to rethink and regroup in terms of the limited, awkward problems of guerrilla operations and the smaller military units involved in them."[14] Indeed, they clung to amphibious expertise by developing what became the helicopter bandwagon and emerging with the "vertical envelopment" concept.

Kennedy did not take kindly to either the military strategy or the military plant that he inherited. He did not wish to rely entirely on massive retaliation, which he feared would bring a nuclear war, and he did not trust so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons.[15] Prompted by Maxwell Taylor, who had argued against air force predominancy in a controversial book, *The Uncertain Trumpet*,[16] Kennedy returned to a conventional-force strategy:

> . . . the new Kennedy-McNamara [and Taylor, it should be added] doctrine on conventional forces—a more radical change in strategy even than the augmenting and defining of the nuclear deterrent. . . . A limited Communist conventional action, in short, could best be deterred by a capacity to respond effectively in kind.[17]

So far, so good.

At this stage of the cold war, however, the Communists no longer seemed interested in waging costly conventional actions such as that in Korea, a fact that seems to have escaped the attention of the Pentagon despite Communist involvement in some of the insurgencies we have earlier discussed, and despite declarations by Communist leaders. Kennedy, Sorensen later wrote, ". . . inherited a military policy which had left us wholly unprepared to fight—or even to train others to fight—a war against local guerrillas."[18] Kennedy directed the Department of Defense to a priority effort to repair this tactical ignorance.

Enter Special Forces.

Special Forces—the Green Berets—belonged to the army, a small unit

14. Rostow, op. cit.

15. Sorensen, op. cit.: ". . . some of these 'small' weapons carried a punch five times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Those ready for use in Europe alone had a combined explosive strength more than ten thousand times as great as those used to end the Second World War. If that was tactical, what was strategic . . . ?"

16. Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

17. Sorensen, op. cit.

18. Ibid.

operating under such a cloak of secrecy that, in the mid-1950s, it very nearly secreted itself out of existence.[19]

Special Forces was and is a valid operational concept. Without going into detail, it attempted to amalgamate the best features of SOE/OSS World War II guerrilla operations to come up with teams based on the Jedburgh and OG prototypes (see Chapter 33, Volume I). These teams varied in size, but each consisted of specialists trained to infiltrate into a target area and there contact and organize indigenous guerrilla forces either known, or believed by intelligence, to exist. In the mid-fifties, the U.S.S.R. and her satellites formed the major targets, but another Special Forces unit, based on Okinawa, was undoubtedly casting covetous eyes on China's hinterland. Despite some favorable publicity, Special Forces remained small and relatively unimportant until 1961.[20]

Special Forces skyrocketed to fame when President Kennedy recognized its elite status, authorized its unofficial emblem, the green beret, and increased its numbers and scope of responsibility. In effect, Kennedy made Special Forces what it was never intended to be and what it had not trained for, a counterinsurgency force.

The United States possessed still another agency concerned with guerrilla warfare. This was the CIA, which concurrently had been operating in Laos, clandestinely arming, supporting, and transporting pro-Western Laotian units to meet Pathet Lao guerrilla incursions supported by North Vietnam. In spring of 1961, by presidential authority, the CIA began infiltrating South Vietnamese forces into southeastern Laos ". . . to locate and attack Communist bases and lines of infiltration." The agency also began infiltrating agents into North Vietnam, where they were to form ". . . networks of resistance, covert bases and teams for light harassment inside North Vietnam." A historical evaluation of these operations cannot be made until CIA releases necessary documents; judging from results and from later events, they were not very successful, though better than other efforts.

Nor was CIA successful in the political field. The conflict between

19. The near disaster caused a change of public-relations heart, and in 1956 this writer was given an open-arms welcome as a military correspondent by the Special Forces unit headquartered in Bad Tölz, Bavaria.

20. In 1956, after a period in field and garrison at Bad Tölz, I wrote a favorable article for *Army* Magazine. Alas! the secrecy cloak had not lifted to mini-size: My relatively short article was returned with 55 security violations noted, one of which was a recommendation to give Special Forces units on-the-job training in Vietnam. My article was not published. In 1961, as special correspondent for *Army* Magazine, I revisited the scene of my earlier crime, was again welcomed and again impressed. Whether I was less perceptive or whether army security precautions had relaxed, my article was finally cleared and published and even elicited a congratulatory letter from the chief of the army's Information Section upon its inclusion in a volume on special warfare; see also Sorensen, op. cit.: Special Forces consisted of ". . . only eighteen hundred men . . . preparing for a wholly different kind of action in a general war in Eastern Europe. Their equipment was outmoded and insufficient, unchanged since the Second World War."

intelligence collection and analysis and executive operations had already emerged in the agency. The CIA in Laos and Vietnam was in the policy-making business to an alarming degree.[21] Among other disadvantages, this meant that, once it had taken a stand, its reports were likely to be less dispassionate than is desirable. In 1962, David Halberstam, of the New York *Times,* interviewed John Richardson, chief of the CIA in Vietnam:

> . . . I remember distinctly: our discussion of the Nhus [Diem's brother and his wife]. Nhu, Richardson said, was a great nationalist. When I mentioned some of Nhu's anti-American remarks and the resentment many anti-Communists felt toward him, Richardson said that the anti-American was simply a product of Nhu's nationalism. He was a proud Asian, but he was also for us; more important, he was the one man who understood the strategic hamlet program. . . .[22]

At the beginning of the Kennedy administration, then, the country possessed precious little guerrilla expertise. The armed forces were operating in a state of flux, each more concerned with trying to maintain a state of readiness necessary to carry out conventional missions than in probing unconventional depths of insurgency warfare. A military correspondent in 1961 was asked to cover NATO Operation Wintershield, in Bavaria, not MAAG activities in Vietnam, and was ticked off by the air force for writing critically of its concentration on strategic bombers at the expense of tactical air support.[23] Insurgency and guerrilla warfare were not subjects of general military discussion. The *Marine Corps Gazette* scooped its competitors by devoting its January 1962 issue to guerrilla warfare: President Kennedy was so moved that he wrote the editor a personal letter of congratulation and directed the Pentagon to pay special attention. In spring of 1962, the President told the graduating class at West Point:

> . . . This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins —war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. . . . It requires in those situations where we must counter it . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training."[24]

But, in spring of 1962, when the first American helicopter units were flying in South Vietnam, Kennedy nevertheless entertained the Shah-

21. Sorensen, op. cit.
22. Halberstam, op. cit.
23. I was the correspondent. Scene: U. S. Air Force PIO office, Pentagon. Serious Major Sunderman tapping copy of offensive article in *Army* Magazine: ". . . I must inform you, Mr. Asprey, that you have ruined General LeMay's afternoon."
24. Hilsman, op. cit.

in-Shah of Iran by taking him to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where hordes of marines performed a conventional amphibious landing. And in spring of 1962, a military correspondent could ask the chief of staff of Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, what the immense command—some forty thousand ground and air troops—was doing about counterinsurgency, and could hear in reply: "What is it?"[25]

Kennedy would still have to learn that a presidential directive cannot work miracles. He failed to respect the soldier's fondness for tradition. It had taken a century to remove the soldier from the horse, once the rifle claimed the battlefield. A piece of paper could not overnight reorient armed forces that had grown up on gasoline. Special Forces could expand its command at Fort Bragg; the air force could train pilots to fly T-28s and B-26s and organize "Jungle Jim" commando-type ground units; the navy and marines could begin altering units and adapting amphibious tactics to meet the new challenge—but that did not mean that their leaders understood the essence of counterinsurgency warfare, any more than did the twenty-two American generals in Saigon.[26]

Convinced that the challenge was primarily military, commanders of all services began trying to convert an unorthodox area of operations into an orthodox theater of war. Not understanding the new rules, they could not tactically adapt. Whatever the President said about guerrilla warfare, these officers, in general, secretly believed that military professionalism would prove more than a match in any battle with "irregulars." Although, in time, some of the younger advisers would realize this error, the bulk remained convinced that professionalism—by which they meant adherence to Western military doctrines—would *win the war*. They had never heard of Major Callwell's writings on small wars, so they would never have pondered his sage advice to regard the native as the professional, the newcomer as the amateur (see Chapter 15, Volume I). They had never studied Gallieni's and Lyautey's pacification campaigns (see Chapter 17, Volume I). They had never heard of General Gwynn and so did not realize that, in countering an insurgency, the military was fulfilling a police role and had to apply *minimum,* not maximum, force; nor would they have known of his warning that a lull in guerrilla action is usually a danger sign, not a "victory" (see Chapter 30, Volume I).

Some of their own people tried to educate them—with no success. As early as 1950, a regular marine officer, an Annapolis graduate, wrote a series of articles on guerrilla warfare in the *Marine Corps Gazette.* This was Colonel Samuel B. Griffith, who had served in Nicaragua, had personally observed Mao Tse-tung's tactics in China and was the first to translate his writings into English, and had served with great distinction as a Raider commander in World War II. Griffith stressed that

25. Again, I was the correspondent.
26. Hilsman, op. cit.

". . . modern arms and techniques have greatly increased the capabilities of partisans":

. . . Powerful explosives, shaped charges, and light rocket firing weapons make it possible for small groups to attack and destroy heavy installations, such as structures of steel and reinforced concrete, that their predecessors were unable to cope with. Propaganda facilities which have been greatly improved by such things as light mobile presses make it easier than it has previously been for partisans to stage full dress propaganda offensives among the people.

Partisan operations are capable of redressing an unbalanced situation in respect to available military manpower. Ten thousand partisans organized into a number of columns can easily tie up 10, 20, or 30 times their own number of regular troops. Radio makes possible concerted partisan effort in widely separated areas. It also insures close strategic and tactical coordination between conventional and partisan forces and provides a means for the uninterrupted flow of information.

The partisan can be defeated, the author argued, but not by conventional military operations:

. . . Anti-partisan operations embrace political, economic, and psychological measures, as well as those of a military nature. Indeed, the latter are of the least significance. The basis of partisan operations is in the people, or at least in a proportion of them. It becomes the first task then to win away important segments of this support, a task which requires correct policies in the three fields named. These policies will also make it possible to recruit one's own partisans, who should constitute the major part of the anti-partisan forces.

Partisans must be beaten at their own game. This means that mobile columns must be the primary military agency. These columns should be equipped with the lightest weapons consonant with delivery of maximum fire effect. The 60 mm mortar and the light machine gun would probably be the heaviest organizational weapons carried. Light radios of varying ranges and characteristics will of course be essential.

These columns cannot be dependent upon supply trains; supply, replacement, and evacuation must be carried out by aircraft so that the columns need not be tied to a base. Equipment must be transportable by light aircraft and helicopters in order that an entire column may be moved from place to place within its operating area with the greatest possible rapidity. Two or three anti-partisan "flying columns" of several hundred men each would thus, even if operating in an area of one hundred miles square, never be out of mutually supporting distance.

Anti-partisan columns cannot be transferred from one area to another and be expected to operate effectively until some time has elasped after they have entered a new area. They must learn an area of operations so that they know it as well as do the partisans themselves. . . .

Too much centralization of control over operations of anti-partisan columns must be avoided. . . . Operational rigidity can result only in disaster.

The author concluded:

. . . It is abundantly clear that the problem posed by guerrilla operations on a vast scale is not susceptible to a military solution that is completely divorced from political reality. But given a reasonable political basis, military operations can be productive if they are properly planned and executed by ingenious and imaginative leaders. . . . [The problem] requires serious study of all available historical experience, and the formulation therefrom of realistic and flexible doctrine.[27]

Thus, in 1950, Griffith was emphasizing the truth of Lawrence of Arabia's dictum: ". . . Guerrilla warfare is more scientific than a bayonet charge."

Lacking suitable background, the American command did not realize that Western warfare is quantitative and that insurgency warfare is qualitative. To fight the latter successfully is frequently to reverse normal standards of measurement, just as trick mirrors in an amusement park make a fat person thin and a thin person fat.

From the beginning, the American command erred, in waging counterinsurgency warfare, first by trying to use maximum, not minimum, force, second by designating the guerrilla the primary target rather than the population that supported him. Dead guerrillas became "victories"—enough "victories" would "win" the war.

They did not understand that an insurgency is not "won"—except that it fades into relative quiescence. Unlike the Western battlefield, a rising body count in an insurgency is a danger sign. So is the necessity for "surprise" encounters, no matter how successfully fought. Progress is not made in an insurgency situation until local peasants are protected sufficiently and have sufficient reason to support government forces and supply necessary information on which to base operations. The oft-expressed American desire to persuade the Viet Cong "to stand and fight," a desire inherited from the French, was another pathetic fallacy. These were professional guerrillas, who would not stand and fight—except on their own terms.

The Americans also failed to understand that qualitative warfare calls for careful target selection—that "saturation" of a battle area contains a number of built-in booby traps in an insurgency situation. The more units involved, the more-attenuated the lines of communication, thus the more targets available to the enemy. The Pentagon and State Department could bleat their combined heart out about arms and supply from the North—the grim fact remained that the Viet Cong was deriving the bulk of its arms and supply from ARVN, exactly as Mao Tse-tung had done from the armies of Chiang Kai-shek. Worse than this,

27. Griffith ("Guerrilla"), *supra*.

however, saturation of a battle area invariably damaged the peasants' crops and villages, frequently killing innocent people, and thus alienating the very persons the government needed to "win."

Our military commanders could not understand this. When General Harkins

> . . . was asked about the political consequences when villages were hit with napalm, he replied that it "really puts the fear of God into the Viet Cong." "And that," he said, "is what counts."[28]

Even after the disaster at Ap Bac, in January 1963, Hilsman found ". . . General Harkins and Ambassador Nolting . . . strongly and quite genuinely optimistic." In a memorandum for the record at that time, Hilsman wrote:

> . . . All this [the hamlet program, American aid, numerous advisers] gives them [the American command] a sense of movement and of progress. The trouble is, however, that the progress and movement is [sic] highly uneven. . . . The failure to provide a police program that is even remotely phased in with the provision of barbed wire and radios for the strategic hamlets is one example. Thus you have strategic hamlets going up enclosing Communists inside their boundaries with no provision for winkling out those Communists.
>
> Other things are similar. You also have the impression that the military is still too heavily oriented toward "sweep" type operations. There is also still the same emphasis on air power as there was before. Almost every operation, so far as I can tell, still begins with an air strike which inevitably kills innocent people and warns the Viet Cong that they should get moving for the troops will be coming soon. I think all this indicates that the Americans are just as much to blame as the Vietnamese.[29]

28. Hilsman, op. cit.; see also Mecklin, op. cit.; Pike, op. cit. Harkins' attitude at times approached the incredible: In 1962, the highly respected and experienced *New Yorker* correspondent Robert Shaplen brought a CBS television documentary to Saigon. Called *The End of an Empire,* it was a photographic record of the Viet Minh fighting at Dien Bien Phu– ". . . by far the most graphic picture of its kind ever filmed." Harkins refused to let it be shown to either American advisers or South Vietnamese officers, because it would "frighten" them to see how well the Viet Minh had fought! (Private information in the author's files.)

29. Hilsman, op. cit.

Chapter 78

American military advisers • American dependence on technology • Helicopters • ARVN tactics • The war escalates • Nolting's and Harkins' dream world • Warnings from the field • Wishful thinking in Saigon • American Government versus the press • The Hilsman-Forrestal report • Kennedy condones the great deception • Pierre Salinger's warning • McNamara's volte-face *• Kennedy's private doubts*

A LARGE PART of the American failure in South Vietnam derived from ignorance of respective forces. A long time ago, Sun Tzu advised military commanders: ". . . Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril."[1]

Prompted by Diem and Nhu, who, like Chiang Kai-shek, regarded guerrillas as "Communist bandits," American commanders in Saigon in large part oversimplified the enemy and particularly his goals. They would not accept that he was waging revolutionary warfare as defined by Mao and modified by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. Our senior officers refused to differentiate between the "political struggle" and the "armed struggle" or realize the importance of the former and its determinant influence on the course of war. They accepted militarily

1. Griffith (*Sun Tzu*), *supra.*

"quiet" areas as "won" areas, where, often, the reverse was true and they were politically "active" areas calling for the greatest concentration of government counteractivity.[2] Such was their arrogance, such their ignorance, that they refused to respect adverse reports filed by subordinates from the field—reports that frequently contradicted information being fed to Washington.

Conversely, they found it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the temperament and mentality of the ARVN troops they were advising. They did not understand the evolutionary requirement of making a military silk purse out of a native sow's ear—they did not realize the awful hold of ingrained tradition epitomized militarily by two Vietnamese words: the ". . . word for soldier stems from the root word for bandit, just as the word for general stems from warlord."[3] They would not admit that expensive American-trained ARVN was avoiding contact with the VC, not seeking it—that the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, which were running on slim budgets, were taking the bulk of casualties in defending static positions against VC night assaults.[4] They failed to realize that the edifice had to be scrapped and rebuilt, with will a cornerstone, if a viable army was to result. As corollary to this failure, they did not understand that defectors gained by the government's Open Arms (Chieu Hoi) program did not necessarily mean loyal government supporters—that, in a larger sense, diminishing NLF strength did not mean added Diem strength.

With some splendid exceptions, American advisers did not understand very much. They came with confidence instead of caution; they started teaching before they had learned. From Nolting on down, too many of them resembled Alden Pyle—Graham Greene's Quiet American: ". . . He was impregnably armored by his good intentions and his ignorance."[5] The insurgencies of our time, not to mention those of history, might never have happened. The lessons they furnished weren't so much lost—they were never learned. To accomplish the military goal in Vietnam, to "win the war," to achieve "victory," the American military command sought to repair doctrinal deficiencies with machines. It relied on technology as opposed to motivation, on helicopters and jeeps and trucks and armored personnel carriers as opposed to men. It did precisely what the American military command in China had done nearly twenty years earlier. It attempted to remedy political, social, and economic deficiencies with metal.

The advisers were not discouraged, not at first, because the new technology brought illusory success. The initial impetus created by new weapons and new vehicles, by the helicopter and APC, frightened the Viet Cong. Greatly increased ARVN mobility led to disruption of a

2. Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency*), *supra.*
3. Pike, op. cit.
4. Halberstam, op. cit.
5. Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (London: William Heinemann, 1955).

good many guerrilla units; ARVN killed and captured impressive numbers of guerrillas and forced others to take sanctuary in Cambodia and Laos.

And yet . . .

The South Vietnam Government estimated that the Viet Cong began the year with about sixteen thousand hard-core guerrillas. They estimated that in 1962 they had killed about twenty thousand "guerrillas" (I use quotation marks because we shall never know how many innocents were included in the figure). And yet VC strength, they estimated, had increased to twenty thousand! ". . . At the same time," Roger Hilsman later wrote, "captured documents, interrogation of prisoners, and other intelligence indicated that *at the most* only three to four thousand infiltrators had come down the Ho Chi Minh trail."[6] The other replacements came from hamlets and villages, and if some arrived under duress, a great many others came freely.

Despite ARVN "victories" and diminishing enemy morale, the Viet Cong retained control of major areas. In summer of 1962, this writer flew several missions with marine helicopter squadrons operating out of Soc Trang, south of Saigon. Fuel for these machines came from Saigon by tank truck, the Saigon trucker paying the Viet Cong a "toll" in order to pass to Soc Trang. This meant that, at any moment, the Viet Cong could prevent marine helicopters from flying; indeed, on one occasion during my stay, the worst was feared, but, in the event, the precious fuel came through.

The fallacy of the new approach was already becoming evident at this time. ARVN may have killed a lot of Viet Cong, but the South Vietnam Government had not deprived survivors of peasant support—whether voluntary or under duress. Initial Viet Cong fright soon turned to bewilderment; analysis followed, to produce countertactics. Night operations increased, since helicopters at first did not fly at night. Assassinations and kidnapings greatly increased, the reasons being to enforce discipline, demonstrate determination, and gain recruits. By spring of 1962, the Viet Cong were beginning to fight back, and, by autumn, were not only pursuing active guerrilla tactics but were standing against ARVN units.[7] Once again, Viet Cong countertactics were immensely aided by intelligence derived from networks that, while on the defensive, were scarcely defunct. Marines at Soc Trang provided a case in point: They were living, in Bernard Fall's term, in a fishbowl, their every movement, their takeoff and landing, their resupply, noted and reported by Viet Cong agents.[8]

In June 1962, Homer Bigart, of the New York *Times,* reported a

6. Hilsman, op. cit.; see also Pike, op. cit.; Halberstam, op. cit.; A. H. Bushell, "Insurgency and the Numbers Game," *Army Quarterly,* April 1967.

7. Personal observation; see also Mecklin, op. cit.; Halberstam, op. cit.

8. A few months later, when U. S. Army helicopter units were occupying Soc Trang, the VC attacked with mortars.

Viet Cong ambush of an ARVN column and then put his finger squarely on the problem. The enemy, he pointed out, had laid an ambush three hours before the army unit approached, an effort witnessed by dozens and perhaps hundreds of peasants:

> . . . Could this have happened if the peasants felt any real identification with the regime? . . . The Viet Cong probably would never have undertaken this action without full confidence that the peasants were with them, or at least indifferent.[9]

The new technology did nothing to repair the existing gap between Vietnamese army units and peasants; indeed, helicopter delivery widened the intelligence gap by flying troops *over* villages and thus eliminating personal contact with the peasants—admittedly a good thing in the case of rapacious army units. Both helicopters and armored personnel carriers, by tearing up ricelands, also alienated the peasants in major operational areas.

The new vehicles also proved expensive. Neither mechanism is simple; each requires large workshop and storage complexes, installations that in Vietnam demanded ground troops to provide security and nonetheless remained vulnerable to guerrilla attack, as did their lines of communication to major supply centers. Troops so assigned inevitably assumed a static role, to the guerrilla's benefit.

Finally, the new vehicles were only aids, not panaceas. The machines neither rectified command deficiencies nor removed the warlord command concept that prevented co-ordinated operations. Armor plate and motors did not erase poorly conceived plans. Prompted in part by American advisers, Vietnamese planners were trying to strike the enemy all over the place, and, all too often, these were random strikes, because the commands lacked proper intelligence on which to base specific and profitable operations. Where good intelligence existed, Viet Cong intelligence frequently countered it. Helicopters and APCs are noisy, and a black-pajama-clad Viet Cong did not take long to ditch his weapon and either commence work in the field or hide along the reeded bank of a nearby canal.

Already, by summer of 1962, frustrated American airmen had begun developing new tactics, for example "eagle flights," whereby helicopters landed a unit in a suspect area. If contact resulted, other, lingering helicopters immediately brought in reinforcements. The poverty of this tactic is too obvious for comment.

When the Viet Cong recovered from surprise and started to shoot —and they were shooting in summer of 1962, an unhappy fact visibly evident from holes in helicopter "skins"—helicopter crews shot back.[10] At first, this was primitive; a crew member firing from the cargo door-

9. Mecklin, op. cit.

10. Ibid.; by the end of 1962, American combat deaths numbered 21; in 1963, 97 were killed.

way. Then Vietnamese planes, T-28s, sometimes piloted by American advisers, began strafing missions prior to helicopter landings. In late 1962,

> . . . the armed helicopters arrived, with four mounted machine guns and sixteen rocket pods; they were to escort the unarmed helicopters into battle and were not to fire until fired on. But this was too dangerous—it gave the enemy too many opportunities—and the rules of engagement were further broadened. By mid-1963 the armed helicopters were often serving as fighter planes, carrying out strafing missions.[11]

The net result was an increase in quantitative tactics—or escalation of the tactical effort.

CIA and Special Forces operations in the central highlands produced two results. One was a diminution of effort on part of the Vietnamese when left to their own resources. Once American teams moved on, Montagnard projects wilted and died to create tribal disillusionment and thus fertile ground for Viet Cong propaganda. The other was an extension of the war by building military outposts such as that at Pleiku, outposts that had to be defended, supplied—and finally evacuated.

At the same time, the civil effort burst forth into fresh bloom. This concentrated on the expensive strategic-hamlet program, which, as we have seen, was rapidly becoming dangerous in that false reports were endeavoring to prove it a success. Not only were the hamlets host to the sea of troubles already discussed, but they in no way answered the root problem of land reform. The reader will perhaps remember that highly restrictive land-distribution laws had made about 20 per cent of total ricelands available for peasant purchase. By the end of 1962, only about 25–30 per cent of the available land had been transferred to peasant hands. The former big landowners, rich Vietnamese, French *colons,* and the Catholic Church remained principal owners, with members of Diem's family and government claiming huge chunks of sequestered lands.[12] Despite Diem's promises to American officials, nothing had changed. John Mecklin later wrote of

> . . . at least one area where we found tax collectors attached to military units. The idea was that this was a convenient way to collect back taxes for absentee landlords in hamlets where government authority had totally collapsed, often several years later.[13]

The fallacy of the American approach did not escape certain observers. A small press corps almost unanimously contradicted optimistic statements of various American officials. Official statements emanating from Saigon and Washington, they wrote, scarcely reflected

11. Halberstam, op. cit.; see also Frank Harvey, *Air War—Vietnam* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).
12. Shaplen, op. cit.
13. Mecklin, op. cit.

true feelings of American advisers in the field. The war admittedly had picked up speed, but, to what ultimate purpose, was not clear. Certainly by the turn of the year, it was obvious that the South Vietnamese army was not doing its share, the result of manacled command and poor morale, and it was obvious that the strategic-hamlet program had bogged down.

Nor did the small press corps stand alone in its pessimism. A good many of its stories traced to complaints by field advisers. David Halberstam names one of these, Lieutenant Colonel John Vann, an army officer who later retired so he could tell the truth to the American public —the first of several officers so motivated. Vann was adviser to ARVN's IV Corps, commanded by Colonel Huynh Van Cao, a Diem appointee whose zest for combat was shown by his earlier command of ARVN's 7th Division: From October to December, this division, in fourteen operations against the Viet Cong, had suffered four killed.[14] Cao's behavior, along with that of other Diem appointees at Ap Bac, drew sharp protests from Colonel Vann. Incredibly, General Harkins scorned Vann's report. At a press conference in Saigon two days later, Harkins told dumfounded reporters that he considered Ap Bac ". . . a victory. We took the objective."[15]

Other field advisers were reporting adversely on complementary pacification operations such as the strategic-hamlet program and the effort in the central highlands. Ralph Harwood, who was in charge of the strategic-hamlet program in the Mekong Delta, had warned Saigon ". . . that the program was not working and that in many of the lowland areas the Vietcong were taking over virtually unchallenged."[16]

By 1963, the failure of the American program was evidencing itself in a further and very sinister way: An increasing casualty rate of American personnel—not from bullets but from mental illness. John Mecklin later explained the problem:

> . . . Young American Army officers who came to Vietnam as advisers were set for hardship and extreme danger, and they accepted both with admirable spirit. But they were not prepared for a system where incompetents were given commands for political reasons, where a battle was lost because a company commander was a coward and was not then relieved, where there was no authority, and no possible action but to appeal to commanders who would not listen, because they had no authority from Saigon to listen, much less act.

Intellectually it made sense to support the Diem regime, or this in any case was the considered judgment of U.S. policy-makers, including President Kennedy, who was deeply admired by most Americans in Saigon. This, in turn, meant in effect that it was near blasphemy to be critical of the regime,

14. Halberstam, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

even in exclusively American company. Yet blasphemy there was, plentifully, with many a resulting guilty conscience. The bitter fact was that an overwhelming majority of all Americans in Vietnam disliked the regime, and many of them hated it for its uniform abuse of so many principles Americans believe in, like free speech, even though that same majority kept telling itself our policy was right.[17]

The result was disastrous: erroneous official reporting on such a scale that one seeks for a parallel; perhaps one occurred in 1933, during Sumner Welles's excursion in Havana at the time of the Batista takeover. In Vietnam, two factors prevented the bulk of American officials from objectively analyzing the situation. The first was ignorance—historical ignorance of guerrilla warfare. The second was subjectiveness—to an alarming degree. The myth of Ngo Dinh Diem's indispensability had been so well inculcated that many of our officials believed he was the only man we had—they could not let Diem fail. Mecklin later wrote:

. . . As mentioned earlier, a large portion of the American community in Vietnam privately disliked and distrusted the Diem regime, and doubted that it could prevail. Among those of us who felt that we nevertheless should keep trying, in the absence of an acceptable alternative, this tended to create a complex of defensiveness. I hope it is not presumptuous to suggest that this in turn created an underlying feeling, perhaps subconsciously, of guilt vis-à-vis the American people because we were politically bankrupt, failing to serve their interest well in a critical situation. This, in any case, was the way I felt. Failure became unthinkable.[18]

Mecklin amplified these words in a later paragraph:

. . . We were stuck hopelessly with what amounted to an all-or-nothing policy, which might not work. . . . The state of mind in both Washington and Saigon tended to close out reason. The policy of support for Diem became an article of faith, and dissent became reprehensible.[19]

This partly explains the difficulty between the U.S. mission in Saigon and its field advisers and American journalists. Saigon officials, not knowing the difference between right and wrong in insurgency warfare, continued to insist that the combined U.S.-Vietnam effort was right. Nolting probably meant what he said in a speech of 1962: that ". . . the Republic of Vietnam will take its place in history as the country where the tides of Asian Communism was reversed and the myth of Communist invincibility forever shattered."[20]

Unfortunately for Nolting and Harkins, some American field advisers, by no means all, in time had learned the difference between

17. Mecklin, op. cit.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.

right and wrong and had passed their observations to perceptive journalists. Hilsman later noted that ". . . every faction was so passionately convinced of the rightness of its cause that leaking to the press became a patriotic act."[21] As befits a democratic system, a number of these journalists avoided the subjective thinking that crowned the Saigon mission and attempted to report the situation objectively.[22] Their accounts of what was happening conflicted at almost every point with what Saigon *wanted* to be happening. The official reaction was attempted news management and suppression in the totalitarian tradition—thus, a State Department directive of February 1962 that virtually ordered reportage favorable to the regime.

Here was a hideous situation that was Administration policy, a pernicious policy that refused to trust the American people with the truth. John Mecklin, who was charged with carrying out the restrictive policy, later wrote:

> . . . The Mission persisted in the practice of excessive classification, under the secret fraternity doctrine of State Department Cable No. 1006, to a degree that denied newsmen access to whole segments of U.S. operations in Vietnam.[23]

American reporters reacted predictably to the Administration's attitude and particularly to the dissembling behavior of American officials in Saigon, and a feud of massive proportions developed. Contradiction crowned contradiction until a veritable communications breakdown developed, with awesome results in the United States. A Congressional subcommittee later condemned the State Department's attitude:

> . . . The restrictive U.S. press policy in Vietnam . . . unquestionably contributed to the lack of information about conditions in Vietnam which created an international crisis. Instead of hiding the facts from the American public, the State Department should have done everything possible to expose the true situation to full view.[24]

Nolting and Harkins could not altogether ignore adverse field reports, particularly when journalists were quoting "informed sources" in highly critical articles, and when, in some cases, the reports reached Washington.

Some evidence exists that President Kennedy was already worried about the Pandora's box of power he had opened. Faced with a pessi-

21. Hilsman, op. cit.

22. More-subjective reporting, e.g. by Halberstam and Browne, came later—induced in part, it should be added, by the hopeless corruption of the Diem regime, in part by obtuse and obdurate behavior of American civil and military officials.

23. Mecklin, op. cit.; but see also Pierre Salinger, *With Kennedy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966): Salinger points out that Cable 1006 was *intended* to help the press.

24. Ibid.

mistic report from Hilsman's office in late December 1962, he sent Hilsman and Michael Forrestal (son of the former Secretary of Defense) on still another "fact-finding" mission. The two emissaries found Harkins and Nolting ". . . strongly and quite genuinely optimistic," despite the battle at Ap Bac (which Harkins insisted was a "victory"). As for the strategic-hamlet program, the British expert Robert Thompson, though admitting certain shortcomings, was now ". . . the most optimistic" of all. Their report to the President began: ". . . The war in South Vietnam is clearly going better than it was a year ago." After a review of facts, the report continued:

. . . Our overall judgment, in sum, is that we are probably winning, but certainly more slowly than we had hoped. At the rate it is now going, the war will probably last longer than we would like, cost more in terms of both lives and money than we had anticipated, and prolong the period in which a sudden and dramatic event could upset the gains already made.

The report went on to object to a lack of an over-all plan, to an inadequate police system, and to a predominance of "search-and-destroy" and "elaborate, set-piece" tactics; it also questioned the ". . . increasing use of air power."[25]

Kennedy could scarcely have been reassured by the corpus of the report. But a top-secret, "eyes only" annex must have jolted him, particularly when he read:

*. . . no overall planning effort that effectively ties together the civilian and military efforts;
*. . . little or no long-range thinking about the kind of country that should come out of a victory and about what we do now to contribute to this longer-range goal;
*. . . among both civilians and military there is still some confusion over the way to conduct a counter-guerrilla war;
*. . . in general, we don't use all the leverage we have to persuade Diem to adopt policies which we espouse.

The "eyes-only" annex continued in damning words:

. . . The real trouble, however, is that the rather large U.S. effort in South Vietnam is managed by a multitude of independent U.S. agencies and people with little or no overall direction. No one man is in charge. What coordination there is results mainly from the sort of treaty arrangements that we arrived at in the country team meetings. . . . The result is that the U.S. effort is fragmented and duplicative. . . .

What is needed ideally is to give authority to a single strong executive, a man perhaps with a military background but who understands that this war is essentially a struggle to build a nation out of the chaos of revolution. . . .[26]

25. Hilsman, op. cit.
26. Ibid.

How much credence the President attached to this report is not known, but Hilsman's promotion to Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs seemed to lend it at least presidential grace. In spring of 1963, Colonel Vann returned to Washington to report his dissent, and it is unlikely that this bit of healthy heterodoxy escaped White House ears. In late April 1963, John Mecklin, at Pierre Salinger's instigation, personally reported to the President the unsavory relationship between officialdom and press in Saigon. William Truehart, Nolting's deputy, was beginning to express grave doubts about the Diem regime. In September, Rufus Phillips, who headed the $20-million Rural Affairs program in Vietnam, told President Kennedy that, despite Phillips' own earlier optimism, the program was failing. When Henry Cabot Lodge arrived in Saigon as the new ambassador, William Flippen, deputy chief of AID, who had been in South Vietnam for six years, ". . . delivered a bitter attack on our previous policy. Flippen added that the American military had been consistently wrong in its reports and interpretations ever since he arrived in Vietnam, and stated flatly that the war was being lost."[27]

Unfortunately, such dissidents formed a minority. MACV and Harkins still refused to admit that the American effort had turned sour, and Nolting and Richardson, despite impressive evidence to the contrary, chose to go along with this optimism. By spring of 1963, these people resembled company directors surrounded by charts and statistical reports showing favorable production and sales at a time when, unknown to them, the factory was shutting down.

Harkins and his principal staff officers were continuing an unhealthy tradition begun by Generals Williams and Myers, who could not or would not objectively analyze and report on the situation. Their obdurate attitude unfortunately found reflection in visiting officials, some of whom should have known better. At one point, Major General V. H. Krulak, an incisive little man jocularly known to his Marine Corps associates as "the Brute," arrived in Saigon as McNamara's counterinsurgency expert. At a time when the strategic-hamlet program was bursting at the seams, Krulak, although aware of Vann's strong feelings on this and other matters, reported favorably to McNamara. Later, when Rufus Phillips flew to Washington to acquaint Kennedy with disaster, he ". . . was immediately and bitterly challenged by Krulak, who doubted his veracity and his competence . . ."[28]—a courageous stand, considering Krulak's lack of background in guerrilla warfare.

The conflict between Saigon and the field—between wishes and facts—had already produced a chilling corollary: extreme intolerance, on the part of both the Saigon regime and the American mission, of journalists who questioned the validity of allied performance. In March

27. Halberstam, op. cit.
28. Ibid.; see also Hilsman, op. cit.

1962, Mme. Nhu had begun persuading President Diem to expel three troublemakers, the veteran news correspondents Homer Bigart of the New York *Times,* François Sully of *Newsweek,* and James Robinson of *NBC,* each of whom was increasingly harassed by the Saigon government, as were other correspondents. Joseph Buttinger later wrote:

. . . Sully was called a Vietcong spy, an opium smuggler, and a participant in sex orgies [and was expelled in August 1962]. Halberstam [who replaced Bigart], Neil Sheehan of the United Press International, and several others were accused of being part of an international Communist-inspired conspiracy to slander the regime. They were shadowed, and some of them were attacked and physically mishandled by Nhu's secret-service agents. Their telephones were tapped, and they were prevented from sending uncensored dispatches out of the country.[29]

What was the official American reaction to this attempt to keep the American public informed of events in Vietnam?

By 1962, the collective mind of the American civil and military high command in Saigon, with few exceptions, had closed itself to nuance: Vietnam was a matter of GOOD versus EVIL, Hero versus Villain, democracy versus communism:

. . . The U.S. mission was anything but forceful in defending these correspondents against abuse and ill-treatment, and almost apologetic in explaining that these men were merely trying to live up to the American concept of a free press. Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., and General Paul Harkins in particular were incensed by the American newsmen's attacks on the regime. Both stanchly believed that there was no alternative to Diem, and were therefore on the whole inclined to accept as true the regime's claim that the Vietcong were on the way to defeat. They, as well as their superiors in Washington, spoke repeatedly of the "slanted" or even "irresponsible" press reporting out of Saigon, convinced not only that the correspondents who criticized the regime did harm to U.S.-South Vietnamese relations, but also that they were wrong. . . .[30]

Nolting and Harkins took it upon themselves to deny the democratic right of free speech. Dissent would not be tolerated. As David Halberstam, a dissenter, later wrote:

. . . The result was an outward rigidity and orthodoxy at the top that was unique among American missions overseas. Admiral Harry Felt, the commander of all American forces in the Pacific, summed up the attitude eloquently when, at a press conference in Saigon in late 1962, he became angered by a question from Malcolm Browne of the Associated Press, and snapped, "Why don't you get on the team?"[31]

29. Buttinger, op. cit.; see also Mecklin, op. cit.
30. Buttinger, op. cit.
31. Halberstam, op. cit.

Felt's direct violation of his authority, indeed his official mockery of everything sacred in the American heritage, did not draw a protest from the top. On April 20, 1961, President Kennedy had told the American Society of Newspaper Editors:

> . . . The President of a great democracy such as ours, and the editors of great newspapers such as yours, owe a common obligation to the people: an obligation to present the facts, to present them with candor, and to present them in perspective. . . .[32]

Not only did this advocate of a free press allow Felt's outburst, which should have brought his immediate relief, to pass unnoticed (so far as we know), but he later attempted to muzzle the outspoken Halberstam by suggesting to his publisher, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, ". . . that he might give Halberstam a vacation to remove him from Vietnam."[33] Sulzberger refused, and Halberstam, along with Malcolm Browne, went on to win a Pulitzer prize. Another dissident, Charles Mohr, of *Time,* who reported pessimistically on the deteriorating situation, found his copy suppressed by senior editors, and resigned in disgust.[34] Reporters who wrote favorable accounts, among them Marguerite Higgins, Joseph Alsop, and Richard Tregaskis, received comforting little pats for their part in what was rapidly becoming the great deception. The Administration was running scared!

Kennedy's press representative, Pierre Salinger, had been monitoring the situation as it developed. To prevent a blow-up, he persuaded Kennedy to send a State Department representative, Bob Manning, to Saigon to investigate. Manning's report pinpointed the difficulty:

> . . . The press problem in Vietnam is singular because of the singular nature of the United States involvement in that country. Our involvement is so extensive as to require public, i.e., press, scrutiny, and yet so hemmed by limitations as to make it difficult for the United States government to promote and assure that scrutiny. The problem is complicated by the long-standing desire of the United States government to see the American involvement in Vietnam minimized, even represented, as something less than in reality it is. The early history of the handling of the situation is marked by attitudes, directives, and actions in Washington and in the field that reflect this United States desire.[35]

Manning's report helped to change policy and ease tension, and Lodge's later arrival and fair treatment of the press did a great deal of good. But, again, a directive cannot change things overnight, and a good many bureaucrats and ranking military officers continued to lie to the press and otherwise antagonize journalists carrying out one of the most sacred

32. Kennedy (*Public Papers*), *supra.*
33. Salinger, op. cit.; see also Halberstam, op. cit.
34. Halberstam, op. cit.
35. Salinger, op. cit.

tasks of a democratic nation. Pierre Salinger later wrote presciently of the problem:

> . . . The most important [lesson] is that despite all the motivations which exist to the contrary the government can never expect success for a press policy which does not rely on total candor. Thus, the government of the United States, as a free democratic society, may be faced with an impossible choice: that choice is between using any methods at its disposal, including some secret operations, to defend the national interest and doing everything out in the open with the accepted drawbacks that such a policy would produce.
>
> I do not believe that such a choice should be forced on either government or press. It is at best an oversimplification and at worst unacceptable to a great nation locked in struggle around the world.
>
> It is why I have suggested frequently that instead of walking away from a central problem of our time—and hoping that it will somehow go away—it should now have the attention of the most knowledgeable and creative people in both the government and the press.[36]

Salinger's efforts to bring about healthy conferences failed. What he was calling for was an educational effort to achieve a mature relationship that would benefit everyone, including the American public. Unfortunately, his dismal conclusion could have been written at the present time:

> . . . The recitation of the events in Vietnam [1961 to early 1964] . . . cries out for a new start to such an approach. The question is whether the government and the press are content to limp through the rest of the twentieth century on the basis of unfortunate policies based on improvisation.[37]

The double standard of reporting continued into 1963. As each new allied effort flared and wilted, MACV continued to insist that the war was being won; the press, in general, continued to insist that it was being lost. If conditions were somewhat dicey in the Mekong Delta, briefing officers said, it was because ". . . the guerrillas had been pushed south by successful operations in northern areas."[38] If conditions were somewhat dicey in the delta, reporters wrote, it was because the strategic-hamlet program was failing—the inevitable result of a despot-ridden regime whose venality and corruption penetrated the entire command system of ARVN. (The reader should take note that almost every disclosure made by American reporters earlier and at this time was confirmed, and then some, by discoveries made after Diem's death!)[39]

36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Halberstam, op. cit.
39. Hilsman, op. cit.

The eye-opening Buddhist revolts favored the reporters, however. Throughout summer of 1963, some of the truths they had been writing began emerging in official reports. National Security Council meetings grew more tense and acrimonious as the civil-versus-military battle mounted in Administration circles. In September, the President sent out still another civil-military fact-finding team, consisting of Krulak, the Pentagon's expert on insurgency warfare, and J. S. Mendenhall, a veteran diplomat with extensive service in Vietnam. In due time, they returned to Washington and a meeting of the National Security Council. Krulak reported enthusiastically on the situation, Mendenhall unfavorably. So diametrically opposed were the reports that President Kennedy dryly commented, ". . . Were you gentlemen in the same country?"[40] The President was probably not impressed, either, with General Harkins, who stated in October: ". . . I can safely say the end of the war is in sight."[41]

The end of the war, though not as Harkins meant it, might have been in sight had President Kennedy lived. During 1963, Kennedy had been hearing increasingly disturbing minority reports such as those offered by Phillips and Mecklin, which must have brought De Gaulle's warning in spring of 1961 to mind. In September 1963, one of his most trusted advisers, Robert McNamara, theretofore an optimist, returned from Saigon to report a *volte-face* that brought Kennedy up short. On previous inspection tours, McNamara had been sold a bill of goods by Harkins and Nolting that bore but slight resemblance to facts. By now, however, Henry Cabot Lodge had replaced Nolting and was dissatisfied with what he found. Apparently, he pressed his views with considerable vigor on McNamara. Despite Harkins' continued whitewash, McNamara back in Washington ". . . reportedly told Kennedy that the military had been wrong, that the war was not going well and that the official version of military events was inaccurate."[42] McNamara and Taylor nonetheless continued to insist on a military approach:

> . . . Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the United States military task can be completed by the end of 1965. . . . They reported that by the end of this year [1963] the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point that one thousand U.S. military personnel assigned to South Vietnam can be withdrawn.[43]

40. Schlesinger (*Days*), *supra.*
41. Schlesinger (*Bitter*), *supra.*
42. Halberstam, op. cit.; see also Hilsman, op. cit.: McNamara ". . . came back doubting the statistics he loved so well—or at least recognizing that unquantifiable political factors might be more important than he had been willing to believe before"; Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.
43. Hilsman, op. cit.

Despite this optimism, misplaced as usual, the situation continued to deteriorate, with such rapidity that, shortly after McNamara's return, Kennedy decided to dump Diem or at least not stand in the way of those who wished him dumped.

A former presidential aide, Kenneth O'Donnell, disclosed in 1970 that Kennedy, for some time, had been entertaining private personal doubts as to the American role in Vietnam. In late 1962, Senator Mike Mansfield had urged that the President stop escalating the American effort and withdraw all American forces from what was a civil war.

. . . A continued steady increase of American military advisers in South Vietnam, the senator argued, would lead to sending still more forces to beef up those that were there, and soon the Americans would be dominating the combat in a civil war that was not our war. Taking over the military leadership and the fighting in the Vietnam war, Mansfield warned, would hurt American prestige in Asia and would not help the South Vietnamese to stand on their own two feet, either.[44]

This was Kennedy's original position, and though he ignored the argument by implementing the Taylor-Rostow program in part, he had second thoughts in spring of 1963, when Mansfield continued to press the argument. Kennedy called Mansfield to the White House, a private meeting witnessed by O'Donnell:

. . . The President told Mansfield that he had been having serious second thoughts about Mansfield's argument and that he now agreed with the senator's thinking on the need for a complete military withdrawal from Vietnam.

"But I can't do it until 1965—after I'm re-elected," Kennedy told Mansfield.

President Kennedy felt, and Mansfield agreed with him, that if he announced a total withdrawal of American military personnel from Vietnam before the 1964 election, there would be a wild conservative outcry against returning him to the Presidency for a second term.

After Mansfield left the office, the President told me that he had made up his mind that after his re-election he would take the risk of unpopularity and make a complete withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. "In 1965, I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now, we would have another Joe McCarthy red scare on our hands, but I can do it after I'm re-elected. So we had better make damned sure that I *am* re-elected."[45]

What the President thought is not what the President told the public. Neither doubts nor maturity embossed his statement given at a news conference in mid-September 1963: ". . . But we have a very simple policy in that area. In some ways I think the Vietnamese people and

44. Kenneth O'Donnell, "LBJ and the Kennedys," *Life*, August 7, 1970.
45. Ibid.

ourselves agree: we want the war to be won, the Communists to be contained, and the Americans to go home. That is our policy. . . ."[46]

As we said earlier, that is no policy but, rather, an ambition. What would have happened had the President lived and been re-elected is futile to speculate. We know that, until his death, he continued publicly to support the American commitment to Vietnam. Unfortunately, his successor, Lyndon Johnson, chose to expand it.

46. Hilsman, op. cit.

Chapter 79

Enter President Lyndon Johnson • Duong Van Minh's provisional government • Political anarchy in the South • Revolutionary pressures • Nguyen Khanh takes over • McNamara's report (I) • Operation Plan 34A • Intelligence experts dissent • JCS hawks • Nguyen Khanh's reforms • McNamara's report (II) • Renewed VC offensives • The situation deteriorates • The Lodge plan: "carrot and stick" • Johnson backs the hawks • CIA rebuttal • Seaborn's mission to Hanoi • Hanoi hawks • Taylor relieves Lodge: the military situation • The new Saigon team • The Tonkin Gulf incident • William Bundy's Congressional resolution

NOTHING in President Johnson's background presaged a healthy change of policy in Vietnam. So far as that dismal situation went, he assumed office with one foot in a trap, albeit a trap he had helped set.

Like John Kennedy, Johnson embraced a number of simplistic tenets. Unlike Kennedy, he was intellectually unable to outgrow them. He was wedded to the grand ambition: *stop communism.* He accepted the "aggression from the North" theory, and if the monolithic-Communist-conspiracy theme had developed a major crack, Peking conveniently replaced Moscow as master villain. The new President regarded South Vietnam as a military rather than a political problem; drawing on Prometheus and Robert Frost, he ". . . held with those who favored fire" for its solution.

But, unlike Kennedy, Johnson faced a presidential election within a year, and that, rather than personal doubts, at first checked his use of overt force. Instead, as Kennedy had done in 1961, Johnson ordered a program greatly enlarged from the earlier civilian effort. At the same

time, however, Johnson accepted arguments for more overt action and allowed advisers to plan accordingly.

We know from events what these advisers generally had in mind. Many details of their thinking more recently have emerged in the celebrated Pentagon Papers, and the interested reader should study Neil Sheehan's analytical account of these crucial years.[1] Although not all principals have written memoirs, the present record, which includes President Johnson's version of these momentous events, indicates that the President increasingly embraced force to compel the North to stop the war.

In the case of the South, he behaved predictably, and what we have said of Kennedy's opening performance, we can say of Johnson's:

> . . . A change of faces and significant increases in personnel, both civil and military, meant no fundamental improvement of a worsening situation. Instead it meant privately compounding past and present errors while publicly defending them as a viable program.

As with the Kennedy era, we shall attempt to analyze Johnson's actions once we examine the major happenings of these tragic years.

President Diem's demise had opened the way for a reform government that probably could still have retrieved the situation in South Vietnam. Unfortunately, the new provisional government showed itself weak and divided. Headed by a cardboard premier, it consisted of twelve generals, who formed a Military Revolutionary Council, chopped off as many pro-Diem heads as possible—and then sat still. In a situation that demanded firm and vigorous domestic policy carried out by trustworthy, trained, and confident officials, Duong Van Minh and his fellow generals proved themselves incapable of rule, indeed even of trusting one another.

Here was a power vacuum that a determined effort on the part of American advisers might have filled. But lack of viable American policy dictated inaction at a crucial time. As Robert Shaplen later wrote, instead of responding to a situation that American officials had helped create,

> . . . we dealt repeatedly in tired shibboleths, in continued bland expressions of optimism; and in consequence our policy, if indeed we had one, was obscured in a welter of words that unfortunately soon became involved in a Presidential political campaign. The admission must be made that we had no more of a post-coup plan than the Vietnamese had.[2]

1. Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy, and Fox Butterfield, *The Pentagon Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971); see also L. B. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra;* Lyndon B. Johnson, *Public Papers of the President* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965–70), 10 vols. Hereafter cited as Johnson (*Public Papers*), with appropriate year.

2. Shaplen, op. cit.

The situation would have been difficult under normal circumstances. With government fragmented by Diem's death and daily challenged by the Viet Cong, it soon grew calamitous. In the cities, political parties proliferated—sixty-two of them within a month and a half of the coup![3] The factious bodies in no way influenced the junta government into framing and passing reform legislation. A Council of Notables, which was supposed to draft a new constitution (but never did), included ". . . no representatives of the peasantry or of the labor movement."[4]

Although the junta removed some important pro-Diem officials, a number of them survived in office, as did thousands of lesser bureaucrats imbued with mandarin philosophy. Part of the reason was necessity: Trained officials remained in short supply. But part was political: Each junta member held ties to the old regime, his power resting, in part, on cliques and cabals within the framework of Diem's government, including the army.

Nothing was unique about the situation. It was a typical coup setup, a palace revolution; it was familiar to history; in the previous half century, it had occurred dozens of times in the Near East and in South America. Power shifted from one house of rule to another, usually without improving the peasant's lot. The great powers normally condoned such shifts of power for reasons of "stability" essential to business —whether growing bananas or mining metals or pumping oil. Sometimes, however, they were endorsed for reasons of what statesmen like to call policy—by which they frequently mean pride and prestige—and that was the case in South Vietnam in that winter of 1963–64.

The Johnson administration would not accept a situation already experienced by the Wilson administration in Mexico—a political revolution being overwhelmed by demands for a social revolution. A nationalist leader, Dan Van Sung, had complained in mid-1963 that,

> . . . By emphasizing anti-Communism rather than positive revolutionary goals and from lack of a better adaptation to the local situation, the United States has reduced its anti-Communist efforts in Viet Nam to the maintenance of an administrative machine and of an army. . . . The way out, to our mind, is not by an abandonment but, on the contrary, by going deep into every local revolutionary problem and helping solve them using principles of justice and freedom, and perhaps in fusing them with the revolutionary spirit of 1776.[5]

In autumn of 1963, the politically organized NLF-PRP was on hand to exploit the very real desire in the South for social revolution in cities and countryside. Within a month after the junta had assumed power,

3. Ibid.; see also Pike, op. cit.; George A. Carver, Jr., "The Real Revolution in South Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1965.

4. Shaplen, op. cit.

5. Edward G. Lansdale, "Viet Nam: Do We Understand Revolution?" *Foreign Affairs*, October 1964.

Viet Cong guerrillas opened carefully planned offensives throughout South Vietnam. By December, guerrillas had ARVN on the run; once again, a cloud of jeopardy covered the land.

The failure of Minh's junta government promoted increasing intrigue, which brought another coup at the end of January 1964. Using the pretext that De Gaulle was on the verge of persuading the junta to back his plan for a neutral Southeast Asia and come to terms with the NLF and Hanoi, the dissidents promoted a bloodless military coup that installed General Nguyen Khanh in place of Minh.

Shortly after taking office, President Johnson conferred with Ambassador Lodge and with CIA Chief John McCone. Johnson later described Lodge as "optimistic" (as opposed to McCone):

> . . . I told Lodge that I had not been happy with what I had read about our Mission's operations in Vietnam earlier in the year. There had been too much internal dissension. I wanted him to develop a strong team; I wanted them to work together; and I wanted the Ambassador to be the sole boss. I assured him of full support in Washington. . . .[6]

We still don't know the exact relationship of that period. We do know that a stronger man than Lodge was needed to halt the internecine warfare being fought between not only American civil and military missions, but between sections within each. We also know that McCone's pessimism was justified. In December 1963, President Johnson sent Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to Saigon for a two-day visit. McNamara reported that ". . . the situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2–3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely to a Communist-controlled state." In his opinion, the new Saigon government was ". . . the greatest source of concern. It is indecisive and drifting." The "second major weakness," McNamara reported, was the Country Team, or *ad hoc* civil-military U.S. committee that was supposed to co-ordinate the American effort (see Chapter 76):

> . . . It lacks leadership, has been poorly informed, and is not working to a common plan. A recent example of confusion has been conflicting USOM [U. S. Operations Mission] and military recommendations both to the Government of Vietnam and to Washington on the size of the military budget. Above all, [Ambassador] Lodge has virtually no official contact with Harkins. Lodge sends in reports with major military implications without showing them to Harkins, and does not show Harkins important incoming traffic. My impression is that Lodge simply does not know how to conduct a coordinated administration. This has of course been stressed to him both by Dean Rusk and myself (and also by John McCone [chief of CIA]), and

6. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

I do not think he is consciously rejecting our advice; he has just operated as a loner all his life and cannot readily change now.

Lodge's newly-designated deputy, David Nes, was with us and seems a highly competent team player. I have stated the situation frankly to him and he has said he would do all he could to constitute what would in effect be an executive committee operating below the level of the Ambassador.

As to the grave reporting weakness, both Defense and CIA must take major steps to improve this, John McCone and I have discussed it and are acting vigorously in our respective spheres.

McNamara also told the President that the situation has ". . . been deteriorating in the countryside since July to a far greater extent than we realize because of our undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting." Infiltration of men and equipment from the North also played a part: ". . . The best guess is that 1000–1500 Viet Cong cadres entered South Vietnam from Laos in the first nine months of 1963." He was also concerned with ". . . the quality of the people we are sending to Vietnam. It seems to have fallen off considerably from the high standards applied in the original selections in 1962. . . ."

From the operational standpoint, he called for reallocation of South Vietnamese forces to challenge VC control in threatened provinces. His other recommendations perhaps unconsciously indicted the U.S.-Vietnamese performance to date:

. . . We also need to have major increases in both military and USOM staffs, to sizes that will give us a reliable, independent U.S. appraisal of the status of operations . . . realistic pacification plans must be prepared, allocating adequate time to secure the remaining government-controlled areas and work out from there.

He also discussed anti-infiltration measures, but noted:

. . . In general, the infiltration problem, while serious and annoying, is a lower priority than the key problems discussed earlier. However, we should do what we can to reduce it.

As for the North, McNamara reported:

. . . Plans for covert action into North Vietnam were prepared as we had requested and were an excellent job. They present a wide variety of sabotage and psychological operations against North Vietnam from which I believe we should aim to select those that provide maximum pressure with minimum risk. . . .

McNamara's report concluded:

. . . My appraisal may be overly pessimistic. Lodge, Harkins, and Minh would probably agree with me on specific points, but feel that January should see significant improvement. We should watch the situation very carefully,

running scared, hoping for the best, but preparing for more forceful moves if the situation does not show early signs of improvement.[7]

Johnson was sufficiently impressed by this report to order significant changes in reporting methods from the field including direct ". . . detailed weekly reports from Ambassador Lodge which pulled no punches in describing problems as well as progress."[8] The President also authorized additional American personnel, both civil and military, for the Saigon missions, as well as covert operations in the North. The latter effort, known as Operation Plan 34A, called for a variety of actions ranging from U-2 flights to commando-type raids designed ". . . to result in substantial destruction, economic loss and harassment"—what the Pentagon called "destructive undertakings."

Two other covert operations complemented Plan 34A. One was an air effort directed by CIA in Laos, where a force of twenty-five to forty T-28 fighter-bombers interdicted Pathet Lao operations. The other consisted of U. S. Navy destroyer operations in the Gulf of Tonkin. Code-named DeSoto patrols, they were mainly designed as a show of force, but

> . . . the destroyers collected the kind of intelligence on North Vietnamese warning radars and coastal defenses that would be useful to 34A raiding parties.[9]

Along with other Administration officials, McNamara was apparently convinced from radio intercepts ". . . that Hanoi controlled and directed the Vietcong." McNamara recommended Plan 34A to the President in the hope that ". . . progressively escalating pressure from the clandestine attacks might eventually force Hanoi to order the Vietcong guerrillas to halt their insurrections." The President accepted the plan, which went into effect in February 1964.

Two important bodies remained unimpressed with the covert effort. The first was the intelligence community in general, which held that raids would not affect NLF operations in the South. The JCS also dissented, but for rather different reasons. A JCS memorandum signed by the chairman, General Maxwell Taylor, and submitted to McNamara in late January 1964, cited President Johnson's resolve ". . . to ensure victory over the externally directed and supported communist insurgency in South Vietnam." In JCS minds,

> . . . our fortunes in South Vietnam are an accurate barometer of our fortunes in all of Southeast Asia. It is our view that if the U.S. program succeeds in South Vietnam it will go far towards stabilizing the total Southeast Asia situation. Conversely, a loss of South Vietnam to the communists will

7. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 271–74); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
8. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
9. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 240).

presage an early erosion of the remainder of our position in that subcontinent.

This was the old domino theory, but to it was now added a prestige factor that would eventually overtake strategic factors originally cited. The memorandum continued:

. . . In a broader sense, the failure of our programs in South Vietnam would have heavy influence on the judgments of Burma, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of the Philippines with respect to U.S. durability, resolution, and trustworthiness. Finally, this being the first real test of our determination to defeat the communist wars of national liberation formula, it is not unreasonable to conclude that there would be a corresponding unfavorable effect upon our image in Africa and in Latin America.

To defeat insurgency in South Vietnam, Taylor and JCS believed, demanded a predominantly military effort, carried out by an American military commander authorized to widen the war:

. . . In adverting to actions outside of South Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff are aware that the focus of the counter-insurgency battle lies in South Vietnam itself, and that the war must certainly be fought and won primarily in the minds of the Vietnamese people. At the same time, the aid now coming to the Viet Cong from outside the country in men, resources, advice, and direction is sufficiently great in the aggregate to be significant—both as help and as encouragement to the Viet Cong. It is our conviction that if support of the insurgency from outside South Vietnam in terms of operational direction, personnel, and material were stopped completely, the character of the war in South Vietnam would be substantially and favorably altered. Because of this conviction, we are wholly in favor of executing the covert actions against North Vietnam which you [McNamara] have recently proposed to the President. We believe, however, that it would be idle to conclude that these efforts will have a decisive effect on the communist determination to support the insurgency; and it is our view that we must therefore be prepared fully to undertake a much higher level of activity, not only for its beneficial tactical effect, but to make plain our resolution, both to our friends and to our enemies.

A "much higher level of activity" included raids into Laos, bombing the North with South Vietnamese and American aircraft, and committing American troops in sufficient numbers to meet the combat challenge in the South, including any specific response from the North such as invasion in the Korean style.[10]

In large part, this parroted JCS thinking on Laos in 1961 and also bore direct resemblance to the Taylor-Rostow plan of late 1961. It had at least one supporter in State Department. Walt Rostow, who now

10. Ibid. (pp. 274–77).

headed State Department's Policy Planning Council, continued to press his "aggression from the North" thesis, urging punitive action against Hanoi; as he stated in a memorandum to Dean Rusk in February, Ho Chi Minh ". . . has an industrial complex to protect: he is no longer a guerrilla fighter with nothing to lose."[11]

As with earlier plans, the new JCS plan glossed over the danger of escalating local insurgency into thermonuclear war:

> . . . A reversal of [U.S.] attitude and the adoption of a more progressive program would enhance greatly our ability to control the degree to which escalation will occur. It appears probable that the economic and agricultural disappointments suffered by Communist China, plus the current rift with the Soviets, could cause the communists to think twice about undertaking a large-scale military adventure in Southeast Asia.

Whatever the danger, however:

> . . . The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the strategic importance of Vietnam and of Southeast Asia warrants preparations for the actions above and recommend that the substance of this memorandum be discussed with the Secretary of State.[12]

In Saigon, meanwhile, General Nguyen Khanh was trying to rule through a mélange of vice-premiers, a Cabinet, and an enlarged Military Revolutionary Council. His top officials consisted mainly of Dai Viet nationalists, his government, in general, excluding other important nationalist groups and parties.

In March 1964, presumably prodded by American advisers, Khanh announced a Program of Action that included ambitious and bold political, social, economic, and military reforms. In place of Nhu's defunct strategic-hamlet program, Khanh substituted a concept called New Rural Life Hamlets. Theoretically a reversion to Lyautey's tache-d'huile concept of pacification, Khanh's plan called for clearing, consolidating, and defending specific rural areas. Unlike former programs, however, the new effort bowed to NLF success in mobilizing from the inside. Integral to it were Advance People's Action Groups:

> . . . Directed by Vietnamese after being organized and trained by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, they were, specifically, guerrilla outfits of six men each who, dressed in black pajamas, like those worn by the Vietcong, surreptitiously entered a Vietcong-controlled hamlet, usually at night, engaged in direct armed counterinsurgency action against the Communists; and followed this up, once the Vietcong were dispersed, by staying on the scene and helping the people harvest their rice and repair whatever damage had been done.[13]

11. Ibid. (p. 241).
12. Ibid. (p. 277).
13. Robert Shaplen, *The Road from War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

By going after what one counterinsurgency expert, Richard Clutterbuck, aptly terms "the man with the knife," the groups were attacking the fundamental fear that allowed Communist agitation/propaganda agents to organize the infrastructure essential to guerrilla operations. Once covert groups had removed Viet Cong agents, political and social action would consolidate the gain, new areas would be cleared and held . . . and so on until South Vietnam lived free of Viet Cong. To aid the process, Khanh wanted the Civil Guard brought up to strength, some eighty thousand, and joined to the regular army; the Self-Defense Corps would also be brought up to its authorized strength, seventy-two thousand. Specific land reforms would win over peasant groups, while "national mobilization" would eliminate inequities in conscription laws.[14]

To some American observers, Khanh appeared determined to lead South Vietnam out of chaos created by Diem and subsequent junta governments. Secretary of Defense McNamara, always on the lookout for a strong man, seemed particularly impressed. Reporting on still another trip to Saigon, which he made with General Taylor in mid-March 1964, McNamara, although upset at the general situation,

> . . . found many reasons for encouragement in the performance of the Khanh Government to date. Although its top layer is thin, it is highly responsive to U.S. advice, and with a good grasp of the basic elements of rooting out the Viet Cong. . . .

McNamara advised Johnson to instruct appropriate government agencies:

> . . . To make it clear that we are prepared to furnish assistance and support to South Vietnam for as long as it takes to bring the insurgency under control. . . . To make it clear that we fully support the Khanh government and are opposed to further coups. . . .[15]

The United States was already contributing directly $500 million a year to South Vietnam, not counting the cost of supporting her own military and civil units operating there; she now added another $50 million a year.[16]

Alas, the new strong man could not lift the weight of government. Not only did he fail to fuse dissident political and religious elements into a governing whole, but he also fell victim to a self-made legacy of quarreling, jealous, and ambitious generals, not to mention veteran nationalist politicians. In protecting his flanks of power, he slowed and ultimately doomed forward movement.

While Khanh was forming a government, announcing grandiose

14. Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra;* see also McNamara's report, *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 271–74).
15. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 277–83).
16. Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra.*

plans and projects, and attempting to consolidate his power, the NLF-PRP became increasingly aggressive. Hanoi later distributed a balance sheet which stated:

> . . . From the tactics of 1963, which consisted of taking the initiative in attacking and routing the enemy's Southern forces in entire sections, the Army of Liberation passed in 1964 to the tactic of conducting an uninterrupted offensive against the enemy, and of destroying a great number of his units on battalion and company level, and depriving him of all weapons. . . .
>
> Efforts to kill Americans have developed with great vigor and on a large scale in all regions, and particularly in Saigon proper. . . .[17]

Black-clad agit-prop teams proclaimed Khanh another American lackey in the Diem tradition. They also made capital propaganda out of Khanh's attempts to cut losses by abandoning weak and isolated strategic hamlets. As government forces withdrew, Viet Cong forces advanced, the process accompanied by Communist cries of the inevitability of socialist progress. At the same time, Viet Cong cadres continued, as did outright VC attacks. ARVN remained the VC's major supply depot, contributing an average eight hundred weapons per month![18]

The South Vietnamese army seemed no more able under Khanh's aegis to halt the rot than previously. Although Khanh promised improvements such as a much needed pay raise, many internal abuses remained: political rather than professional commanders and staff officers, poor staff work, non-integrated field operations, corruption and inefficiency at all levels. In the spring of 1964, at a formal briefing in Saigon, an American adviser,

> . . . a colonel with three years' experience in the field and famous for his frankness, condemned the whole Vietnamese military and administrative structure as being riddled with "second-raters" who, he said, had no ability for "management of the war" and who went about their business in the manner of "the blind leading the blind." In decrying "politics, corruption, and nepotism" at the top, and sheer incompetence or laziness at the middle and lower levels, the colonel reminded the Vietnamese that their Vietcong antagonists had become stronger and better in the last three years not only because they had better weapons, including such new things as electrically detonated anti-personnel and vehicular mines, but also because they went about their work of winning the war with dedicated ardor "twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, convinced that their cause is right."[19]

17. Lacouture, op. cit.

18. Ibid.: ". . . Between January 1 and October 1, 1964, the Viet Cong took nine thousand arms from government troops, that is an average of eight hundred per month between January and July, and close to fifteen hundred per month between July and October."

19. Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra.*

The deteriorating situation continued to cause deepest concern in Washington. Despite McNamara's guarded enthusiasm for Khanh, he and Taylor reported upon their return from Saigon in mid-March 1964 that ". . . the situation has unquestionably been growing worse." About 40 per cent of the countryside was ". . . under Viet Cong control or predominant influence." Civil and military morale was low, ARVN and para-military desertion rates high, draft-dodging extensive.[20]

The JCS memo of late January previously referred to seems to have influenced the Secretary of Defense toward a more aggressive course. In his report to the President of mid-March, he recited the domino theory and pointed to the "very modest 'covert' program" against the North—". . . a program so limited that it is unlikely to have any significant effect." Although deeming it vital ". . . that we continue to take every reasonable measure to assure success in South Vietnam," McNamara recommended contingency plans capable of putting ". . . new and significant pressures upon North Vietnam." These included limited ARVN incursions into Laos and Cambodia as well as "retaliatory bombing strikes" of the North by South Vietnamese and American planes. At the same time, however, McNamara cautioned:

> . . . There were and are sound reasons for the limits imposed by present policy—the South Vietnamese must win their own fight; U.S. intervention on a larger scale, and/or GVN actions against the North, would disturb key allies and other nations; etc. In any case, it is vital that we continue to take every reasonable measure to assure success in South Vietnam. The policy choice is not an "either/or" between this course of action and possible pressures against the North; the former is essential without regard to our decision with respect to the latter. The latter can, at best, only reinforce the former.[21]

President Johnson accepted the bulk of McNamara's recommendations, and directed planning to ". . . proceed energetically." Despite JCS objections, Johnson agreed that it was too early to take overt military action against the North.[22] As he cabled Ambassador Lodge in late March, ". . . the immediate and essential task is to strengthen the southern base . . . for possible later action. There is additional international reason for avoiding immediate overt action in that we expect a showdown between the Chinese and Soviet Communist parties soon

20. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 279); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

21. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 278–83).

22. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra:* Chief of CIA John McCone, according to Johnson, also wished to escalate the action, believing that McNamara's measures were ". . . too little, too late."

and action against the North will be more practicable after than before a showdown. . . ."[23]

Johnson's other immediate concern was the increasing indigenous sentiment in Saigon for a neutralist settlement in form of a coalition government with the NLF, a solution that he and his advisers deemed tantamount to Communist victory, in view of Khanh's fragile government. In the same cable to Lodge, the President instructed:

> . . . It ought to be possible to explain in Saigon that your mission is precisely for the purpose of knocking the idea of neutralization wherever it rears its ugly head, and on this point I think nothing is more important than to stop neutralist talk wherever we can by whatever means we can.[24]

Lodge, meanwhile, had been touting a carrot-and-stick plan as ingenious as it was impractical. This involved

> . . . sending a secret non-American envoy to Hanoi with an offer of economic aid, such as food imports to relieve the rice shortages in North Vietnam, in return for calling off the Vietcong. If the North Vietnamese did not respond favorably, the stick—unpublicized and unacknowledged air strikes, apparently with unmarked planes—would be applied until they did.[25]

Various courses of action were discussed at a high-level strategy meeting of American officials in late April in Saigon. In general, two schools of thought were at work: a go-slow and a go-fast. The major check on go-fast escalation, aside from American public opinion, was lack of adequate information ". . . concerning the nature and magnitude" of infiltration from the North. Its appeal, however, to the bulk of the President's top advisers, was only too obvious. In mid-April, the JCS approved a plan submitted by Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) Admiral Harry Felt:

> . . . It tabulated how many planes and what bomb tonnages would be required for each phase of the strikes, listed the targets in North Vietnam with damage to be achieved, and programed the necessary positioning of air forces for the raids. A follow-up operation plan, designated 32-64, calculated the possible reactions of China and North Vietnam and the American ground forces that might be necessary to meet them.[26]

At the same time, William Bundy, who headed Intelligence Security Affairs—a sort of private State Department in the Department of Defense—was preparing a sixteen-point "scenario" for escalation. Bundy and Rusk had questioned a tacit assumption that the insurgency's con-

23. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 285–86); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra,* whose stated reason later became the necessity to avoid massive Communist intervention.

24. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 285–86).

25. Ibid. (p. 244).

26. Ibid. (p. 247).

tinuing success hinged on aid from the North. Rusk sent a former New York *Times* correspondent, William Jorden, to Saigon to assemble available data. What became known as the Jorden Report apparently convinced Rusk and Bundy that sufficient infiltration existed to justify attacks against the North—sufficient, at least, to justify such attacks to the American public. In late May, Bundy drafted a resolution for Congress that would free the President's military hand, a resolution we shall examine shortly.[27]

But, also in May, Pathet Lao offensives in Laos heated up that situation and caused the Administration to commit American navy and air force planes to low-level reconnaissance flights. Although this crisis blew over, continuing deterioration in South Vietnam did nothing to dampen hawk enthusiasm. By early June, Ambassador Lodge, theretofore moderate, began arguing for bombing the North. A Pentagon analyst later wrote:

> . . . In answer to Secretary Rusk's query about South Vietnamese popular attitudes, which supported Hanoi's revolutionary aims, the Ambassador stated his conviction that most support for the VC would fade as soon as some "counterterrorism measures" were begun against the D.R.V. [North Vietnam].

According to Admiral Felt, who was present, Lodge predicted that ". . . a selective bombing campaign against military targets in the North" would ". . . bolster morale and give the population in the South a feeling of unity."[28]

The Honolulu meeting resembled those portentous 1961 meetings when Kennedy and his advisers discussed sending American troops into Laos. In 1964, in discussing necessity for a Congressional resolution prior to escalating military action, McNamara noted that it might be necessary ". . . to deploy as many as seven [U.S.] divisions," while Rusk

> . . . noted that some of the military requirements might involve the calling up of reserves, always a touchy Congressional issue. He also stated that public opinion on our Southeast Asia policy was badly divided in the United States at the moment and that, therefore, the President needed an affirmation of support.

According to William Bundy's memorandum:

> . . . General Taylor noted that there was a danger of reasoning ourselves into inaction. From a military point of view, he said the U.S. could function in Southeast Asia about as well as anywhere in the world except Cuba.

27. Ibid. (p. 286).
28. Ibid. (pp. 250–51).

Although the assembled notables advised President Johnson to delay overt action in order to gain time ". . . to refine our plans and estimates,"

. . . Mr. [William] Bundy emphasized the need for an "urgent" public relations campaign at home to "get at the basic doubts of the value of Southeast Asia and the importance of our stake there."[29]

At a subsequent JCS meeting, enemy reaction to escalation was discussed. Admiral Felt asked for the option to use nuclear weapons, ". . . as had been assumed under various plans":

. . . Secretary McNamara then went on to say that the possibility of major ground action also led to a serious question of having to use nuclear weapons at some point. Admiral Felt responded emphatically that there was no possible way to hold off the Communists on the ground without the use of tactical nuclear weapons.[30]

During this crucial period, President Johnson continued to follow a wait-and-see policy, but one that held aggressive overtones. He permitted American aircraft to engage in combat operations in Laos; he evidently authorized official leaks to emphasize the Administration's determination ". . . to support its allies and uphold its treaty commitments in Southeast Asia"; he authorized military preparations for troop movements to the area.

But doubt apparently entered his mind, at least to the extent that he formally asked the CIA: ". . . Would the rest of Southeast Asia necessarily fall if Laos and South Viet-Nam came under North Vietnamese control?" Neil Sheehan, who studied these particular highly classified documents, later wrote that the CIA replied on June 9:

. . . With the possible exception of Cambodia, it is likely that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to Communism as a result of the fall of Laos and South Vietnam. Furthermore, a continuation of the spread of Communism in the area would not be inexorable, and any spread which did occur would take time—time in which the total situation might change in any number of ways unfavorable to the Communist cause.

. . . The C.I.A. analysis [Sheehan wrote] conceded that the loss of South Vietnam and Laos "would be profoundly damaging to the U.S. position in the Far East" and would raise the prestige of China "as a leader of world Communism" at the expense of a more moderate Soviet Union. But the analysis argued that so long as the United States could retain its island bases, such as those in Okinawa, Guam, the Philippines and Japan, it could wield enough military power in Asia to deter China and North Vietnam from overt military aggression against Southeast Asia in general.

Even in the "worst case," if South Vietnam and Laos were to fall through

29. Ibid. (p. 252).
30. *The Sunday Times* (London), June 27, 1971.

"a clear-cut Communist victory," the United States would still retain some leverage to affect the final outcome in Southeast Asia, according to the analysis.

It said that "the extent to which individual countries would move away from the U.S. towards the Communists would be significantly affected by the substance and manner of U.S. policy in the period following the loss of Laos and South Vietnam."[31]

The CIA analysis said, in effect, that South Vietnam was a strategic convenience, *not* a strategic necessity. If ever a green light flashed for a President and his advisers to accept facts, re-examine objectives, reform priorities, and realign effort—to change from a collision course to a crafty and intelligent course designed to attain national aims at a reasonable cost—it was in June 1964. We don't know Johnson's reaction to this reply prepared by the nation's top intelligence experts. Judging by subsequent events, he was unimpressed; at least, he appears not to have questioned sharply those spurious and dangerous postulates pleaded by those around him.

Instead, in mid-June, he sent a Canadian official, Mr. Blair Seaborn, on a secret visit to Hanoi in line with Ambassador Lodge's senseless carrot-and-stick approach. How much carrot Seaborn offered Premier Pham Van Dong, we don't know. In Neil Sheehan's words,

> . . . The [Pentagon] analyst says Mr. Seaborn stressed to Premier Dong that while the United States' ambition in Southeast Asia was limited and its intentions "essentially peaceful," its patience was not limitless. The United States was fully aware of the degree to which Hanoi controlled the Vietcong, Mr. Seaborn said, and "in the event of escalation the greatest devastation would of course result for the D.R.V. [North Vietnam] itself."
>
> The North Vietnamese Premier, the study relates, "fully understood the seriousness and import of the warning conveyed by Seaborn."[32]

It was a dangerous time to present an ultimatum in Hanoi, where moderate voices were having a difficult time surmounting clamor raised by such hawks as Vo Nguyen Giap, Nguyen Chi Thanh, and the premier himself. Viet Cong gains made it seem only a matter of time until the Saigon government collapsed. An ultimatum would have enjoyed a more prosperous reception had the Viet Cong been losing ground. Two German analysts writing of this period are probably correct in concluding that Chinese and North Vietnamese Communist leaders were convinced ". . . that the nuclear deterrent is not effective in South Asia and that the revolutionary war they are waging carries no risks and because of the superior morale and better organization of the Communist guer-

31. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 254).

32. Ibid. (p. 256); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra:* ". . . all he [Seaborn] heard from Hanoi's leaders was propaganda repeated many times since."

rilla forces can be waged without risk and brought to a victorious conclusion."[33] Had the NLF been contained or, better, dispersed and falling back, then Hanoi hawks would have had to look a bit harder at the situation. As it was, with a minimum of investment on the part of the North, a major political goal was about to be realized.

Hoping to forestall more-overt action, at least until after the presidential election, Johnson continued to approve massive doses of American aid to the South. In June, he recalled Ambassador Lodge, who had never quite made "the team" and now wanted to campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. He replaced Lodge with a powerful "team": General Maxwell Taylor as ambassador and U. Alexis Johnson, a hawkish career diplomat, as deputy ambassador—appointments that confirmed priority of the military over the political role. In July 1964, he turned his back on Hanoi and, sounding remarkably like Lloyd George voicing his dilemma in Ireland (see Chapter 21, Volume I), declared: ". . . If those practising terror and ambush will simply honor their existing agreements, there could easily be peace in Southeast Asia immediately. But we do not believe in conferences called to ratify terror."[34] On the military side, General William Westmoreland already had replaced General Harkins; Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp would soon replace Admiral Harry Felt as CINCPAC. A corps of American military and civil specialists descended on Saigon to help Khanh realize his Program of Action.

Khanh's program unfortunately failed to get off the ground. Although a few reforms emerged and some pacification progress resulted in a few provinces, Khanh never tamed the political and social forces that had brought down Diem and the junta.

Nor did an influx of American advisers serve him as well as Washington had hoped. At Taylor's insistence, South Vietnamese officials directly controlled materials provided by American aid, which resulted in two major disasters: First, relatively little reached the essential target, the peasants, whose co-operation was vital to neutralizing VC operations; and second, in siphoning off and selling American arms, equipment, and material to make personal fortunes, GVN officials and ARVN officers (frequently the same) furnished the enemy with more equip-

33. Ernst Kun and Joseph Kun, "North Vietnam's Doctrine," *Survival,* The International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, February 1965. The authors do not seem to me, however, to prove their contention that ". . . for Peking and Hanoi the whole Chinese Communist conception of world revolution is at stake."

34. Adam Roberts, "Lessons of Geneva 1954," *The Times* (London), April 23, 1968. Reprinted in *Survival,* June 1968; in 1921, David Lloyd George complained, ". . . I recognize that force is itself no remedy, and that reason and goodwill alone can lead us to the final goal. But to abandon the use of force today would be to surrender alike to violence, crime and separation, and that I am not prepared to do."

ment than was arriving from Hanoi. Looking at the ships daily arriving in the South, Ho Chi Minh might well have thought of Xerxes:

> . . . While he was staying at Abydos, he saw some corn-ships, which were passing through the Hellespont from the Euxine, on their way to Egina and the Peloponnese. His attendants, hearing that they were the enemy's were ready to capture them, and looked to see when Xerxes would give the signal. He, however, merely asked, "Whither the ships were bound?" and when they answered, "For thy foes, master, with corn on board." "We too are bound thither," he rejoined, "laden, among other things, with corn. What harm is it, if they carry our provisions for us?"[35]

From Taylor on down, the Americans found themselves enmeshed in corruption and intrigue that made most thrillers read like nursery stories. Lacking linguistic ability, not to mention an understanding of insurgency warfare, they floundered while attempting to repair inadequate performance by quantitative methods: American agencies quickly proliferated into numerous bureaucratic empires staffed by highly paid civil servants who, like war lords of old, too often fought each other instead of the common enemy. To add to Taylor's problems, as the internal situation worsened during summer of 1964—at this time the NLF-PRP correctly claimed to control much of South Vietnam—Khanh sought to save his neck by carrying the war into North Vietnam, a "March North" propaganda campaign squelched only with difficulty by Taylor.

NLF-PRP gains during the summer scarcely calmed Administration hawks. Although Johnson had forbidden overt action, covert operations involving ". . . trained sabotage teams, electronic intelligence-gathering equipment, C-123 transports for the airdrops and fast PT boats for the coastal raids" mounted in scope and intensity.[36] At the end of July, one of MACV's South Vietnamese naval commando teams raided two North Vietnamese islands. Two days later, enemy patrol boats searching the area attacked a DeSoto patrol destroyer, USS *Maddox*. Her guns and American carrier planes knocked out three of the boats, and *Maddox* sailed South. The next day, President Johnson ordered *Maddox* and another destroyer back North along with air cover[37]—gunboat diplomacy that, considering the circumstances, was provocative enough. But two other events fired the explosive situation: On August 1 and 2, T-28 planes bombed North Vietnamese villages on the Laotian border; and on the night of August 3, MACV launched two more covert attacks by South Vietnamese-manned PT boats. On the following night, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the two American patrol destroy-

35. Herodotus, op. cit.
36. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 259).
37. Ibid.; see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*) and (*Public Papers 1963–1964*).

ers.[38] Washington reacted promptly. Planes from two U.S. aircraft carriers struck DRV naval installations along a hundred miles of coast. At the same time, President Johnson ordered previously alerted aircraft squadrons to South Vietnam, as called for in JCS strike plans; he also alerted army and marine ground forces for deployment against North Vietnamese or Chinese reaction to the raids. In announcing these momentous events that night on television, the President assured his audience, ". . . we still seek no wider war."

This might have been so, but Johnson nonetheless wanted authority to wage wider war if necessary. Bundy's resolution was now dusted off, altered slightly, and introduced into Congress.[39] In secret and hastily held Congressional hearings, Robert McNamara threw up a verbal dust screen to inquisitive senators. To Senator Wayne Morse, who had learned of the August 3 raids and suggested that McNamara was aware of them and that the American navy had been involved, he replied:

> . . . First, our Navy played absolutely no part in, was not associated with, was not aware of, any South Vietnamese actions, if there were any. . . .
>
> I did not have knowledge at the time of the attack on the island. There is no connection between this patrol and any action by South Vietnam.

The Secretary went on to explain that whatever action had occurred was part of an anti-infiltration program run by a South Vietnamese fleet of junks for some years. He did not explain that the junk patrols had nothing to do with Plan 34A operations, nor did he confide the fact of the August 3 raids, much less that the destroyer skippers had been notified. Neither did he explain the air action against North Vietnamese border villages.[40]

Partly on the basis of this and presumably other false, distorted, and incomplete testimony from top American officials, an alarmed and emotional Congress passed the Southeast Asia resolution, which authorized the President ". . . to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast

38. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 305); a number of qualified observers, including a senior marine intelligence officer, have argued that it is doubtful if the North Vietnamese attacks ever occurred. While I do not wish to argue the case here, I would suggest that we have not heard the end of this episode. (Confidential information in the author's files.)

39. Ibid. (p. 264); see also Johnson (*Public Papers 1963–1964*), *supra;* William P. Bundy, "The Path to Vietnam," *Survival,* October 1967. On August 15, 1967, Mr. Bundy offered this version to a National Student Association audience: ". . . [The Tonkin Gulf action] led President Johnson to seek, and the Congress to approve overwhelmingly on 7 August, 1964, a resolution—drafted in collaboration with Congressional leaders . . ."; see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra,* who later wrote that Rusk and George Ball ". . . in consultation with the congressional leaders of both parties" had worked out the resolution during Johnson's one-day absence from Washington.

40. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 265–66).

Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom." Although some critics, including two senators, dissented on the grounds that DRV attacks were shrouded in mystery and that the resolution partially abrogated Congressional responsibility for placing the nation in war, the bulk of American people seemed to accept it with equanimity and trust—even with pride.

Chapter 80

General Taylor reports from Saigon • Seaborn's second mission to Hanoi • William Bundy's program of escalation • Admiral Sharp's recommendations • Taylor's operational plans • Pentagon voices • Johnson: ". . . we still seek no wider war" • September meeting in the White House • Enemy estimate of the situation • Douglas Pike's analysis • Bias of the insurgency • Enemy strategic adjustments • Edward Lansdale's analysis • The Bien Hoa attack • John McNaughton's adjusted aims • "Fast full squeeze" and "hot-blood actions" • Rostow on power • George Ball's doubts • Taylor's pessimism • The intelligence panel dissents • Khanh's dictatorship • Dissent in Saigon • Tran Van Minh takes over

CONGRESSMEN AND CITIZENS might have been upset had they known of behind-the-scenes communications shortly after American bombs fell on North Vietnam.

The situation already had alarmed Premier Nikita Khrushchev and the Kremlin sufficiently to involve them in the imbroglio. Professor Donald Zagoria later wrote:

> . . . Just after the Tonkin Gulf incident, Hanoi, with apparent Soviet encouragement, relayed a message to Washington through U.N. Secretary-General U Thant, who, in turn, dispatched it to Washington through Adlai Stevenson, then U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. The message continued Ho Chi Minh's response to U Thant's suggestion of a private meeting with U.S. envoys. Thant, after hearing from Ho, arranged for such a meeting at an estate outside Rangoon. Washington, however, refused to participate and reportedly also rebuffed a second invitation to meet with Ho.[1]

1. Zagoria, op. cit.; see also New York *Times*, December 6, 1966; Mario Rossi, "U Thant and Vietnam: The Untold Story," *The New York Review of Books*, November 17, 1966.

The action had also raised international pressures for a Geneva-style conference on the Laotian problem, a conference that undoubtedly would have considered the Vietnam situation as well. On August 7, Secretary of State Rusk queried various U.S. embassies as to the desirability of such a conference. Two days later, Ambassador Taylor replied from Saigon:

> . . . Rush to conference table would serve to confirm to Chicoms [Chinese Communists] that U.S. retaliation for destroyer attacks was transient phenomenon and that firm Chicom response in form of commitment to defend NVN [North Vietnam] has given U.S. "paper tiger" second thoughts. . . .
> Intensified pressures for Geneva-type conference . . . would appear to us to be coming almost entirely from those who are opposed to U.S. policy objectives in [Southeast Asia] (except possibly UK [Great Britain] which seems prepared to jump on band wagon).[2]

Nor would Congress and the American public have been relieved to know of a second secret visit by Mr. Seaborn to Hanoi on August 10. This time, Johnson's message, drafted by John McNaughton and delivered to Premier Pham Van Dong, apparently offered nothing of carrot and plenty of stick. It said, in effect, you have seen what we can do; now if you don't stop your nonsense and call off your offensives in Laos and South Vietnam, we are going to clobber you. According to the Pentagon report, Mr. Seaborn noted that Pham Van Dong, in August as in June,

> . . . showed himself utterly unintimidated and calmly resolved to pursue the course upon which the DRV was embarked to what he confidently expected would be its successful conclusion.[3]

All this might have upset congressmen and citizens, but worse was to come: While Mr. Seaborn was speaking to Premier Pham Van Dong, Ambassador Taylor was preparing a detailed report for Secretary McNamara and the JCS. Taylor had canvassed ". . . responsible U.S. advisers and observers" throughout South Vietnam on a score of pertinent questions:

> . . . In broad terms, the canvass results are surprisingly optimistic at the operational levels of both the civil and military organizations. The feeling of optimism exceeds that of most senior U.S. officials in Saigon. Future reports should determine who is right.

Taylor reported that the Khanh government

> . . . is ineffective, beset by inexperienced ministers who are jealous and suspicious of each other.

2. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 346).
3. Ibid. (pp. 268–69 and 289 ff.); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

Khanh does not have confidence or trust in most of his ministers and is not able to form them into a group with a common loyalty and purpose.

Taylor estimated ". . . that Khanh has a 50/50 chance of lasting out the year," but there is ". . . no one in sight to replace Khanh." Accordingly, we must ". . . do everything possible to bolster the Khanh Government." Among other courses of action, the American Government must ". . . be prepared to implement contingency plans against North Vietnam with optimum readiness by January 1, 1965."[4]

At the same time, William Bundy, now working in the State Department, where he replaced Roger Hilsman as Undersecretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, was drawing up an action memorandum calling for

. . . a combination of military pressures and some form of communication under which Hanoi (and Peiping) eventually accept the idea of getting out. Negotiation without continued pressure, indeed without continued military action, will not achieve our objectives in the foreseeable future. . . .

Bundy and McNaughton agreed with Taylor that the United States must not consent to an international conference on Vietnam, at least until North Vietnam was "hurting" from retaliatory pressures.[5] Bundy's program called for "military silence" for the rest of August, then for "limited pressures," both covert and overt, until the new year, then "more serious pressures" such as interdicting ". . . infiltration routes and facilities" leading up to bombing oil depots, bridges, and railroads and mining Haiphong harbor.[6]

Flashed to CINCPAC for comment, this memorandum drew a predictable response. The effect of recent American actions, Admiral Sharp replied on August 17,

. . . was to interrupt the continually improving Communist posture, catch the imagination of the Southeast Asian peoples, provide some lift to morale, however temporary, and force CHICOM/DRV [China/North Vietnam] assessment or reassessment of U.S. intentions. But these were only steps along the way. What we have not done and must do is make plain to Hanoi and Peiping the cost of pursuing their current objectives and impeding ours. . . .

"Military silence" for the rest of August, Sharp argued,

. . . is not in consonance with desire to get the message to Hanoi and Peiping. Pierce Arrow [Tonkin bombing attacks] showed both force and restraint. Further demonstration of restraint alone could easily be interpreted as period of second thoughts about Pierce Arrow and events leading thereto as well as sign of weakness and lack of resolve. . . .

4. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 291–94).
5. Ibid. (p. 295).
6. Ibid. (pp. 294–98).

Sharp agreed

. . . that we make clear to all that military pressure will continue until we achieve our objectives. Our actions must keep the Communists apprehensive of what further steps we will take if they continue their aggression. In this regard, we have already taken the large initial step of putting U.S. combat forces into Southeast Asia. We must maintain this posture; to reduce it would have a dangerous impact on the morale and will of all people in Southeast Asia. And we must face up to the fact that these forces will be deployed for some time and to their need for protection from ground or air attack. RVN [South Vietnam] cannot provide necessary ground security without degraduation of the counterinsurgency effort and has little air defense capability. A conference to include Vietnam, before we have overcome the insurgency, would lose U.S. our allies in Southeast Asia and represent a defeat for the United States.

Sharp next got to the nub of his and Saigon mission's desires:

. . . In considering more serious pressures, we must recognize that immediate action is required to protect our present heavy military investment in RVN. We have introduced large amounts of expensive equipment into RVN and a successful attack against Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, Da Nang, or an installation such as a radar or communication site would be a serious psychological defeat for U.S. MACV reports that [sic] inability of GVN to provide requisite degree of security and therefore we must rely on U.S. troops . . . consideration should [also] be given to creating a U.S. base in RVN [to] provide one more indication of our intent to remain in S.E. Asia until our objectives are achieved. . . . Such a base should be accessible by air and sea, possessed of well developed facilities and installations, and located in an area from which U.S. operations could be launched effectively. Da Nang meets these criteria. . . .

Sharp concluded that

. . . our actions of August 5 have created a momentum which can lead to the attainment of our objectives in S.E. Asia. We have declared ourselves forcefully both by overt acts and by the clear readiness to do more. It is most important that we not lose this momentum.[7]

Sharp's recommendations introduced a sinister note into the proceedings. The general Administration view at this time, at least as outlined in a joint State and Defense departments publication, did not call for committing American combat troops, and for good reasons:

. . . The military problem facing the armed forces of South Viet Nam at this time is not primarily one of manpower. Basically it is a problem of acquiring training, equipment, skills, and organization suited to combating

7. Ibid. (pp. 298–300).

the type of aggression that menaces their country. Our assistance is designed to supply these requirements.

The Viet Cong use terrorism and armed attack as well as propaganda. The government forces must respond decisively on all appropriate levels, tasks that can best be handled by Vietnamese. U.S. combat units would face several obvious disadvantages in a guerrilla war situation of this type in which knowledge of terrain, language, and local customs is especially important. In addition, their introduction would provide ammunition for Communist propaganda which falsely proclaims that the United States is conducting a "white man's war" against Asians.[8]

Some military hawks agreed with this altogether-sound analysis. On August 18, General Taylor, in Saigon, cabled a reappraisal of the situation that called for a carefully limited commitment of ground troops. He agreed with the "apparent assumption" of the State Department

. . . that the present in-country pacification plan is not enough in itself to maintain national morale or to offer reasonable hope of eventual success. Something must be added in the coming months.

His cable cited four objectives:

. . . The first and most important objective is to gain time for the Khanh government to develop a certain stability and to give some firm evidence of viability. . . . A second objective in this period is the maintenance of morale in South Viet Nam particularly within the Khanh Government. . . . Thirdly while gaining time for Khanh, we must be able to hold the DRV in check and restrain a further buildup of Viet Cong strength by way of infiltration from the North. Finally, throughout this period, we should be developing a posture of maximum readiness for a deliberate escalation of pressure against North Viet Nam, using January 1, 1965 as a target D-Day. . . .[9]

To accomplish these objectives, the mission recommended a three-part general course of action:

. . . the first, a series of actions directed at the Khanh government; the second, actions directed at the Hanoi Government; the third, following a pause of some duration, initiation of an orchestrated air attack against North Viet Nam.[10]

Specifically, Taylor nominated two operational plans. The first, a go-slow plan—U-2 overflights of North Vietnam, resumption of 34A coastal raids and DeSoto destroyer patrols, and air and ground strikes

8. Department of State Publication 7724 (Department of Defense, Gen.-8), *Viet Nam: The Struggle for Freedom* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964).
9. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 349–52).
10. Ibid.

against infiltration routes in Laos—which the United States would implement in return for Khanh's promise ". . . to stabilize his government and make some progress in cleaning up his operational backyard." This, Plan A, called for a specific "precautionary military readiness": ". . . Hawk [anti-aircraft] units to Da Nang and Saigon, landing a Marine force at Da Nang for defense of the airfield and beefing up MACV's support base." Course B, a go-fast plan, would ask ". . . virtually nothing from the Khanh Government, primarily because it is assumed that little can be expected from it. It avoids the consequence of the sudden collapse of the Khanh Government and gets underway with minimum delay the punitive actions against Hanoi. Thus, it lessens the chance of an interruption of the program by an international demand for negotiation by presenting a fait accompli to international critics." Taylor added, however,

> . . . it increases the likelihood of U.S. involvement in ground action since Khanh will have almost no available ground forces which can be released from pacification employment to mobile resistance of DRV attacks.

Taylor recommended adopting Course A, ". . . while maintaining readiness to shift to Course of Action B."[11]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff duly considered this appraisal. Echoing Admiral Sharp's earlier message, the JCS, in a memorandum to McNamara on August 26, showed a preference for Taylor's Course B: ". . . an accelerated program of action with respect to the DRV is essential to prevent a complete collapse of the U.S. position in Southeast Asia." They approved various pressures, covert and overt, as part of an escalating program of action. Holding that ". . . more direct and forceful actions" would be required, the memorandum went on:

> . . . We should therefore maintain our prompt readiness to execute a range of selected responses, tailored to the developing circumstances and reflecting the principles in the Gulf of Tonkin actions, that such counteroperations will result in clear military disadvantage to the DRV.[12]

These and other top-secret messages stood in stark contrast to President Johnson's ". . . we still seek no wider war" theme, which he was laboring against his Republican opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater, who was calling for all-out air strikes against North Vietnam. In late August, Johnson told a crowd at an outdoor barbecue in Texas:

> . . . I have had advice to load our planes with bombs and to drop them on certain areas that I think would enlarge the war and escalate the war, and result in our committing a good many American boys to fighting a war that I think ought to be fought by the boys of Asia to help protect their own land.

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid. (pp. 354–55).

Although the American presence in Vietnam had cost fewer than two hundred lives, ". . . we think it better to lose 200 than to lose 200,000. For that reason we have tried very carefully to restrain ourselves and not to enlarge the war."[13]

While Johnson was soothing Texas constituents, one of his top officials, John McNaughton, in the Pentagon, was working on still another operational memorandum. Dated September 3, this paper described the seriously deteriorating situation in South Vietnam and spelled out specific Administration objectives:

> . . . to reverse the present downward trend. Failing that, the alternative objective is to emerge from the situation with as good an image as possible in U.S., allied and enemy eyes.

McNaughton outlined measures for action inside South Vietnam, including consideration of a proposal ". . . to enlarge significantly the U.S. military role in the pacification program . . . e.g., large numbers of U.S. special forces, divisions of regular combat troops, U.S. air, etc., to 'interlard' with or to take over functions of geographical areas from the South Vietnamese armed forces. . . ." Simultaneously, he called for actions against North Vietnam that would cause the enemy to react in such a way as to give the American Government initiative to escalate the action at will.

At best, McNaughton suggested, this program would cause Hanoi to call off its support, thus allowing pacification of the South. It might result in either "explicit settlement" or "tacit settlement":

> . . . If worst comes and South Vietnam disintegrates or their behavior becomes abominable, to "disown" South Vietnam, hopefully leaving the image of "a patient who died despite the extraordinary efforts of a good doctor."

The American Government had to be particularly careful, however, in implementing such a program:

> . . . During the next two months, because of the lack of "rebuttal time" before election to justify particular actions which may be distorted to the U.S. public, we must act with special care—signalling to the DRV that initiatives are being taken, to the GVN that we were behaving energetically despite the restraints of our political season, and to the U.S. public that we are behaving with good purpose and restraint.[14]

Various Administration points of view met on September 7 at the White House, where, after considerable debate, the principals agreed that air attacks against North Vietnam would have to be employed, but on a go-slow, "low-risk" basis, since Khanh's government was too weak to withstand probable enemy reaction to rapid escalation by Amer-

13. Ibid. (p. 311); see also Johnson (*Public Papers*—1964), *supra.*
14. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 355–57).

ican forces. Undoubtedly with the rapidly approaching election in mind, Johnson agreed to this course, but approved various covert actions already recommended, including U.S. air operations—"Yankee Team"—in Laos, as well as resumption of naval patrols in Tonkin Gulf. He also approved a significant increase in expenditures inside South Vietnam, including overdue civil-service raises for the South Vietnamese and other urgent projects.[15]

Hanoi did not react passively to the continuing American counter-offensive. In mid-September, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked DeSoto patrol destroyers, an action that President Johnson let slide. Administration nerves again jangled in October, when Communist China exploded a nuclear pile. Also in October, Saigon observers reported an increase in infiltration, including a GVN claim that ARVN had captured four North Vietnamese soldiers in South Vietnam. The administration, however, was not particularly worried by action from the North. A Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE), of October 9, read in part:

. . . While they [Hanoi and Peiping] will seek to exploit and encourage the deteriorating situation in Saigon, they probably will avoid actions that would in their view unduly increase the chances of a major U.S. response against North Vietnam (DRV) or Communist China. We are almost certain that both Hanoi and Peiping are anxious not to become involved in the kind of war in which the great weight of superior U.S. weaponry could be brought against them. Even if Hanoi and Peiping estimated that the U.S. would not use nuclear weapons against them, they could not be sure of this. . . .

In the face of new U.S. pressures against the DRV further actions by Hanoi and Peiping would be based to a considerable extent on their estimate of U.S. intentions, i.e., whether the U.S. was actually determined to increase its pressures as necessary. Their estimates on this point are probably uncertain, but we believe that fear of provoking severe measures by the U.S. would lead them to temper their responses with a good deal of caution. . . .

If despite Communist efforts, the U.S. attacks continued, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether it was not better to suspend their support of Viet Cong military action rather than suffer the destruction of their major military facilities and the industrial sector of their economy. In the belief that the tide has set almost irreversibly in their favor in South Vietnam, they might calculate that the Viet Cong could stop its military attacks for the time being and renew the insurrection successfully at a later date. Their judgment in this matter might be reinforced by the Chinese Communist concern over becoming involved in a conflict with U.S. air and naval power.[16]

15. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra;* see also *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 357–60).
16. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 419–20).

The American intelligence estimate fell considerably wide of the mark, as did American insistence that the fulcrum of insurgency lay in Hanoi. The NLF-PRP had by no means decided on a specific course of action during these momentous months. Ever since major American intervention, in 1962—the beginning of what the NLF called Special War—the enemy had been debating how to win the war. As Douglas Pike has pointed out, this was a major doctrinal problem that occupied enemy minds during 1963 and 1964.

Three options existed:

> . . . the military ending, or third stage; the social ending, or General Uprising; and the political-infiltration and takeover ending, or the negotiated settlement. All three were doctrinally acceptable. It was abundantly clear from both the nature of the NLF struggle movement and the priorities employed, as well as from NLF documents, that the early doctrinaires believed the General Uprising and not the Giap third-stage military assault would be the culmination of the action programs and deliver final victory. It is true that the Giap thesis of "first political struggle, then mixed political and armed struggle, then armed struggle, and finally again political struggle" continued as an ikon motif; but within this sort of generalized approach there was room for great latitude of interpretation.

Pike's analysis is the more interesting since it was made before the Tet offensive of 1968:

> . . . Among the earlier theorizers armed struggle was conceived of not as a military effort but as a series of violent actions, some of a military cast, that sought to achieve those goals that the political struggle movement could not achieve alone. The emergence of a military force for the purpose of fighting a more or less conventional war, similar to the final stages of the Viet Minh war, was considered highly risky and quite unnecessary. The Giap armed struggle phase was conceived of not as regiments or divisions openly confronting the enemy but as an explosion of small-unit acts of violence across the country. The end of the struggle then would be marked by a multitude of guerrilla-unit assaults, in unit force of perhaps 500 men, erupting simultaneously and in coordinated fashion throughout the country. ARVN revolts would break out in every unit as the result of the *binh van* [proselyting] movement. GVN [South Vietnamese Government] officials would be assassinated in numbers. But most of all the people of the country, by the millions, would have taken to the streets in one grand struggle movement that would paralyze what remained of the GVN administrative and military power. This was the General Uprising, which could be accomplished without use of military or paramilitary units larger than a battalion.

I know of no other writer who has defined the fulcrum of the Vietnam insurgency in clearer terms than Douglas Pike and, in so doing, has demonstrated what must be the proper counterinsurgency effort:

. . . The NLF originally saw itself as an agency of social control, not as a military force. It sought to channel rural Vietnamese activities in certain directions and in line with its own purposes. Its control instruments were individuals, especially the natural leaders in villages, the so-called influentials; institutionalized organizations, the various liberation associations and special-interest groups; and social pressure, that is, its own social norms and mores. Its social inducements included superiority in the form of praise, flattery, and prestige; and deterrents were in the form of punishments, coercion, social ostracism, humiliation, physical injury, or death. The process of social control was suggestion and example, argument, persuasion and exhortation, inducement, deterrence, encouragement, and discouragement. These were the social bases for its efforts. In its revolutionary guerrilla warfare a three-pronged attack was employed: the political, use of the united front; the social, fomenting and instigating class strife; and the violence program, use of paramilitary and military war, assassinations, and various other acts of violence. The instrument throughout was the organization. Now this gigantic effort suggested something far beyond the traditional three stages of revolutionary guerrilla warfare. It suggested strongly that the ultimate objective was not Stage Three but, assisted perhaps by the General Uprising, assumption of power by means of the conference table.

The overt American military response in 1962 raised doubts as to the validity of this approach, and was one reason that the PRP came into being to bring increasing emphasis on a military approach. In 1964, according to Douglas Pike,

. . . an open division occurred at the Central Committee level and perhaps higher, in which the then dominant doctrine of the General Uprising was openly questioned. Defending it were the original NLF founders and the older more indigenous elements from the South; in opposition to it were the regulars from the North. The first group held that an intensification of the *dich van* [rural] and *binh van* [proselyting] programs, and perhaps with a step-up in the armed struggle, eventually could completely destroy the GVN's administrative and military apparatus, and thus a frontal assault would never be necessary. The regular cadres from the North held for increased militarization of the effort, a calculated military challenge to the ARVN, and greater emphasis on military assaults, including assaults on exclusively American military installations in Vietnam. For a time, as the debate raged, the armed struggle took on a schizoid character: NLF activities for a few weeks would be predominantly military, then switch to political approaches, and then back to military actions.

The heart of this debate was whether it would be possible to win through to victory in revolutionary guerrilla warfare by means of the political and armed struggles, whose basic objectives were mobilization of the civilian population and attrition, and immobilization but not physical destruction of the enemy's military establishment. . . . Both Mao and Giap, of course,

adamantly insisted that no revolutionary guerrilla war could end as a guerrilla war, that it must evolve into a more or less conventional war in which the opposing armed forces are defeated or destroyed in direct combat. In the end the Northerners won the NLF debate, and military activities increased in scope, tempo, and nature. . . .[17]

Though allowing that the fulcrum of insurgency lay in the South, the Johnson administration continued to believe that its *raison d'être* came from the North. They could not understand the true situation as explained, for example, by Edward Lansdale. After discussing favored Administration options, he wrote: ". . . The anomaly in these reactions is that each falls short of understanding that the Communists have let loose a revolutionary idea in Viet Nam and that it will not die by being ignored, bombed or smothered by us. Ideas do not die in such ways." He then called for essentially a political approach, which would

. . . oppose the Communist idea with a better idea and to do so on the battleground itself, in a way that would permit the people, who are the main feature of that battleground, to make their own choice. A political base would be established. The first step would be to state political goals, founded on principles cherished by free men, which the Vietnamese share; the second would be an aggressive commitment of organizations and resources to start the Vietnamese moving realistically toward those political goals. In essence, this is revolutionary warfare, the spirit of the British Magna Carta, the French "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" and our own Declaration of Independence.

South Vietnam had to have a "cause," and the American effort primarily had to go ". . . on helping the Vietnamese leadership create the conditions which will encourage the discovery and most rapid possible development of a patriotic cause so genuine that the Vietnamese willingly will pledge to it 'their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor.'" After suggesting a number of ways in which this could be done, Lansdale warned that the most urgent function is ". . . to *protect* and *help* the people":

. . . When the military opens fire at long range, whether by infantry weapons, artillery or air strike, on a reported Viet Cong concentration in a hamlet or village full of civilians, the Vietnamese officers who give those orders and the American advisers who let them "get away with it" are helping

17. Pike, op. cit.: Pike does not emphasize that these were NLF, or Viet Cong, attacks. Although he asserts that militarizing the effort in late 1964 ". . . included ordering thousands of North Vietnamese regular army soldiers to the South," he cites no evidence for this statement. Administration officials subsequently claimed that regular North Vietnam army (PAVN) units appeared in the South in late 1964, but these contradictory and confusing claims tend to validate contrary assertions that regular PAVN units did not appear in appreciable numbers until after mid-1965 and then mainly in the central highlands and in the North.

defeat the cause of freedom. The civilian hatred of the military resulting from such actions is a powerful motive for joining the Viet Cong.[18]

On November 1, whether acting on orders from Hanoi or independently, the Viet Cong launched a surprise mortar attack against Bien Hoa, the American airbase outside of Saigon, killing four airmen and destroying a number of B-57 aircraft. Although Lyndon Johnson was elected President two days later by a large majority, he did not use the Bien Hoa attack as an excuse to escalate the war—despite urgings by the JCS for extensive reprisal action and by Ambassador Taylor for a lesser program.[19] Instead, he directed an interagency working group, under William Bundy, to once again examine the problem.

Although quite a wide range of options remained open to the American Government at this point, Administration minds seemed in no more a receptive mood to face reality and act accordingly than formerly. In a draft paper dated November 5, William Bundy perhaps unwittingly disclosed the Administration's temper:

. . . Bien Hoa may be repeated at any time. This would tend to force our hand, but would also give us a good springboard for any decision for stronger action. The President is clearly thinking in terms of maximum use of a Gulf of Tonkin rationale, either for an action that would show toughness and hold the line till we can decide the big issue, or as a basis for starting a clear course of action under the broad options.[20]

Subsequent talks remained hawkish, with compromise options discussed only briefly if at all. The Pentagon Papers reveal, beyond question, that ranking officials of the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the American mission in Saigon, and members of the JCS intended to escalate the war; it was a matter of when and how, as it had been for some months. From the standpoint of the American public, the record is one of dissembling, if not outright fraud. Thus, in the draft paper of November 5, quoted above, William Bundy continued:

. . . Congress must be consulted before any major action, perhaps only by notification if we do a reprisal against another Bien Hoa, but preferably by careful talks with such key leaders as Mansfield, Dirksen, the Speaker, Albert, Halleck, Fulbright, Hickenlooper, Morgan, Mrs. Bolton, Russell, Saltonstall, Rivers, (Vinson?), Arends, Ford, etc. He [the President] probably should wait till his mind is moving clearly in one direction before such a consultation, which would point to some time next week. Query if it should be combined with other topics (budget?) to lessen the heat.

18. Lansdale, op. cit.
19. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 322); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
20. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 363–64).

We probably do not need additional Congressional authority [to that granted in the Tonkin Gulf resolution], even if we decide on very strong action. A session of this rump Congress might well be the scene of a messy Republican effort.

We are on the verge of intelligence agreement that infiltration has in fact mounted, and Saigon is urging that we surface this by the end of the week or early next week. Query how loud we want to make this sound. Actually Grose in the Times had the new estimate on Monday; so the splash and sense of hot new news may be less. We should decide this today if possible. . . . In general, we all feel the problem of proving North Vietnamese participation is less than in the past, but we should have the Jorden Report updated for use as necessary. . . .[21]

Apparently as a result of this thinking, the State Department sent another representative, Chester L. Cooper, to Saigon to report on infiltration, meanwhile stressing the fact of mounting efforts from Hanoi by means of "leaks."[22]

McNamara's assistant secretary, John McNaughton, was also drafting a paper that adjusted Administration aims in South Vietnam. The task now became, according to McNaughton and presumably McNamara:

. . . (a) To protect U.S. reputation as a countersubversion guarantor.
(b) To avoid domino effect especially in Southeast Asia.
(c) To keep South Vietnamese territory from Red hands.
(d) To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods.

Although admitting that the real problem of South Vietnam lay in the South, McNaughton noted:

. . . Action against North Vietnam is to some extent a substitute for strengthening the government in South Vietnam. That is, a less active VC (on orders from DRV) can be matched by a less efficient GVN. We therefore should consider squeezing North Vietnam.

McNaughton offered a three-option plan. Option A called for continuing the present course of action: In essence, go-slow, low-risk operations against the North with reprisals when necessary ". . . but not to a degree that would create strong international negotiating pressures. Basic to this option is the continued rejection of negotiating in the hope that the situation will improve." Option B called for:

. . . Fast full squeeze. Present policies plus a systematic program of military pressures against the north, meshing at some point with negotiation, but with pressure actions to be continued at a fairly rapid pace and without interruption until we achieve our central present objectives.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid. (p. 338); see also Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade—The Full Story of U.S. Involvement in Vietnam from Roosevelt to Nixon* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1970).

Option C called for:

. . . Progressive squeeze-and-talk. Present policies plus an orchestration of communications with Hanoi and a crescendo of additional military moves against infiltration targets, first in Laos and then in the DRV, and then against other targets in North Vietnam. The scenario would be designed to give the U.S. the option at any point to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not. The decision in these regards would be made from time to time in view of all relevant factors.

In McNaughton's opinion, reaction from the North was not a vital worry:

. . . The DRV and China will probably not invade South Vietnam, Laos or Burma, nor is it likely that they will conduct air strikes on these countries. The USSR will almost certainly confine herself to political actions. If the DRV or China strike or invade South Vietnam, U.S. forces will be sufficient to handle the problem.

McNaughton showed considerable concern for the effects of escalation on South Vietnam:

. . . Military action against the DRV could be counterproductive in South Vietnam because (1) the VC could step up its activities, (2) the South Vietnamese could panic, (3) they could resent our striking their "brothers," and (4) they could tire of waiting for results. . . .

However, McNaughton continued,

. . . Should South Vietnam disintegrate completely beneath us, we should try to hold it together long enough to permit us to try to evacuate our forces and to convince the world to accept the uniqueness (and congenital impossibility) of the South Vietnamese case.[23]

Apparently, neither Department of Defense nor State Department senior officials seriously considered holding the line with Option A. William Bundy and McNaughton were said to favor Option C. The JCS, however, preferred Option B—". . . fast full squeeze," with what the Pentagon called "hot-blood actions"—". . . with something like Option C as a fall-back alternative."[24]

Still another voice sounded a cry for escalation. In mid-November, Walt Rostow wrote McNamara his feeling that the American Government must clearly "signal" Hanoi its intentions, including escalation if desired. Rostow was ". . . convinced that we should not go forward into the next stage without a U.S. ground force commitment of some kind." A few days later, he expanded his thinking in a memorandum to Secretary of State Rusk. Convinced that Hanoi wished to avoid de-

23. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 365–68).
24. Ibid. (pp. 368–70).

struction of its industrial plant (as postulated in the October SNIE), Rostow wrote:

. . . Our most basic problem is, therefore, how to persuade them that a continuation of their present policy will risk major destruction in North Viet Nam; that a preemptive move on the ground as a prelude to negotiation will be met by U.S. strength on the ground; and that Communist China will not be a sanctuary if it assists North Viet Nam in counter-escalation.

Calling for retaliation against the North ". . . for continued violation of the 1954–1962 [Geneva] Accords" and ". . . the introduction of some ground forces in South Viet Nam and, possibly, in the Laos corridor," Rostow wanted to go further:

. . . Perhaps most important of all, the introduction into the Pacific Theater of massive forces to deal with any escalatory response, including forces evidently aimed at China as well as North Viet Nam, should the Chinese Communists enter the game. I am increasingly confident that we can do this in ways which would be understood—and not dangerously misinterpreted—in Hanoi and Peiping.

But deployment of forces and ". . . even bombing operations in the north" would not form a "decisive signal." The situation called for ". . . that kind of Presidential commitment and staying power" familiar to the Berlin and Cuba crises. In Rostow's mind, the danger existed that Hanoi would either ". . . pretend to call off the war in South Viet Nam, without actually doing so," or would ". . . revive it again when the pressure is off." American troops in South Vietnam, as well as an American naval blockade, were essential to prevent this and to force Hanoi to stop supporting the NLF and the PRP. Rostow continued:

. . . As I said in my memorandum to the President of June 6, no one can be or should be dogmatic about how much of a war we still would have—and for how long—if the external element were thus radically reduced or eliminated. The odds are pretty good, in my view, that, if we do these things in this way, the war will either promptly stop or we will see the same kind of fragmentation of the Communist movement in South Viet Nam that we saw in Greece after the Yugoslav frontier was closed by the Tito-Stalin split. . . .

This was Rostow's old thesis, with the same fundamental flaws we have already discussed (see Chapters 57 and 77). Rostow himself may have felt the ice of logic cracking under his words, for he continued:

. . . But we can't proceed on that assumption. We must try to gear this whole operation with the best counter-insurgency effort we can mount with our Vietnamese friends outside the country; and not withdraw U.S. forces from Viet Nam until the war is truly under control. . . .

Although this course of action would probably lead to a demand from allies of the United States to admit Communist China into the UN, Rostow continued, the Administration could live with this in return for resolving ". . . the Laos and South Viet Nam problems." In summing up, Rostow wrote:

> . . . Considering these observations as a whole, I suspect what I am really saying is that our assets, as I see them, are sufficient to see this thing through it we enter the exercise with adequate determination to succeed. I know well the anxieties and complications on our side of the line. But there may be a tendency to underestimate both the anxieties and complications on the other side and also to underestimate that limited but real margin of influence on the outcome which flows from the simple fact that at this stage of history we are the greatest power in the world—if we behave like it.

"The greatest power in the world," according to Rostow, could bring limited Utopia to ". . . the Asian community," provided that it acted swiftly and surely. Among other deeds, he called for:

> . . . immediate direct communication to Hanoi to give them a chance to back down before faced with our actions, including a clear statement of the limits of our objectives but our absolute commitment to them.

Should this fail, as was likely, physical actions were in order.[25]

In late November, a select committee of the National Security Council (NSC) met to discuss the working group's draft proposals. Present at this meeting of ranking Administration officials was Under Secretary of State George Ball, who challenged basic Administration postulates, a brave act, considering the prevailing temper of his associates. According to William Bundy's memorandum of this meeting,

> . . . Mr. Ball "indicated doubt" that bombing the North in any fashion would improve the situation in South Vietnam and "argued against" a judgment that a Vietcong victory in South Vietnam would have a falling-domino effect on the rest of Asia.[26]

The reader perhaps will remember that this was the stand taken by CIA analysts in the report made for President Johnson the previous spring. Instead of a policy of military escalation, Ball favored Option A. However, as Neil Sheehan later wrote,

> . . . While the working-group sessions had been in progress, the [Pentagon] study discloses, Mr. Ball had been writing a quite different policy paper "suggesting a U.S. diplomatic strategy in the event of an imminent GVN collapse."
>
> In it, he advocated working through the U.K. . . . who would in turn

25. Ibid. (pp. 418–23).
26. Ibid. (pp. 325–26).

seek cooperation from the U.S.S.R., in arranging an international conference . . . which would work out a compromise political settlement for South Vietnam. . . .

Although Ball alone stood for this particular approach, other dissent emerged during the meeting. Secretary of State Rusk said

. . . that while he favored bombing North Vietnam, he did not accept an analysis by Mr. McNaughton and William Bundy that if the bombing failed to save South Vietnam "we would obtain international credit for trying."

"In his view," the [Pentagon] analyst writes, "the harder we tried and then failed, the worse our situation would be."

McGeorge Bundy [the President's special assistant for national security affairs] demurred to some extent, the account goes on, but Mr. Ball "expressed strong agreement with the last Rusk point."

General Wheeler [who had replaced Maxwell Taylor as chairman of the JCS], reflecting the viewpoint of the Joint Chiefs, argued that the hard, fast bombing campaign of Option B actually entailed "less risk of a major conflict before achieving success," in words of the study, than the gradually rising air strikes of Option C.[27]

The meeting ended with no decision as to which option would be recommended to the President. On the following day, Ambassador Taylor joined the select group of officials to report on the Vietnam situation. His words could not have been more gloomy: The Viet Cong everywhere had advanced and were threatening to cut the country in half. Despite heavy casualties produced by an increasingly stronger and professionally competent ARVN, the Viet Cong not only were making good their losses but were adopting new and improved tactics. A new, civilian government in Saigon was proving no more effective than the old, military government, either in the capital or in the provinces. Indeed,

. . . As the past history of this country shows, there seems to be a national attribute which makes for factionalism and limits the development of a truly national spirit. Whether this tendency is innate or a development growing out of the conditions of political suppression under which successive generations have lived is hard to determine. But it is an inescapable fact that there is no national tendency toward team play or mutual loyalty to be found among many of the leaders and political groups within South Viet-Nam. . . .

The ability of the Viet-Cong continuously to rebuild their units and to make good their losses is one of the mysteries of this guerrilla war. We are aware of the recruiting methods by which local boys are induced or compelled to join the Viet-Cong ranks and have some general appreciation of the amount of infiltration personnel from the outside. Yet taking both of these sources into account, we still find no plausible explanation of the

27. Ibid.

continued strength of the Viet-Cong if our data on Viet-Cong losses are even approximately correct. Not only do the Viet-Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they have an amazing ability to maintain morale. Only in rare cases have we found evidences of bad morale among Viet-Cong prisoners or recorded in captured Viet-Cong documents.

One reason for continued Viet Cong growth, Taylor continued, was increasing infiltration from the North. Although the real problem lay in the South, where effective government had to be established in order to run an effective counterinsurgency, pressure also had to be brought on the North by a combination of methods already discussed. Not only could escalating American military operations cause Hanoi to back off from the war, but they could also be used to gain the South Vietnamese Government's promise to provide more-effective government. Taylor added ominously, however,

. . . In any case, we should be prepared for emergency military action against the North if only to shore up a collapsing situation.[28]

For the moment, he favored carrying on with Option A; once Saigon leaders promised to reform, he favored the first actions in Option C.

Thus Ambassador Taylor suggested still another course of action, one that seemed acceptable to most concerned principals. One more voice remained to be heard from, however. Bundy's working group included an "intelligence panel" composed of representatives from CIA, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. This panel faulted the prevailing desire for air strikes against the North. It did not believe the chances were great of ". . . breaking the will of Hanoi"; it suggested that such strikes would cause a much wider war; and it did not attach much weight to Walt Rostow's thesis, embraced by a good many top military officers, that Hanoi would back down in order to preserve its industrial base:

. . . We have many indications that the Hanoi leadership is acutely and nervously aware of the extent to which North Vietnam's transportation system and industrial plant is vulnerable to attack. On the other hand, North Vietnam's economy is overwhelmingly agricultural and, to a large extent, decentralized in a myriad of more or less economically self-sufficient villages. Interdiction of imports and extensive destruction of transportation facilities and industrial plants would cripple D.R.V. industry. These actions would also seriously restrict D.R.V. military capabilities, and would degrade, though to a lesser extent, Hanoi's capabilities to support guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam and Laos. We do not believe that such actions would have a crucial effect on the daily lives of the overwhelming majority of the North Vietnam population. We do not believe that attacks on industrial tar-

28. Ibid. (pp. 370–73).

gets would so greatly exacerbate current economic difficulties as to create unmanageable control problems. It is reasonable to infer that the D.R.V. leaders have a psychological investment in the work of reconstruction they have accomplished over the last decade. Nevertheless, they would probably be willing to suffer some damage to the country in the course of a test of wills with the U.S. over the course of events in South Vietnam.[29]

No one seems to have respected the intelligence panel's doubts, which (correctly) refuted official thinking, particularly Rostow's optimistic thesis. Ignoring professional opinion, the principals agreed on a course of action more or less as outlined by Taylor, and one more or less consonant with William Bundy's "escalation scenario" of May. But, for the moment, the go-slow school prevailed, and William Bundy's intention ". . . to publicize the evidence of increased DRV infiltration" at the earliest feasible date was shelved. The plan presented to the President in early December, in essence, called for a two-pronged course of action: Phase I—go-slow, low-risk until the South Vietnamese Government swung around to making a real war effort; then Phase II—increasing air strikes against the North while concentrating on the pacification program in the South. The President seems to have accepted the plan, at least sufficiently to brief Prime Minister Wilson on its operational aspects and send various emissaries off to inform other allies.[30]

The Tonkin Gulf action served Khanh well. In mid-August, he submitted a constitutional charter ". . . that gave him virtually complete powers"; the Military Revolutionary Council approved it and elected him President of South Vietnam.[31] But the new charter immediately brought protests from such important elements as students and Buddhists. Instead of trying to placate them, Khanh chose imperial aloofness. Dissenters responded with mass demonstrations against the government. Catholic groups spilled out to fight them. Viet Cong infiltrators effectively fanned rampant hatreds. Riots in Saigon spread to Hué and Da Nang. Khanh refused to accept dissident demands, summoned the Military Revolutionary Council, and resigned as president! He was reinstalled as prime minister in a caretaker government headed by himself and Generals Minh and Khiem—a deceptively simple solution for a most complex problem.[32]

The new government brought a shaky end to demonstrations by promising a better constitution than the one framed by Khanh. The new constitution would be written by a new High National Council; as soon as possible, government would return to civilian hands.

29. Ibid. (pp. 331–32).
30. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
31. Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra.*
32. Ibid.; see also George Carver, op. cit. This article, by a CIA official, examines political compatibilities in the South, where, the author stresses, a social revolution was occurring, as distinct from a northern-imposed insurgency.

The dust had not settled when a group of disgruntled generals attempted another coup. This failed, in part because some younger and powerful officers remained loyal to Khanh, notably the head of the Vietnamese air force, Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky, a former pilot in the French air force and an ambitious young man whose slick mustache, purple scarf, and Captain Midnight flight suit would soon become prominent on the Vietnamese scene.

Civil government succeeded no better than military government. The new premier, a sixty-year-old former schoolteacher and mayor of Saigon, Tran Van Huong, quickly fell prey to now-familiar dissident elements. Although he received American backing, his hands were tied, in part by General Khanh, who retained real power in the form of ARVN. Beset by various demonstrations in cities and by military reverses in the countryside, the new government soon foundered. The High National Council splintered into opposing cliques, and, in December, the young generals "purged" it in favor of an Armed Forces Council. This was not to Ambassador Taylor's liking. On Christmas Eve, he assembled a group of errant officers, including General Nguyen Van Thieu and Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky. ". . . Do all of you understand English?" the ambassador asked. When the officers indicated that they did, the ambassador-general lowered the boom:

> . . . I told you all clearly at General Westmoreland's dinner we Americans were tired of coups. Apparently I wasted my words. . . . I made it clear that all the military plans which I know you would like to carry out are dependent on governmental stability. Now you have made a real mess. We cannot carry you forever if you do things like this. . . .

After elaborating this theme and stressing need for a functioning High National Council, Taylor concluded: ". . . You people have broken a lot of dishes and now we have to see how we can straighten out this mess."[33]

Taylor could not understand the mess, let alone straighten it out. He now backed Huong, who backed down. General Khanh next launched a virulent anti-Taylor, anti-American campaign, at a time when the American Government was attempting to preserve South Vietnam's identity by spending $1.5 million per day. Although Taylor advised Huong to defy the purge, the premier instead reached a shaky compromise with the young generals. Khanh allied himself briefly with the Buddhist cause, the Buddhists opened their own anti-American campaign, the young generals ousted the Huong government—and Khanh again was in power.

But not for long. His new government, headed by Premier Phan Huy Quat, proved no more stable than its predecessors. Plots and

33. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 379–81).

counterplots swirled through the capital.[34] On February 19, 1965, an attempted military coup succumbed to counterforces. But Taylor notwithstanding, the young generals had had enough of Khanh. They now deposed him as army commander in chief in favor of General Tran (Little Minh) Van Minh.

34. Shaplen, in *The Lost Revolution,* offers a splendid account of this political maelstrom.

Chapter 81

Fresh Viet Cong offensives • William Bundy's dilemma • McGeorge Bundy's memorandum • The attack at Pleiku • McGeorge Bundy's report • Sharp's "calculated risk" • The White Paper • American marines land • Early results • Westmoreland demands more troops (I) • Johnson's Baltimore speech • Hanoi's investment in the South • ARVN offensives • More American aid • The enemy retreats • More American troops • Taylor dissents • Rostow's optimism • Renewed guerrilla offensives • The Thieu-Ky dictatorship • Westmoreland demands more troops (II) • Senator Fulbright's analysis • George Ball's secret warning • Clifford's and Mansfield's pessimism • Ball's solution • Johnson's intransigence • The deception continues

THE INTERNECINE WAR in Saigon scarcely benefitted the real war. Each crisis and each coup expended untold amounts of energy that could better have been used in the countryside. Even optimum government would have made the outcome "a near-run thing." Instead, inept government resulted in continuing VC gains of such importance as to decide Hanoi and the NLF-PRP to launch the third, or all-out offensive, phase of the insurgency.

Fresh VC offensives caused something akin to panic among American officials in Saigon and Washington. By end of December 1964, the Saigon trinity—Taylor, Alexis Johnson, and Westmoreland—apparently despaired of rigging a stable South Vietnamese government and notified Washington that the air campaign should start ". . . under any conceivable alliance short of complete abandonment of South Vietnam."[1] Although President Johnson still held off, continuing VC attacks brought

1. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 337).

renewed recommendations from top officials for overt action. In early January, Johnson received a report from Taylor that concluded, ". . . we are presently on a losing track and must risk a change. . . . To take no positive action now is to accept defeat in the fairly near future." According to President Johnson,

> . . . That was the view of every responsible military adviser in Vietnam and in Washington. Painfully and reluctantly, my civilian advisers were driven to the same conclusion by the hard facts.[2]

The thought processes of some of these advisers may be gathered from a memorandum written in early January by William Bundy to Secretary of State Rusk:

> . . . The alternative of stronger action obviously has grave difficulties. It commits the U.S. more deeply, at a time when the picture of South Vietnamese will is extremely weak. To the extent that it included [sic] actions against North Vietnam, it would be vigorously attacked by many nations and disapproved initially even by such nations as Japan and India, on present indications. Most basically, its stiffening effect on the Saigon political situation would not be at all sure to bring about a more effective government, nor would limited actions against the southern D.R.V. in fact sharply reduce infiltration or, in present circumstances, be at all likely to induce Hanoi to call it off.
>
> Nonetheless, on balance we believe that such action would have some faint hope of really improving the Vietnamese situation, and, above all, would put us in a much stronger position to hold the next line of defense, namely Thailand. Accepting the present situation—or any negotiation on the basis of it—would be far weaker from this latter key standpoint. If we moved into stronger actions, we should have in mind that negotiations would be likely to emerge from some quarter in any event, and that under existing circumstances, even with the additional element of pressure, we could not expect to get an outcome that would really secure an independent South Vietnam. Yet even on an outcome that produced a progressive deterioration in South Vietnam and an eventual Communist takeover, we would still have appeared to Asians to have done a lot more about it.[3]

This attitude gained currency among administration officials in January. Both William Bundy and McNaughton openly favored air strikes and the possibility of committing "limited" numbers of American ground troops to South Vietnam. Secret preparations for more-overt action continued during the month, as pessimistic reports continued to roll in. In late January, McGeorge Bundy sent a memorandum to the President stating that he and McNamara were ". . . pretty well convinced that our current policy can lead only to disastrous defeat."

2. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
3. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 341–42).

. . . The Vietnamese know just as we do that the Viet Cong are gaining in the countryside. Meanwhile, they see the enormous power of the United States withheld, and they get little sense of firm and active U.S. policy. They feel that we are unwilling to take serious risks. In one sense, all of this is outrageous, in the light of all that we have done and all that we are ready to do if they will only pull up their socks. But it is a fact—or at least so McNamara and I now think.[4]

President Johnson later wrote:

. . . Bundy and McNamara saw two alternatives: either to "use our military power in the Far East and to force a change of Communist policy" or to "deploy all our resources along a track of negotiation, aimed at salvaging what little can be preserved with no major addition to our present military risks." They said that they were inclined to favor the first alternative —use of more military power—but they believed that both courses should be studied carefully and that alternative programs should be developed and argued out in my presence.

"Both of us understand the very grave questions presented by any decision of this sort," the memo continued. "We both recognize that the ultimate responsibility is not ours. Both of us have fully supported your unwillingness in earlier months, to move out of the middle course. We both agree that every effort should still be made to improve our operations on the ground and to prop up the authorities in South Vietnam as best we can. But we are both convinced that none of this is enough, and that the time has come for harder choices."

The January 27 memo concluded by pointing out that Dean Rusk did not agree with the McNamara-Bundy assessment. Rusk knew things were going badly, and he did not claim that the deterioration could be stopped. "What he [Rusk] does say," the memo stated, "is that the consequences of both escalation and withdrawal are so bad that we simply must find a way of making our present policy work. This would be good if it was [sic] possible. Bob [McNamara] and I do not think it is."[5]

President Johnson responded by asking ". . . Rusk to instruct his experts once again to consider all possible ways for finding a peaceful solution." In addition, he sent McGeorge Bundy and a team of experts to Saigon to make still another report.

In early February, Viet Cong guerrillas attacked two American camps in the central highlands, Pleiku and Camp Holloway, killing nine and wounding a hundred and forty American troops (see map, p. 1091). While helicopter-borne troops pursued and killed a substantial number of guerrillas, American naval aircraft and South Vietnamese bombers carried out Operation Flaming Dart I, an attack on North Vietnamese barracks and staging areas at Dong Hoi, some forty miles north of the

4. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
5. Ibid.

17th parallel. The President also ordered American dependents withdrawn from South Vietnam.

A few days later, Viet Cong guerrillas struck again, attacking both American and South Vietnamese installations on the central coast. Once again, naval jet fighter-bombers and bombers attacked North Vietnamese "installations," a heavier raid, code-named Flaming Dart II.

Political confusion in Saigon largely negated morale benefits derived from this new and tough line. While South Vietnamese politicians continued to behave as if no national crisis threatened, Viet Cong guerrillas continued to strike in the central highlands. Johnson earlier had authorized Westmoreland to commit combat aircraft in support of ARVN. Now, to prevent the enemy from slicing off the northern provinces, Westmoreland released U. S. Air Force F-100 fighter-bombers and B-57 light jet bombers to bomb and strafe alleged VC concentrations in support of South Vietnamese troops.[6]

Meanwhile, arguments for escalation continued within the Administration. McGeorge Bundy and his team of experts were in Saigon when the VC attacked Pleiku. On his way back to Washington, he wrote a memorandum for the President that began,

> . . . The situation in Vietnam is deteriorating, and without new U.S. action defeat appears inevitable—probably not in a matter of weeks or perhaps even months, but within the next year or so. There is still time to turn around, but not much.

Bundy then went on to assess the situation:

> . . . The stakes in Vietnam are extremely high. The American investment is very large, and American responsibility is a fact of life which is palpable in the atmosphere of Asia, and even elsewhere. The international prestige of the United States, and a substantial part of our influence are directly at risk in Vietnam. There is no way of unloading the burden on the Vietnamese themselves, and there is no way of negotiating ourselves out of Vietnam which offers any serious promise at present. . . .[7]

Arguing that a negotiated withdrawal of American forces would mean ". . . surrender on the installment plan," Bundy instead proposed a policy of ". . . graduated and continuing reprisal" against North Vietnam, as outlined in an annex. He also pointed to specific courses of action in the South, ". . . such as helping to strengthen the Vietnamese political structure and improving pacification," and concluded:

> . . . There are a host of things the Vietnamese need to do better and areas in which we need to help them. The place where we can help most is in the clarity and firmness of our own commitment to what is in fact as well as in rhetoric a common cause. There is one grave weakness in our posture

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

in Vietnam which is within our own power to fix—and that is widespread belief that we do not have the will and force and patience and determination to take the necessary action and stay the course.

This is the overriding reason for our present recommendation of a policy of sustained reprisal. Once such a policy is put in force, we shall be able to speak in Vietnam on many topics and in many ways, with growing force and effectiveness.

One final word. At its very best the struggle in Vietnam will be long. It seems to us important that this fundamental fact be made clear and our understanding of it be made clear to our own people and to the people of Vietnam. Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution when those who live with this war know that no early solution is possible. It is our own belief that the people of the United States have the necessary will to accept and to execute a policy that rests upon the reality that there is no short cut to success in South Vietnam.[8]

The annex, apparently written by John McNaughton, proposed ". . . a policy of sustained reprisal against North Vietnam—a policy in which air and naval action against the North is justified by and related to the whole Viet Cong campaign of violence and terror in the South." The costs of such action, particularly the air aspect, would be "real," ". . . yet measured against the costs of defeat in Vietnam, this program seems cheap. And even if it fails to turn the tide—as it may—the value of the effort seems to us to exceed its cost."[9] Although the object of a reprisal policy was not to "win" an air war against Hanoi but, rather, ". . . to influence the course of the struggle in the South," the United States would have to fight an air war. Moreover, such a reprisal policy might lead to advanced air action—the Option C earlier discussed:

. . . It may even get us beyond this level with both Hanoi and Peiping, if there is Communist counteraction. We and the GVN should also be prepared for a spurt of VC terrorism, especially in urban areas, that would dwarf anything yet experienced. These are the risks of any action. They should be carefully reviewed—but we believe them to be acceptable.

The authors sought a final rationale:

. . . Action against the North is usually urged as a means of affecting the will of Hanoi to direct and support the VC. We consider this an important but longer-range purpose. The immediate and critical targets are in the South —in the minds of the South Vietnamese and in the minds of the Viet Cong cadres.

Sustained reprisal action would raise South Vietnamese morale and thereby ". . . should offer opportunity for increased American influence

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.; see also *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 423).

in pressing for a more effective government—at least in the short-run." Simultaneously, according to CIA analyses from Saigon, the action would lower VC morale. The argument concluded:

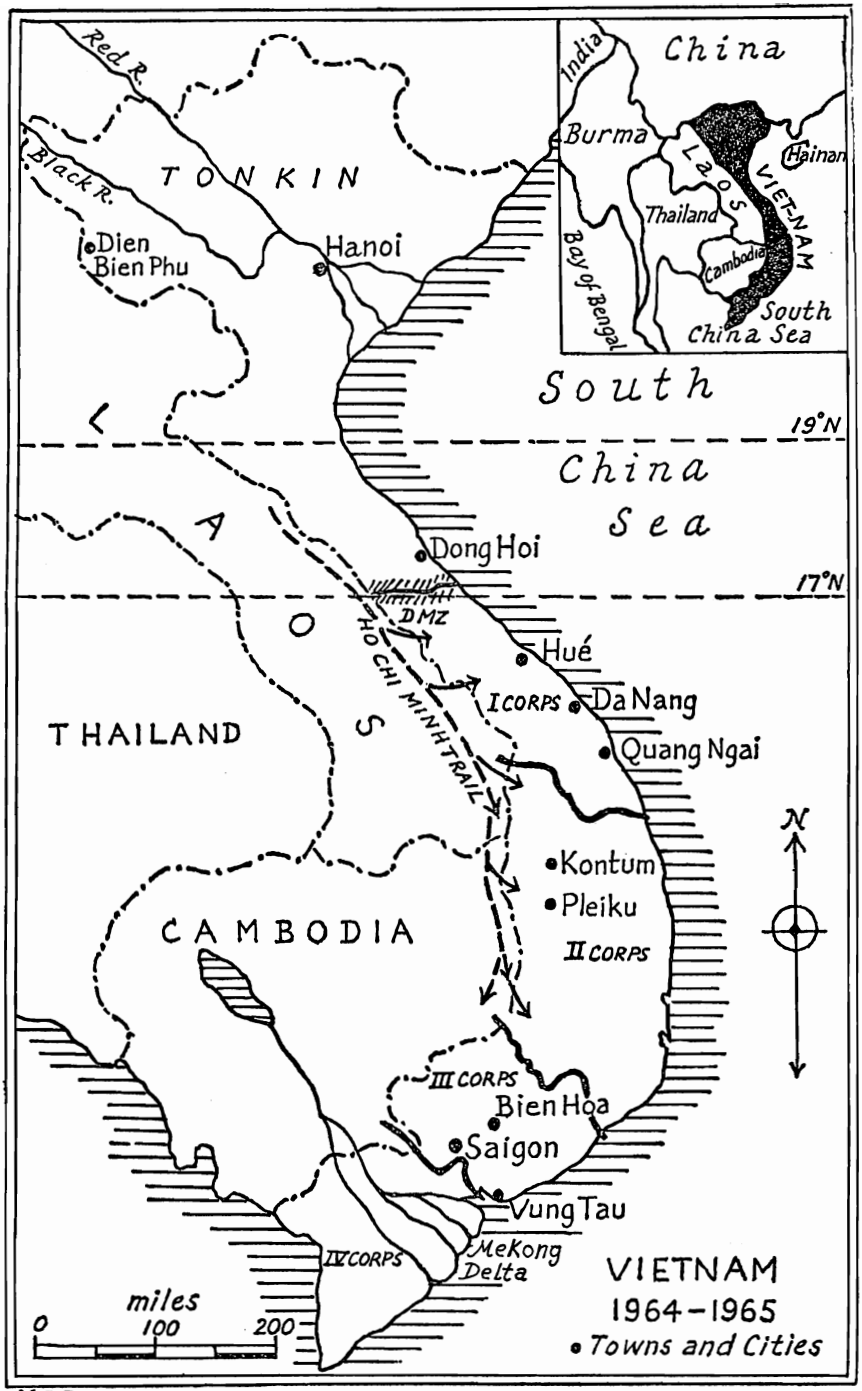
> . . . We cannot assert that a policy of sustained reprisal will succeed in changing the course of the contest in Vietnam. It may fail, and we cannot estimate the odds of success with any accuracy—they may be somewhere between 25% and 75%. What we can say is that even if it fails, the policy will be worth it. At a minimum it will damp down the charge that we did not do all that we could have done, and this charge will be important in many countries, including our own. Beyond that, a reprisal policy—to the extent that it demonstrates U.S. willingness to employ this new norm in counterinsurgency—will set a higher price for the future upon all adventures of guerrilla warfare, and it should therefore somewhat increase our ability to deter such adventures. We must recognize, however, that that ability will be gravely weakened if there is failure for any reason in Vietnam.[10]

Other Administration hawks, particularly Rostow and members of the JCS, did not adopt such a pessimistic attitude regarding use of air power. This school held that strategic bombing of the North would "win" the war.[11] What it could not ignore was that strategic bombing of the North could well lead to a nuclear war. Primarily for this reason, President Johnson adopted a lesser course of action, ". . . a policy of sustained reprisal" against North Vietnam. In his later words,

> . . . The decision was made because it had become clear, gradually but unmistakably, that Hanoi was moving in for the kill. Its leaders had sent in regular North Vietnamese army units. They had directly attacked not only our ships but our barracks, our airfields, and our men. They had asked for and received increased aid from Moscow. They were exerting maximum pressure on the military and political situation in South Vietnam. The best advice available to me indicated that if we did not act against the North Vietnamese, they soon might achieve their objectives in the South. Also our forces in the South were increasing and I felt strongly that our men deserved all the support and protection we could give them. . . .[12]

The Administration's justification for escalation rested fundamentally on the aggression-from-the-North theme. The State Department now added a diplomatic exclamation point to military plans by publishing a fourteen-thousand-word treatise called "Aggression from the North—The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam." The White Paper, which William Bundy had called for in his "escalation scenario" of May and which the State Department had been preparing for some months, made it clear that the Johnson administra-

10. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 423–27).
11. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra;* see also U. S. Grant Sharp, "We Could Have Won in Vietnam Long Ago," *Reader's Digest,* May 1969.
12. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*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tion held North Vietnam fully responsible for fomenting, directing, and supporting the VC insurgency in the South.[13]

On March 2, 1965, U.S. and South Vietnamese air force planes struck a North Vietnamese ammunition depot and naval base. A few days later, an American marine expeditionary force of two reinforced battalions—some thirty-five hundred troops—landed at Da Nang to defend the airfield against VC reprisal attacks. At a news conference at his Texas ranch on March 20, the President repeated a pledge he had made a year before:

> . . . For ten years, under three Presidents, this Nation has been determined to help a brave people to resist aggression and terror. It is and it will remain the policy of the United States to furnish assistance to support South Viet-Nam for as long as is required to bring Communist aggression and terrorism under control.

A few days later, he repeated this sentiment in a formal presidential statement.[14]

The American public may not have known it, but their country had gone to war.

American air strikes against the North, coupled with American marines landing in Da Nang, bolstered GVN and ARVN morale, particularly at top echelons, but did little to improve existing deficiencies in either government or armed forces. Nor, as Robert Shaplen has pointed out, did it imbue ARVN with the offensive attitude so heavily desired by American military advisers. Improved morale at top levels soon gave way to renewed political turbulence and crises that continued to inhibit beneficial governmental action in the countryside, where the bulk of South Vietnam's peasants—that is to say, the bulk of the South Vietnamese people—did not share Saigon's enthusiasm for a widening war. American actions alarmed many peasants who, contrary to what most people in the United States believed, had yet to be touched by insurgency: In numerous areas of the South, the war still resembled a distant cloud of locusts, and escalation seemed a threatening wind that moved this cloud uncomfortably closer. When it exploded to release phosphorus and napalm bombs, streams of machine-gun bullets, high-explosive artillery shells, and nausea-producing gases, all of which too often failed to distinguish between Viet Cong and innocent folks, it also unleashed a counterstorm of world opinion that included many vociferous voices in the United States.

By spring of 1965, the Johnson administration's escalation policy had failed on two counts: North Vietnam seemed singularly unimpressed both by American air strikes and by grim warnings that they would continue. And, despite an expenditure of millions, the landing of sev-

13. Ibid.; see also, Carver, op. cit.; Lacouture, op. cit.
14. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1965, Book I), *supra*.

eral thousand troops, and the presence of over twenty-five thousand advisers, the American Government seemed as far from accomplishing the necessary task of establishing viable government in South Vietnam as it ever had.

As one result, President Johnson faced a situation familiar in embryo to Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. Reduced to simplest terms, it called for the American Government to demand that the Saigon government produce or else stand (or fall) alone. It was not an easy ultimatum, but it was the one action, short of arbitrarily terminating aid and withdrawing, that might have fused dissident elements sufficiently to fight a counterinsurgency.

But where Eisenhower and Kennedy failed, so did Johnson. Instead of demanding an about-face from the Saigon government, instead of confining the war to the South and treating it for what it was, a politically motivated civil conflict, the President attempted to convert it to an international ideological conflict that had to be resolved by American arms with or without the tacit co-operation of either the South Vietnamese or American people.

Throughout March, air strikes called for by Operation Rolling Thunder mounted in intensity. Although President Johnson authorized use of napalm early in the campaign, he imposed such restrictions as confining air strikes to south of the 19th parallel, which infuriated service chiefs as well as Ambassador Taylor in Saigon. Pressures mounted during March for a sustained bombing program north of the 19th parallel. Also in March, the JCS and General Westmoreland began calling for SEATO ground forces (which would have to be predominantly American) both to hold coastal enclaves and to patrol northern and northwestern border areas. Westmoreland wanted about seventy thousand troops by June ". . . and indicated that more troops might be required thereafter if the bombing [of the North] failed to achieve results." The JCS recommended sending in three divisions, two American and one Korean, ". . . for offensive combat operations against the guerrillas." Ambassador Taylor argued against the requests,

> . . . because he felt the South Vietnamese might resent the presence of so many foreign troops—upwards of 100,000 men—and also because he believed there was still no military necessity for them.[15]

McNamara tended to support the requests, but his deputy, John McNaughton, wanted them integrated into a specific course of action. By late March, McNaughton had concluded that the chief U.S. aim in South Vietnam was ". . . to avoid a humiliating defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor)":

> . . . It is essential—however badly SEA [Southeast Asia] may go over the next 1–3 years—that U.S. emerge as a "good doctor." We must have kept

15. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 399).

promises, been tough, taken risks, gotten bloodied, and hurt the enemy very badly. We must avoid harmful appearances which will affect judgments by, and provide pretexts to, other nations regarding how the U.S. will behave in future cases of particular interest to those nations—regarding U.S. policy, power, resolve and competence to deal with their problems. . . .[16]

Pointing to the Administration's "trilemma" and its inability for various reasons either to achieve aims by all-out bombing of the North and large troop deployments, or to exit by negotiations, he suggested slowing the escalating air effort in order to avoid "flash points" with the Soviet Union and China, preparing phase deployments of limited numbers of troops, and opening preliminary talks immediately with the U.S.S.R., a diplomatic offensive that hopefully would lead to a resumption of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords. If this plan failed, then the United States would have to escalate accordingly.

CIA chief John McCone held still other ideas. In line with Walt Rostow's thesis, McCone believed that ". . . forcing submission of the VC can only be brought about by a decision in Hanoi." A decision in Hanoi, in turn, could only result from a massive air campaign that would impose "unacceptable damage" and threaten the DRV's "vital interests." He did not object to committing ground troops, but

. . . I believe our proposed track offers great danger of simply encouraging Chinese Communists and Soviet support of the DRV and VC cause, if for no other reason than the risk for both will be minimum. I envision that the reaction of the NVN [North Vietnamese] and Chinese Communists will be to deliberately, carefully, and probably gradually, build up the Viet Cong capabilities by covert infiltration of North Vietnamese and, possibly, Chinese cadres and thus bring an ever-increasing pressure on our forces. In effect, we will find ourselves mired down in combat in the jungle in a military effort that we cannot win, and from which we will have extreme difficulty in extricating ourselves.

Therefore it is my judgment that if we are to change the mission of the ground forces, we must also change the ground rules of the strikes against North Vietnam. We must hit them harder, more frequently, and inflict greater damage. Instead of avoiding the MIG's, we must go in and take them out. A bridge here and there will not do the job. We must strike their airfields, their petroleum resources, power stations and their military compounds. This, in my opinion, must be done promptly and with minimum restraint. . . .[17]

President Johnson and his top advisers met at the White House in early April. Although VC guerrillas had just blown up the American embassy in Saigon, the President declined to take drastic overt action (other than asking Congress for a million dollars in order to build a

16. Ibid. (p. 438).
17. Ibid. (pp. 440–41).

new one), but instead set the stage further. Among other decisions, he now authorized two more marine battalions and one marine air squadron for the Da Nang enclave, and a further eighteen to twenty thousand support troops for South Vietnam. More important, he authorized marines to change from defensive to offensive operations in Da Nang area. The order embodying these decisions concluded:

. . . The actions themselves should be taken as rapidly as practicable, but in ways that should minimize any appearance of sudden changes in policy, and official statements on these troop movements will be made only with the direct approval of the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State. The President's desire is that these movements and changes should be understood as being gradual and wholly consistent with existing policy.[18]

On April 7, 1965, in his famous Baltimore speech, the President set forth the Administration's position in Southeast Asia. Like Kennedy before him, he was Prometheus on the podium. He left no doubt as to the villains:

. . . The first reality is that North Viet-Nam has attacked the independent nation of South Viet-Nam. Its object is total conquest. Of course, some of the people of South Viet-Nam are participating in attack on their own government. But trained men and supplies, orders and arms, flow in a constant stream from North to South.

Hanoi, however, was not acting unilaterally: ". . . Over this war—and all Asia—is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist China. The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peiping. . . . The contest in Viet-Nam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purposes."

As for American presence in South Vietnam:

. . . We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Viet-Nam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence.

And I intend to keep that promise.

To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemies, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong. We are also there to strengthen world order. Around the globe, from Berlin to Thailand, are people whose well-being rests in part on the belief that they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Viet-Nam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of an American commitment and in the value of America's word. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war. We are also there because there are great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that

18. Ibid. (pp. 442–43); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

retreat from Viet-Nam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. To withdraw from one battlefield means only to prepare for the next. We must say in Southeast Asia—as we did in Europe—in the words of the Bible: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

What did the United States wish to accomplish?

. . . Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way. We will do everything necessary to reach that objective, and we will do only what is absolutely necessary. . . .

Increased American participation in the war did not signify a change in purpose but, rather,

. . . a change in what we believe that purpose requires.

We do this in order to slow down aggression.

We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Viet-Nam who have bravely borne this brutal battle for so many years with so many casualties.

And we do this to convince the leaders of North Viet-Nam—and all who seek to share their conquest—of a simple fact:

We will not be defeated.

We will not grow tired.

We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement. . . .

God was clearly on the side of the big airplanes:

. . . I wish it were possible to convince others with words of what we now find it necessary to say with guns and planes: armed hostility is futile—our resources are equal to any challenge—because we fight for values and we fight for principle, rather than territory or colonies, our patience and our determination are unending. . . .

Having applied the stick, the President offered the carrot that General de Gaulle had recommended to President Kennedy four years earlier. The United States had been and remained ready ". . . for unconditional discussions" in order to bring an end to the fighting. If fighting stopped, he would ask Congress to fund a billion-dollar investment program in Southeast Asia that would bring a new and better life to the peoples of Southeast Asia, including those of North Vietnam.[19]

19. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1965, Book I), *supra;* see also his statement to the press, "Tragedy, Disappointment, and Progress" in Vietnam, April 17, 1965.

If President Johnson expected his words to propel Ho Chi Minh to the conference table, he was quickly disappointed. Although, at one time, the United States might have influenced the Communist leader to conciliatory action, since 1950 the U.S.A. had emerged as archenemy in northern eyes. Even had Ho been inclined to deal with capitalist Satan, forces around him—Hanoi's hawks—would probably have been able to prevent it.

It is doubtful if Ho or any of his more moderate colleagues entertained such a desire, particularly since President Johnson's offer meant virtual capitulation, with attendant destruction of the NLF in the South. Someday we may learn Hanoi's estimate of the situation at this time. Considering the factors at work, it was probably neither unanimous nor inflexible. Like Japan prior to World War II, North Vietnam's high command included leaders who could not envisage American industrial and military might and whose arrogance derived from this ignorance was compounded by Viet Minh victory over France. Hanoi was probably impressed by American refusal to intervene militarily at Dien Bien Phu, and continued to be impressed by divisive voices in the 1960s sounding with greater frequency and volume from within the United States and from around the world. Finally, a number of Ho's colleagues, probably all of them, also felt cheated by results of the Geneva Conference. They had not relinquished the notion of a unified Vietnam, and, in one way or another, would continue to pursue that goal.[20]

That did not mean that they stood ready to rush army divisions to the South. Thanks to Pentagon and State Department fulminations, we tend to forget that, at this time, Hanoi's investment in the southern rebellion was minimal. Hanoi had contributed by training Southerners who had come North and who returned South to work up the insurgency. During 1964, Hanoi began infiltrating *northern* cadres, at the most probably twenty-five hundred. These people joined an extremely viable organization that was Communist-dominated in part by means of the PRP, but one that was largely self-supporting. For years, the NLF had controlled large areas of the South; they collected taxes, sold war bonds, extorted money, captured arms, ammunition, medical supplies, and other material from ARVN—all this to a remarkable degree, described in detail by Douglas Pike.[21] Pike estimated that the 1964 NLF budget was $7.5 million with Hanoi contributing about 20 per cent, a minimum investment that kept the pot of rebellion not only boiling but daily growing more savory.

In this respect, President Johnson was aiming at the wrong target. As Jean Lacouture has pointed out, not only was the NLF-PRP carrying on the war, but Hanoi would have had its hands full in persuading the southern organization to stop fighting. Put another way: successful ne-

20. Zagoria, op. cit., discusses these various factors in detail.

21. Pike, op. cit. (Chapter 16); see also Robert J. O'Neill, *Vietnam Task* (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1968).

gotiations with the NLF-PRP could have stopped the war. At this point, Hanoi was still conforming to standard Communist revolutionary doctrine as determined by both Moscow and Peking, whose leaders believed that a rebellion had to come from within although it could be helped from without. We have seen this principle at work in Yugoslavia, Greece, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaya. It is a wait-and-see policy, and Communists have no monopoly on it: Woodrow Wilson practiced it during the Mexican revolution.

Perhaps because it is so simple, Western experts seem unable to understand it. Douglas Pike, for instance, wrote:

> . . . It is the thesis of this book that the DRV was indeed the godfather of the NLF, that its support over the years was developmental, from lesser to greater, that until mid-1964 this aid was largely confined to two areas—doctrinal know-how and leadership personnel—and after mid-1964 it supplied antiaircraft weapons and certain other types of military hardware not available through capture, but at all times from 1960 on *it stood ready to help the NLF in any way that was absolutely necessary*.[22]

But what Pike fails to add, and what Rostow and various hawks in Washington, Honolulu, and Saigon failed to heed, was that Hanoi's help remained contingent on satisfactory progress of the southern insurgency. This is the essence of protracted revolutionary warfare; it is a political axiom derived from a tactical tenet: If an insurgency fails, back off, wait, and try again. This is very important to understand, for it means that the fulcrum of insurgency is interior, not exterior.

By spring of 1965, Hanoi's commitment to the southern insurgency was remarkably slight and for good reason. Years of toil had produced a formidable southern guerrilla force. In Douglas Pike's words:

> . . . The ARVN reported in early 1965 that the NLF army consisted of some 47 battalions, which it said were organized on paper into five regiments. The battalion was planned for 500 men but most had fewer, some as few as 250 men; the NLF Main Force company averaged about 85 men. There were an estimated 94 such companies as part of the 47 battalions. Of the total Main Force units in South Vietnam, approximately one third was in the ARVN's First and Second Corps areas and two thirds in the Third and Fourth Corps areas.
>
> A characteristic of a guerrilla war is that the government side never knows how many of the enemy it faces—every cyclo driver, every Vietnamese who passes in the street could be a guerrilla—but by early 1965 at least 55,000 and perhaps as many as 80,000 "hard hats" were fighting in South Vietnam. Some of them had been fighting for more than a decade and were perhaps the toughest, most experienced guerrilla fighters to be found anywhere on earth. . . .[23]

22. Pike, op. cit. (Chapter 16).
23. Ibid. Chapter 13 offers excellent detail on Viet Cong organization and tactics.

Considering the growth of this force from some five thousand in 1959, Hanoi would have been foolish to interrupt local dynamics, the more so because, as Hanoi waited, the insurgency continued to prosper. Although Diem's demise proved inconvenient in some ways—his government was so corrupt and ineffectual as to prosper the NLF-PRP-Hanoi cause—the resultant fragmentation of Saigon government seemed worthy of exploitation and resulted in a 1964 decision to concentrate on a military solution. This did not mean seriously involving North Vietnam's fourteen regular infantry divisions (though this army might have been tempted into overt invasion had the American military acted wisely). It was to be a southern-based military solution, as it had to be if only some twenty-five hundred Northerners came South in all of 1964.

In 1965, Hanoi infiltrated an estimated eleven thousand Northerners, but this figure must be qualified: Considering NLF-PRP strength, it was not impressive; moreover, Administration testimony is contradictory and confusing. Dean Rusk, in April 1965, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that a North Vietnamese division, the 325th, had moved across the border ". . . as a division" between November 1964 and January 1965[24]—a presence repeatedly referred to by Lyndon Johnson in his memoirs as justification for subsequent attacks against the North.[25]

But Rusk and Johnson apparently were not using William Bundy's intelligence sources, because, on August 15, 1967, in "a major policy address," he told a meeting of the National Student Association that

> . . . Multiple and conclusive evidence which became available from spring 1965 onwards seems to me to refute these contentions. As has been repeatedly made public over the past two years, we know that one North Vietnamese regiment entered South Vietnam by December 1964, and we know that several other regiments entered in the spring of 1965 on timetables of infiltration that can only have reflected command decisions taken in Hanoi prior to the beginning of the bombing.
>
> From the standpoint of the basis for US decisions, this evidence simply reinforces the February picture that Hanoi was moving for the kill. Native North Vietnamese alone or in regular units, were in themselves no more and no less aggressive than the earlier native South Vietnamese who had gone north and become North Vietnamese nationals. The point is that Hanoi, as we suspected then and later proved, had taken major steps to raise the level of the war before the bombing began.[26]

According to Johnson and Rusk, rather than suspecting this presence, the Administration *knew* of it, nor do the figures cited jibe with those claimed by Johnson and Rusk. Now enter Westmoreland, who told an

24. William R. Corson, *The Betrayal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); see also U. S. Senate, *The Vietnam Hearings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).
25. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
26. William Bundy, op. cit.

interviewer, in November 1966, that ". . . in 1965 he [the enemy] began to move regular North Vietnamese Army units into Vietnam through Laos. . . ."[27]—but Rusk said that the enemy began to do this in 1964! Now enter McNamara, who apparently was relying on still other intelligence sources, for, in the same month that Rusk testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that is, April 1965, McNamara revealed that

> . . . it was not until the end of March [1965]—four weeks after the systematic bombing of North Vietnam was initiated and three weeks after the Marines had landed—that intelligence confirmed the presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. Moreover, McNamara indicated, the unit was only one battalion of 400 to 500 men from the North Vietnamese Army's 325th Division. Tacitly it was noted that the 325th Division was still in North Vietnam.[28]

By August 1965, according to General Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approximately fourteen hundred North Vietnamese troops were serving in the South (as opposed to seventy-five thousand American troops); by year's end, North Vietnamese troops numbered fourteen thousand, U.S. troops two hundred thousand![29]

President Johnson's speech aroused more consternation in South Vietnam than in the North. In Saigon, the Quat government hastened to assure Hanoi that while the United States may have been ready ". . . for unconditional discussions," the GVN would not even consider a cease-fire until certain preliminaries were carried out, namely the ". . . previous withdrawal of the Viet Cong armed units and political cadres."[30]

American reinforcements, which followed the President's reassuring speech, once again seemed to breathe new life into the Saigon government and ARVN. After blunting the Viet Cong's winter offensives, ARVN had moved against the enemy in the Mekong Delta area, the central coastal areas, and the north; government troops, in some actions, had killed impressive numbers of guerrillas and, in some areas, had opened major roads.

In April, another three thousand American marines reached the Da Nang area, to build the commitment to some eight thousand men supported by artillery, armor, aircraft, and naval gunfire. Marine patrols were now fanning out from Da Nang, the first steps in contesting Viet Cong control of that area. After a necessary experimental period, as Ambassador Taylor explained to Premier Quat, marine units could fulfill a strike role ". . . as a reserve in support of ARVN operations"

27. *U. S. News and World Report,* November 28, 1966.
28. Corson, op. cit.
29. Ibid.
30. Kahin and Lewis, op. cit.

in the area.[31] McNamara and the JCS subsequently persuaded President Johnson to enlarge the ground role by committing an American airborne brigade to the Bien Hoa-Vung Tau areas, outside of Saigon, ". . . to secure vital U.S. installations."[32]

Despite these reinforcements, the situation in South Vietnam remained fragile in the extreme. As usual when ARVN forces made substantial gains, they failed to exploit them by consolidating operational areas. Instead, they withdrew to defensive positions.

If the Viet Cong had failed to gain tactical objectives and divide South Vietnam, it did not mean that they were defeated. Instead, in the best guerrilla tradition, and as they had done repeatedly in fighting the French and also in 1962 following the first impressive American reinforcement, they withdrew to the hills, fortified villages, licked wounds, and reorganized units with replacements and supply obtained locally and from the North. Fresh American efforts once again had caused them to think twice about the war. An ominous portent of their thinking emerged in a CIA report of late April, which identified a regiment of the North Vietnamese army (PAVN) in the province of Kontum, in northeastern South Vietnam.[33]

Though inducing a certain optimism in the American camp, the lull in the fighting, in general, was regarded as temporary. Most concerned principals now agreed that bombing the North was not going to bring "victory" (but most agreed that it should nonetheless be intensified). At a high-level meeting in Honolulu on April 20, Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton noted general agreement that the decision would be gained in the South:

> . . . Progress in the South would be slow, and great care should be taken to avoid dramatic defeat. The current lull in Vietcong activity was merely the quiet before a storm.
>
> The victory strategy was to "break the will of the D.R.V./VC by denying them victory."
>
> Impotence would lead eventually to a political solution.[34]

The aggressive school of tactical thought dominated the Honolulu meeting. Members of the JCS, Westmoreland, and other hawks continued to argue for aggressive tactics to bring the war home to the enemy. They accordingly asked for more troops from the United States and other countries. Ambassador Taylor, according to the Pentagon study, although not opposed to an American troop build-up, preferred a go-slow escalation based on enclaves until the American military machine had satisfactorily identified the tactical problem and adapted accordingly.

31. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 402).
32. Ibid. (p. 403).
33. Ibid. (p. 409); statements of Administration officials aside, this would appear to be the first major PAVN unit in the South.
34. Ibid. (p. 407); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

Something of his attitude was revealed in a cable to McGeorge Bundy shortly before the Honolulu conference, when Taylor ". . . protested the 'hasty and ill-conceived' proposals for the deployment of more forces with which he was being flooded" and called for ". . . a clarification of our purposes and objectives."[35]

The Honolulu conference ended in a clear victory for the Pentagon, which recommended a 100 per cent increase in American troop strength, raising the total from about forty thousand to over eighty thousand; in addition, another seventeen battalions, eleven American and six South Korean, could be deployed at a later stage. The whole package, according to the JCS, was

> . . . to bolster GVN forces during their continued counter-insurgency combat operations in coordination with the RVNAF, and prepare for the later introduction of an airmobile division to the central plateau, the remainder of the third M.E.F. [the Third Marine Expeditionary Force] to the Da Nang area, and the remainder of a ROK [Korean] division to Quangngai.[36]

This deployment was underway when the Viet Cong struck in early May, a regimental attack that captured and briefly held a provincial capital with heavy losses to government forces.

Although the attack caused considerable alarm in Saigon and the Pentagon, it did not signal a new Viet Cong offensive, in Administration minds. The President was still hopeful that extraneous action would force the North to call off the war. On May 10, he proposed a bombing halt of the North to coincide with Buddha's birthday. A paragraph in a message sent to Ambassador Taylor offers an interesting insight into presidential thinking at this stage:

> . . . You should understand that my purpose in this plan is to begin to clear a path either toward restoration of peace or toward increased military action, depending upon the reaction of the Communists. We have amply demonstrated our determination and our commitment in the last two months, and I now wish to gain some flexibility.[37]

Three days later, the President suspended air strikes, a four-day halt that brought no response from Moscow, Hanoi, or Peiping. Although he resumed Operation Rolling Thunder, he refused to authorize strikes in the vicinity of Hanoi. His obdurate attitude infuriated the JCS, just as his cryptic statement that ". . . a military victory is impossible" alarmed one of the more bellicose of his civil advisers, Walt Rostow. Rostow informed Rusk in late May that there was no reason the U.S.A. could not win a clear victory in South Vietnam. In Rostow's mind,

35. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 406–7, 443–46).
36. Ibid. (p. 408).
37. Ibid. (pp. 446–47).

Hanoi, which in February had hoped to obtain victory through political collapse and subsequent coalition government in Saigon, was now

. . . staring at quite clear-cut defeat, with the rising U.S. strength and GVN morale in the South and rising costs in the North. That readjustment in prospects is painful; and they won't in my view, accept its consequences unless they are convinced time has ceased to be their friend, despite the full use of their assets on the ground in South Viet-Nam, in political warfare around the world, and in diplomacy.[38]

While Rostow was writing this remarkable prognosis, the situation in South Vietnam was deteriorating at an alarming pace. In late May, VC guerrillas ambushed an ARVN battalion to open an action that ". . . completely decimated" two ARVN battalions. In June, two VC regiments attacked an ARVN outpost and then ambushed reinforcements. Around Da Nang, U. S. Marine Corps patrols had encountered increasing numbers of enemy, and in April and May suffered about two hundred casualties. Johnson's decision to widen the bombing effort in the North by way of reprisal brought still another ominous reaction, when Britain's Prime Minister Harold Wilson "dissociated" his country from it.[39]

In Saigon, the political situation remained as confused and torn as ever. Renewed fighting between Buddhist and Catholic factions led to the generals' ousting Premier Quat in early June. In place of civil government appeared a National Leadership Committee headed by forty-two-year-old General Nguyen Van Thieu. The ten-man committee included most of the familiar military faces, among them thirty-five-year-old Nguyen Cao Ky, the airman who now became premier. Although Ky imposed a number of dictatorial measures including summary trial and execution of terrorists, black marketeers, speculators, and corrupt officials, government remained weak and ineffective.[40]

With a Viet Cong offensive obviously developing, General Westmoreland reported to the JCS, via CINCPAC, on June 7:

. . . In pressing their campaign, the Viet-Cong are capable of mounting regimental-size operations in all four ARVN corps areas, and at least battalion-sized attack in virtually all provinces. . . .

ARVN forces on the other hand are already experiencing difficulty in coping with this increased VC capability. Desertion rates are inordinately high. Battle losses have been higher than expected; in fact, four ARVN battalions have been rendered ineffective by VC action in the I and II Corps zones. . . .

38. Ibid. (p. 448); see also Roswell W. Gilpatric, "Vietnam and World War III," New York *Times*, May 30, 1965. Gilpatric's recital of American strengths and weaknesses was tempered only by the possibility that the American people would not want to fight a prolonged war.

39. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 448–49).

40. Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra.*

Force ratios on which earlier estimates had been made were thus upset, Westmoreland continued. His solution was to become a MACV theme song:

> . . . I see no course of action open to us except to reinforce our efforts in SVN with additional U.S. or third country forces as rapidly as is practical during the critical weeks ahead.[41]

Westmoreland now requested a whopping increase in outside troop strength, to a total of forty-four battalions. Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC) endorsed the request with approval and noted: ". . . We will lose by staying in enclaves defending coastal areas." The JCS were not antagonistic to the request but wanted to know ". . . where Westmoreland intended to put this force in Vietnam." Westmoreland's reply, according to a Pentagon analyst,

> . . . was extremely important, for in it [he] spelled out the concept of keeping U.S. forces away from the people. The search and destroy strategy for U.S. and third country forces which continues to this day [1967–68] and the primary focus of RVNAF (ARVN) on pacification both stem from that concept. In addition, Westmoreland made a big pitch in this cable for a free hand to maneuver the troops around inside the country.[42]

Westmoreland's request aroused considerable controversy inside the government. At the same time, however, Johnson's decision to allow American troops to indulge in combat operations had slowly leaked to the public, segments of which were already uneasy by a supplementary appropriation of $700 million authorized by Congress in early May ". . . for military needs in Viet-Nam." Mounting intensity of fighting due to the Viet Cong's monsoonal offensive now caused some critical questioning of Administration policy. In mid-June, Senator J. W. Fulbright addressed his fellow senators:

> . . . It is clear to all reasonable Americans that a complete military victory in Viet-Nam, though theoretically attainable, can in fact be attained only at a cost far exceeding the requirements of our interest and our honor. It is equally clear that the unconditional withdrawal of American support from South Viet-Nam would have disastrous consequences. . . . Our policy therefore has been—and should remain—one of the determination to end the war at the earliest possible time by a negotiated settlement involving major concessions by both sides.

The senator went on to echo the President's speech at Johns Hopkins:

> . . . I am opposed to an unconditional American withdrawal from South Viet-Nam because such action would betray our obligation to people we

41. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 409–10); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
42. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 413).

have promised to defend, because it would weaken or destroy the credibility of American guarantees to other countries, and because such a withdrawal would encourage the view in Peiping and elsewhere that guerrilla wars supported from outside are a relatively safe and inexpensive way of expanding Communist power.

However, he saw a great danger in further escalation of the war, because

. . . the bombing thus far of North Viet-Nam has failed to weaken the military capacity of the Viet-Cong in any visible way; because escalation would invite the intervention—or infiltration—on a large scale of great numbers of North Vietnamese troops; because this in turn would probably draw the United States into a bloody and protracted jungle war in which the strategic advantages would be with the other side; and, finally, because the only available alternative to such a land war would then be the further expansion of the air war to such an extent as to invite either massive Chinese military intervention in many vulnerable areas in Southeast Asia or general nuclear war.

In view of the then-current Viet Cong offensive and advantages derived by them from the monsoonal season, Fulbright warned of American setbacks:

. . . As the ground war expands and as American involvement and American casualties increase, there will be mounting pressure for expansion of the war.

Indeed, such pressures already existed, and the President must continue to ignore them in favor of "restraint and patience." After reviewing American errors, the senator noted recent American desire for settlement, as opposed to continuing North Vietnamese and Chinese intransigence, and offered two goals:

. . . First we must sustain the South Vietnamese Army so as to persuade the Communists that Saigon cannot be crushed and that the United States will not be driven from South Viet-Nam by force; second, we must continue to offer the Communists a reasonable and attractive alternative to military victory. For the time being it seems likely that the focus of our efforts will have to be on persuading the Communists that they cannot win a complete military victory. . . .[43]

In other words, once the monsoonal offensive ended and ARVN remained intact, the Communist powers would presumably see the error of their ways and be more inclined to negotiate.

Fulbright's tolerance was shared neither by the JCS nor by Westmoreland, whose hand was steadily being reinforced by the deteriorating situation, political and military, in South Vietnam. In May, President

43. Raskin and Fall, op. cit.

Johnson authorized Westmoreland ". . . to use his forces in combat support if it became necessary to assist a Vietnamese unit in serious trouble." In June, the President authorized the general to use his forces "independently" of South Vietnamese forces. At the end of June, Westmoreland committed an airborne brigade to a search-and-destroy operation in conjunction with an ARVN battalion and an Australian battalion northwest of Saigon, in War Zone D. Meanwhile, General Wheeler, chairman of the JCS, asked Westmoreland ". . . if the 44 battalions were enough to convince the enemy forces that they could not win." According to the Pentagon study, Westmoreland replied

> . . . that there was no evidence the VC/DRV would alter their plans regardless of what the U.S. did in the next six months.
>
> The 44-battalion force should, however, establish a favorable balance of power by the end of the year. If the U.S. was to seize the initiative from the enemy, then further forces would be required into 1966 and beyond. . . .[44]

A few days later, the JCS approved a planned deployment of nearly two hundred thousand American troops in South Vietnam. In mid-July, impressed by a new and optimistic report from McNamara, President Johnson authorized this build-up and also gave Westmoreland authority to commit American troops to combat at his discretion.[45]

Although these measures remained secret, at least for the moment, they caused considerable consternation within the Administration. On July 1, Under Secretary of State George Ball submitted a lengthy memorandum to President Johnson. Ball bluntly opened:

> . . . The South Vietnamese are losing the war to the Viet Cong. No one can assure you that we can beat the Viet Cong or even force them to the conference table on our terms, no matter how many hundred thousand *white, foreign* (U.S.) troops we deploy.
>
> No one has demonstrated that a white ground force of whatever size can win a guerrilla war—which is at the same time a civil war between Asians—in jungle terrain in the midst of a population that refuses cooperation to

44. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 413–14).

45. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*. McNamara, according to the President, reported a seriously deteriorating situation that could be met with one of three courses of action: cut losses and withdraw under the best conditions that could be arranged; continue at present level; expand promptly and substantially. McNamara recommended the third course. ". . . With the force that he and the others were proposing, McNamara was convinced that the South Vietnamese and allied armies could reverse the downward trend and move to the offensive. He said that the military commanders planned to locate, engage, and destroy the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong main-force units. At the same time, they believed we should press our anti-infiltration campaign by hitting enemy supply lines by air and on the sea. We would also carry the air war more intensively into Viet Cong base areas in the South . . ."; see also Johnson (*Public Papers*—1965, Book I), "The President's News Conference of July 13, 1965."

the white forces (and the South Vietnamese) and thus provides a great intelligence advantage to the other side. . . .

The President, Ball stated, had one question to decide:

. . . Should we limit our liabilities in South Vietnam and try to find a way out with minimal long-term costs?

The alternative—no matter what we may wish it to be—is almost certainly a protracted war involving an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces, mounting U.S. casualties, no assurance of a satisfactory solution, and a serious danger of escalation at the end of the road.

The President, Ball believed, had to decide on the answer now:

. . . So long as our forces are restricted to advising and assisting the South Vietnamese, the struggle will remain a civil war between Asian peoples. Once we deploy substantial numbers of troops in combat it will become a war between the U.S. and a large part of the population of South Vietnam, organized and directed from North Vietnam and backed by the resources of both Moscow and Peiping.

The decision you face now, therefore, is crucial. Once large numbers of U.S. troops are committed to direct combat, they will begin to take heavy casualties in a war they are ill-equipped to fight in a non-cooperative if not downright hostile countryside.

Once we suffer large casualties, we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot—without national humiliation—stop short of achieving our complete objectives. *Of the two possibilities I think humiliation would be more likely than the achievement of our objectives—even after we have paid terrible costs.*

Ball then went on to examine the costs of a compromise solution ". . . in terms of our relations with the countries in the area of South Vietnam, the credibility of our commitments, and our prestige around the world":

. . . In my judgment, if we act before we commit substantial U.S. troops to combat in South Vietnam we can, by accepting some short-term costs, avoid what may well be a long-term catastrophe. I believe we tended grossly to exaggerate the costs involved in a compromise settlement. . . .

Ball did not recommend a unilateral withdrawal from South Vietnam. Instead, he proposed a total troop commitment of seventy-two thousand men to support restricted combat operations; he also agreed to the present bombing program. Simultaneously, he called for a diplomatic offensive by unilateral approach to Hanoi, the general idea being that Johnson could pressure the Saigon government and Ho the NLF to the conference table to hammer out ". . . a multi-national agreement guaranteed by the U.S., the Soviet Union and possibly other parties, and providing for an international mechanism to supervise its execution."[46]

46. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 449–54).

Ball next examined short-term costs of a compromise solution. Astute diplomacy could hold these to a minimum. The United States had good allies in Southeast Asia and would continue to support them. If South Vietnam fell to Communist control, Burma, Cambodia, and Indonesia would probably enter the Eastern orbit—but they were scarcely in the Western orbit at this time. Other nations could be expected to hold, with proper backing from the U.S.A. As for Thailand: ". . . Providing we are willing to make the effort, Thailand can be a foundation of rock and not a bed of sand in which to base our political/military commitment to Southeast Asia."

As for U.S. world-wide credibility: With the possible exception of West Germany,

> . . . In my observation, the principal anxiety of our NATO allies is that we have become too preoccupied with an area which seems to them an irrelevance and may be tempted in neglect to our NATO responsibilities. Moreover, they have a vested interest in an easier relationship between Washington and Moscow. By and large, therefore, they will be inclined to regard a compromise solution in South Vietnam more as new evidence of American maturity and judgment than of American loss of face. . . . On balance, I believe we would more seriously undermine the effectiveness of our world leadership by continuing the war and deepening our involvement than by pursuing a carefully plotted course toward a compromise solution. In spite of the number of powers that have—in response to our pleading—given verbal support from feeling of loyalty and dependence, we cannot ignore the fact that the war is vastly unpopular and that our role in it is perceptively eroding the respect and confidence with which other nations regard us. We have not persuaded either our friends or allies that our further involvement is essential to the defense of freedom in the cold war. . . .[47]

We do not know how much credence the President invested in this memorandum, which outlined a bold, imaginative, and courageous policy that had been needed since 1954. Ball further dissented from Administration thinking during a late-July session with Johnson.[48] At Camp Aspen a few days later, Johnson also found his close adviser Clark Clifford ". . . in a reflective and pessimistic mood":

> ". . . I don't believe we can win in South Vietnam," he said. "If we send in 100,000 more men, the North Vietnamese will meet us. If North Vietnam runs out of men, the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win the war."
>
> He urged that in the coming months we quietly probe possibilities with other countries for some way to get out honorably. "I can't see anything but catastrophe for my country," he said.[49]

47. Ibid.
48. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
49. Ibid.

Senator Mike Mansfield, who had dissented from Johnson's February decision to begin bombing North Vietnam, also expressed ". . . serious doubt and opposition" to the present course.[50]

Refined and properly applied, this dissentient thinking, echoed variously by influental citizens throughout the country, might have led to a solution that would have given Lyndon Johnson that place in American history he so obtrusively desired. Instead, he rejected compromise in favor of a "win" strategy. At the end of July, at a press conference, he said: ". . . The lesson of history dictated that the U.S. commit its strength to resist aggression in South Vietnam."

> . . . I have asked the commanding general, General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. We will meet his needs.
>
> I have today ordered to Vietnam the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. Additional forces will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested. . . .

Having declared a collision course with disaster, the President still thought it was necessary to deceive the American public. A reporter asked,

> . . . Mr. President, does the fact that you are sending additional forces to Vietnam imply any change in the existing policy of relying mainly on the South Vietnamese to carry out offensive operations and using American forces to guard American installations and to act as an emergency back-up?

At a time when an American airborne brigade had already sharply engaged the Viet Cong in a search-and-destroy mission, at a time when marines were seeking out Viet Cong and were planning a major search-and-clear operation, at a time when McNamara, Westmoreland, and the JCS were flexing military muscles to "come to grips" with the enemy[51]—at this time, the President of the United States replied:

> . . . It does not imply any change in policy whatever. It does not imply change of objective.[52]

50. Ibid.
51. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 457–58).
52. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1965), *supra,* "The President's News Conference of July 28, 1965."

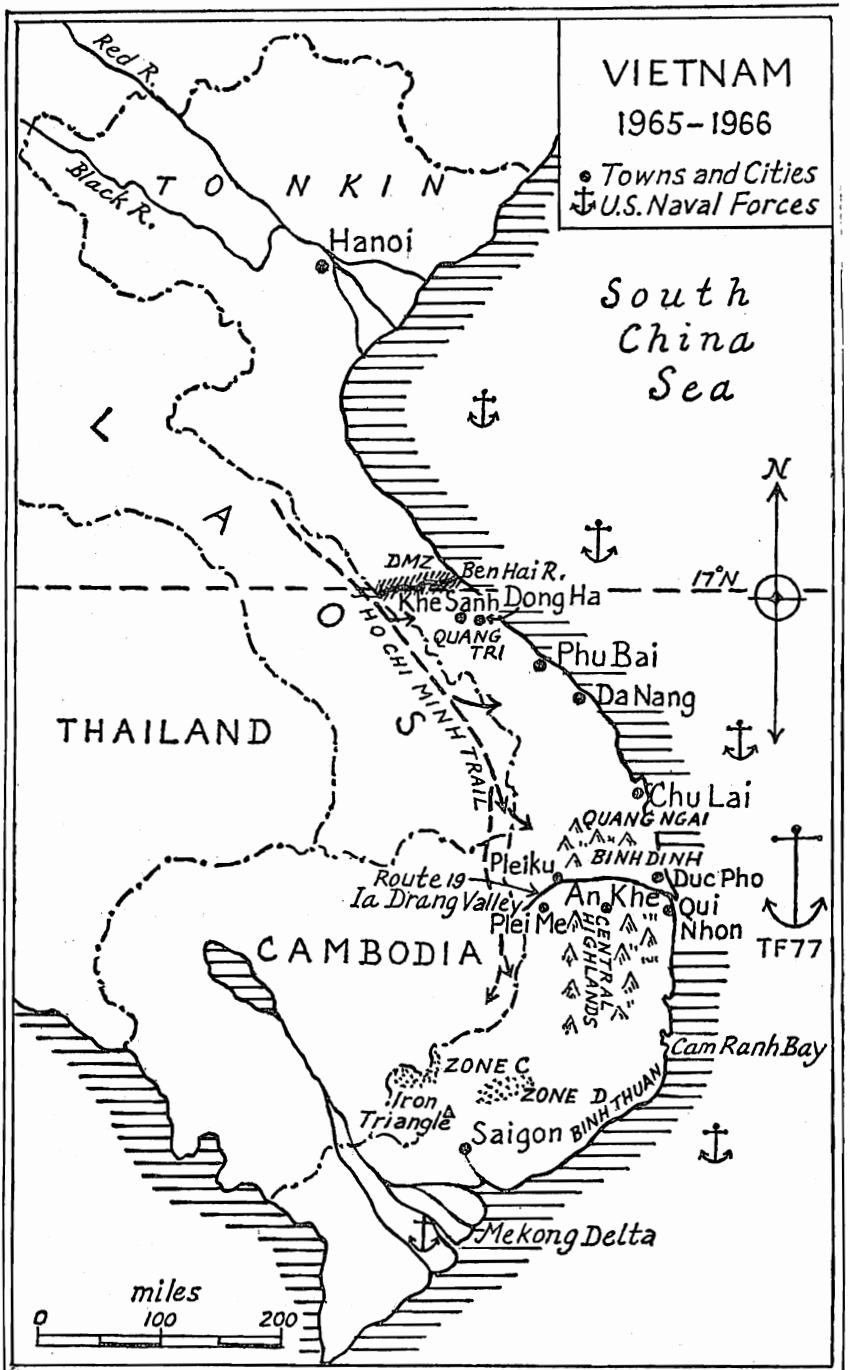
Chapter 82

The fighting escalates • Viet Cong setbacks • American and ARVN gains • The air war • Westmoreland's strategy • Search-and-destroy tactics • The American build-up • Westmoreland's four wars • The "other war" • American arms and equipment • Army operations in the central highlands • Westmoreland's "spoiling" tactics • Operation Crazy Horse • Marine operations in I Corps area • Walt's pacification program • PAVN crosses the DMZ: Operation Hastings, Operation Prairie • Operations in III Corps area • The air war escalates • The naval war • The "other war": the Honolulu conference • Ky's Revolutionary Development program • Elections in the South • The Manila conference • General allied optimism

ONCE AGAIN, American infusion of strength steadied the fibrillating heart of South Vietnam's Government and army. Although, in vicious fighting in summer and autumn of 1965, the Viet Cong nowhere accomplished its major objective of permanently dividing the country, its battalions and regiments, increasingly reinforced by PAVN units from the North, cut road and rail communications, attacked ARVN outposts almost at will, ambushed ARVN forces sent to relieve beleaguered garrisons, and continued a campaign of sabotage and terror against South Vietnamese and American installations and personnel.

But ARVN units, in some cases supported by American forces, also generally fought hard, and new American units showed every willingness to fight.[1] A sort of monsoonal counteroffensive developed. In August, American marines based on Da Nang mounted Operation Starlight, a

1. William G. Leftwich, "Decision at Duc Co," *Marine Corps Gazette*, February 1967; Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra;* Robert Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969).


VIETNAM
1965-1966
Towns and Cities
U.S. Naval Forces
Red R.
Black R.
TONKIN
Hanoi
South China Sea
LAOS
N
DMZ
Ben Hai R.
17°N
Khe Sanh
Dong Ha
QUANG TRI
Phu Bai
Da Nang
THAILAND
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
Chu Lai
QUANG NGAI
BINH DINH
Pleiku
Route 19
Ia Drang Valley
An Khe
Duc Pho
Qui Nhon
Plei Me
CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
TF77
CAMBODIA
Cam Ranh Bay
ZONE C
ZONE D
Iron Triangle
Saigon
BINH THUAN
Mekong Delta
miles
0
100
200

M.E.P.

sweeping operation designed to evict Viet Cong from Chu Lai Peninsula. In a several-day action, marines recorded fifty killed and one hundred and fifty wounded, but claimed over five hundred Viet Cong deaths.

Meanwhile, the American army's 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division set up shop at An Khe, in the central highlands—a base from which units would attempt to screen the neighboring Cambodian border while clearing enemy from the immediate area. When North Vietnamese units, an estimated two regiments, attacked a Special Forces camp at Plei Me, near the Cambodian border, the American garrison held out and then mounted a counterattack, which led to bloody fighting in the Chu Phong and Ia Drang area. The Americans recorded two hundred and forty killed and four hundred and seventy wounded, but claimed over fifteen hundred enemy deaths.[2]

Simultaneously, air strikes against the North rose impressively. During the summer, the purpose of Operation Rolling Thunder had changed from breaking Hanoi's will to ". . . cutting the flow of men and supplies from the North to the South."[3] In addition to striking barracks, ammunition depots, and staging points, pilots at their own discretion attacked vehicles, locomotives, and barges. Sorties increased from nine hundred a week in July to fifteen hundred a week in December; by end of 1965, fifty-five thousand sorties had been flown and thirty-three thousand tons of bombs dropped.

As troops continued to arrive in South Vietnam, General Westmoreland increasingly implemented an attrition strategy—a dependence on superior American military manpower, firepower, and mobility to wear down and finally force the enemy from the war. Here was a conventional strategy designed to gain a military decision. Precedents for it already had appeared during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, which had adopted increasingly quantitative approaches for fighting this insurgency but had managed to retain limited objectives. The Johnson administration enlarged the concept to embrace an all-out "win" strategy.

To implement this strategy, American armed forces relied on quantitative, or search-and-destroy, tactics: more simply, find the enemy—fix him—kill him. This concept accompanied American units into combat in 1965. It was the conventional goal of conventionally organized units ranging from squad to division strength and supported in most cases by artillery (and naval gunfire), by an awesome host of strategic and tactical aircraft, by an inland-waters navy that soon reached sizable proportions, by hordes of helicopters of varying sizes and functions, and by extensive military technology.

By end of 1965, Westmoreland's strategy and tactics had yielded results deemed favorable by military leaders. Westmoreland had received about one hundred and fifty thousand of a promised two hundred

2. Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra.*
3. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 468).

thousand troops. New units were arriving daily, as were tons of equipment and supply needed to support them. Energetic commanders were slowly sorting out initial logistics confusion while simultaneously pushing the enemy on several fronts. American commands were working around the clock. American planes were striking enemy units in North and South. American patrols were seeking contacts, and fighting when possible. A pervasive air of aggression was pushing aside stale air of defeatism. A RAND report based on interviews of refugees also read favorably:

> . . . We find that villagers increasingly tend to ask the Viet Cong unit to leave, refuse to sell them rice, refuse to allow them to sleep in their houses. In some cases, the villagers simply leave the area when the Viet Cong unit arrives. Criticism of irresponsible and provocative actions on the part of the guerrillas is fairly widespread, not only among the villagers but also among defectors from hard-core (Communist) units. Despite Viet Cong propaganda, there is no belief that the Vietnamese government or the Americans are deliberately bombing harmless villages. The villagers more often take the view that the attacks are part of the unavoidable existence of war. . . .[4]

It was just as well the villagers felt that way, because, whether they liked it or not, war was coming to them. That winter in South Vietnam, even the most cynical observer had to admit that the Americans were obviously determined to impose their will on the enemy.

The man chosen to command the American military effort in Vietnam, General William Childs Westmoreland, seemed ideally fitted for the task. A South Carolinian and West Pointer (1936), he had served as an artillery commander in World War II in Africa and Europe. He had commanded an airborne regiment in Korea. Promoted to brigadier general at thirty-eight years, he had served subsequently as secretary of the general staff, commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division, and superintendent of West Point, adding a star for each new billet. Now fifty-one years old, he stood nearly six feet tall, a rugged, fit man of one hundred and eighty pounds, a devout Episcopalian who frowned on swearing, smoking, and hard drinking, and who was said to keep a Bible on his desk and to read it.[5]

General Westmoreland soon found himself fighting four distinct, though intimately related, shooting wars: the "original" guerrilla, or counterinsurgency, war that challenged the NLF-VC organized in regular and paramilitary units throughout the country; the quasi-conventional ground war in the central highlands and south of the Demilitarized

4. Marguerite Higgins, *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

5. C. S. Wren, "A Sunday with Westmoreland," *Look*, October 18, 1966.

Zone (DMZ) that was fought against VC and regular units of the North Vietnamese army (PAVN); the naval war; and the air war.[6] Each of these efforts bred certain political, economic, and psychological problems, which, taken together, influenced what some called "the other war," the contest to win people's "hearts and minds"—what a few persons accurately called "the only war."

To fight the shooting wars, General Westmoreland disposed of a force so impressive as to bring to mind the prophet Jeremiah's description of the ancient army that would irrupt into Judah: ". . . his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. . . . Their quiver is as an open sepulchre. . . ." From the standpoint of technology, the world had never seen a more sophisticated armed host than that committed by the Americans in South Vietnam. Literally, no expense had been spared in equipping and training these infantry and airborne and marine divisions and air units and naval armadas before committing them to combat in Vietnam.

In addition to standard arms and equipment, troops received rapid-firing Armalite rifles, at first the controversial M-16, later the improved M-14 which fired a lighter, 7.62-mm. round. Each squad carried flame throwers, light machine guns, and grenade launchers; in addition to fragmentation and smoke grenades, troops were equipped with a variety of nauseous gases and rocket launchers. Platoons and companies carried such organic support weapons as 60- and 81-mm. mortars and 90- and 106-mm. recoilless rifles. Supporting artillery units carried 4.2-inch mortars and 105-mm., 155-mm., and eight-inch howitzers. More effective artillery shells appeared, for example the 105-mm. "Beehive," which, upon detonation, released eight thousand steel "fléchettes," or tiny darts, to tear through whatever body got in the way. Small-unit communications were vastly improved, as were tropical clothing, boots, ancillary equipment, field rations. Combat troops also received such sophisticated identity aids as electronic sensory devices, or "man sniffers," infrared night-sighting equipment, short-range ground radars. A galaxy of specialist units—medical, engineer, communications—supported ground operations, and, where necessary, commanders could count on heavy-artillery, armor, and, along the coast and inland waterways, naval-gunfire support.[7]

Commanders also relied on armored personnel carriers and on large numbers of helicopters for improved mobility. The U. S. Marine Corps,

6. Hugh A. Mulligan, *No Place to Die* (New York: William Morrow, 1967): The author describes enemy forces in detail; see also Shaplen (*The Lost Revolution*), *supra;* Pike, op. cit.; S. L. A. Marshall, *Battles in the Monsoon* (New York: William Morrow, 1967); O'Neill, op. cit.; General Westmoreland described the war as he saw it in an interview published in *U. S. News and World Report,* November 28, 1966.

7. Francis J. West, "Small Unit Action in Vietnam. Summer 1966." Washington: Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, 1967; see also Mulligan, op. cit.; Donald Duncan, *The New Legions* (New York: Random House, 1967).

a pioneer in helicopter "vertical assault" tactics, brought its own "chopper" squadrons as integral components of its air wings. The U. S. Army, which employs helicopter companies organic to the ground division, went so far as to build two divisions around this machine! Each "airmobile" division consisted of approximately sixteen thousand troops equipped with 434 aircraft, mostly helicopters, and sixteen hundred land vehicles (compared to a normal army division's one hundred organic aircraft and over three thousand vehicles).

A vast armory escorted troop-carrying helicopters into action. Conventional aircraft often "prepared" the "target": F-100, F-104, F-105, F-4C, and F-5 planes, to name a few, not only bombed and machinegunned with great expertise but also carried a varied and highly destructive kit that included conventional high-explosive bombs, delayed-action bombs, white-phosphorus bombs, napalm, and rockets. Some of these were tailored for the tactical situation, for example "daisy-cutters"—bombs fitted with a delayed fuse so as to detonate in water and destroy by concussion any Viet Cong hiding there; and CBUs, or Cluster Bomb Units, which contained thousands of small metal balls released on impact and scattered lethally by compressed air.

Huey gunships—helicopters armed with 7.62-mm. machine guns, rockets, and grenades—usually accompanied troop-carrying helicopters (also armed with machine guns) to furnish immediate fire support in case of enemy fire during approach and landing or in later retrieval operations. Ground commanders also were supported by specially fitted aircraft, old and slow-flying Douglas DC-3s and C-47s, for night defense. These relics, known as Puff the Magic Dragon and Smokey the Bear, circled for hours, dropping magnesium flares and pouring in thousands of rounds from three electrically operated rapid-fire machine guns, each capable of firing six thousand rounds per minute.

Helicopters also played an immensely important support role. Small, fast machines that land most anywhere whipped commanders around extended battle areas to give a tactical cohesion unfamiliar since Napoleonic warfare. Larger machines landed reinforcements and supply to hard-pressed units, and evacuated wounded. Medical evacuation (Med-Evac) techniques became so polished that the American army claimed a "save" ratio of eighty-two out of a hundred men wounded (as opposed to seventy-one out of a hundred in World War II); the Marine Corps pointed out that no wounded man was ". . . more than 30 minutes . . . from a fully staffed and equipped hospital."[8]

The quasi-conventional ground war at first centered north of Saigon, specifically in the central highlands of II Corps area and the northern coastal provinces of I Corps area. Having foiled the enemy's 1965 plan to cut South Vietnam in half, Westmoreland now turned to the task of,

8. U. S. Air Force, "The U. S. Air Force in Southeast Asia." Washington: Headquarters, U. S. Air Force, 1967; see also Frank Harvey (*Air War—Vietnam*), *supra;* R. B. Asprey ("Tactics"), *supra.*

first, preventing the enemy from resuming the offensive, and, second, eventually isolating and destroying him in detail while energetically pacifying areas reclaimed from enemy control. To accomplish the first task, Westmoreland depended primarily on a wide variety of search-and-destroy missions, or what he called "spoiling" tactics, that is, blocking and enveloping actions designed to keep the enemy off-balance and thus "spoil" his plans.

Operations in the central highlands centered on the 1st Cavalry (Airborne) Division, based on An Khe. The reader may remember that this division deployed here in autumn of 1965 and fought a sharp and generally successful series of actions culminating in the Chu Phong and Ia Drang area. A veteran American military correspondent, S. L. A. Marshall, visited the division in spring of 1966 and later wrote an excellent, if sometimes alarming, description of its operations, in his book *Battles in the Monsoon.*[9]

Based at Camp Radcliffe, a huge complex protected by ". . . a seventeen-kilometer-long barrier around Hon Kong mountain," the division "fed" a variety of permanent and temporary fortified bases in the surrounding area. These, in turn, supported numerous operations ranging from small patrols to task-force "sweeps" but including special missions by other units, for example Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) composed of Special Forces teams and friendly Montagnard tribesmen.

In winter and spring of 1966, the division was carrying out a threefold mission: countering enemy operations in the central highlands; interdicting border areas where six or seven PAVN regiments were believed to be hovering (across the line, in Cambodia); protecting communications from Pleiku along Highway 19 to the sea.

Division operations almost always utilized helicopters. The American army believed that extreme mobility offered by these machines was the key to fighting successful counterinsurgency warfare. Early in the division's operations, Major General W. E. DePuy told Frank Harvey: ". . . The VC need ten days to transfer three battalions. We manage five battalions in a day."[10]

Standard operating procedure in the highlands called for extensive patrolling designed to find the enemy. Although information derived from several sources, for example from aerial observation, Special Forces units such as CIDG, and friendly local peasants, preliminary action generally fell to a special Reconnaissance Squadron, ". . . formed of three cavalry troops . . . and one ground troop. In each air troop there is a scout platoon, a weapons platoon and an infantry platoon. They mount up in armored Huey Bravos [helicopters]

9. S. L. A. Marshall, op. cit.; see also Mulligan, op. cit.; Duncan, op. cit.
10. Harvey, op. cit.

with a mixed bag of rockets and machine guns. The scouts go forth and find the enemy; the infantry element then lands to exploit."[11]

Exploitation assumed a number of forms. One was an ambush patrol, usually carried out by specially trained teams infiltrated into the target area by helicopters using appropriate deceptive techniques. Another was the combat patrol, which sought out and engaged the enemy. If action developed favorably, division could escalate it to a major operation, thanks to mobility offered by helicopters and to fire support supplied by base artillery, helicopters, and tactical (and even strategic) aircraft. If a fire fight developed adversely, the local commander could usually evacuate his patrol, including wounded and dead, by helicopter under cover of supporting fire.

These actions were generally very confused, and co-ordinating them into a meaningful whole taxed the ability of competent senior commanders. Marshall described one such operation, known first as Crazy Horse, later as the battle of Vinh Thanh Valley, in detail. The action began when a CIDG patrol surprised an enemy patrol and killed five PAVN soldiers, including a lieutenant. Captured documents indicated that PAVN had moved 120-mm. mortars into the area and was probably going to attack the CIDG base camp in battalion strength (as had been rumored by local villagers). The division commander, Major General Jack Norton, turned the problem over to First Brigade, which was tactically responsible for the area. Although strapped for troops, its commander, Colonel John Hennessey, committed a company-strength patrol into an area "fed" by Landing Zone (LZ) Savoy and, beyond that, by LZ Hereford. When the patrol encountered substantial resistance—it was ambushed and mauled—another company joined the action. Suspecting a lucrative target, Norton enlarged the operation to brigade strength.

According to Marshall, who monitored the action, its purpose was two-fold: ". . . to purge the mountain country beyond LZ Hereford of Communist forces and to make it so costly to them that they would be loath ever again to attempt using it as a sanctuary."

Hennessey now moved his Tactical Operations Center (TOC)—". . . a capsulated headquarters shaped like a Quonset hut" and lifted by a Flying Crane helicopter—to LZ Savoy. From this forward defended base, the colonel dispatched various companies to LZ Hereford, from where they fanned out through the rugged terrain.

Marshall offers several splendid descriptions of these units. Of a thirty-one-man patrol scheduled for a three-day action, he wrote:

> . . . Every soldier carried 800 rounds for his M-16, most of them slung in crossed bandoliers around their shoulders, Mexican-guerrilla style. All carried six meals in C rations and four hand grenades. Then there were two M-60 machine guns with 800 rounds per weapon, nine claymore mines in

11. S. L. A. Marshall, op. cit.

each squad, three M-79 grenade launchers with 24 rounds for each, twelve smoke grenades and twelve trip flares.

These are nigh incredible loads for any patrol. With their canteens, aid packs, bayonets, pill bottles, etc., they must have weighted out with an average carry between sixty-five and seventy pounds.

The patrol could be expected to take care of itself, but, in addition to organic armament, the commander could call down a host of supporting fires on whatever unfortunate enemy unit he encountered.

Unfortunately, he did not encounter many enemy units, at least not on favorable terms. Although captured enemy documents soon confirmed that the Americans were fighting elements of five battalions from two PAVN regiments, as well as local Viet Cong units, none of the patrols captured prisoners or attracted defectors, who could have offered precise enemy locations, strength, and intentions.

As one result, operations continued on a hit-and-miss basis. Although patrols sometimes "found" the enemy, too often by virtue of stumbling into ambushes, they rarely succeeded in "fixing" and "destroying" him. Although the "kill" ratio at times was favorable, it was never decisive. Apparently at home in the terrain, the enemy seemed to have little difficulty in breaking off an action at will and in evading pursuit forces. Hennessey's units could not hope to cover the entire area, and other, substitute measures proved ineffective. Lacking troops to probe the northern arc of the range, Hennessey attempted to neutralize it with tear-gas crystals, but these quickly dissolved in the rainy climate. B-52 strikes in the same area probably did about as little damage as tear gas.

Within two weeks, the operation bogged down. In Marshall's words,

. . . So there, for the most part, they stood and waited, or patrolled, and in either case served. The highland interior was no longer being prowled and pounded. The wishful hope was that the enemy, deprived of his stores, driven by hunger, would emerge, poking through the holes in large numbers looking for rice.

Hennessey did the best he could with the forces at his disposal. Parts of the operation were very professional—for example, an ambush set by an experienced and specially trained platoon of twenty-nine men infiltrated into the area by helicopters using appropriate deceptive techniques. General Marshall described the action:

. . . They went well loaded. Every man carried ten full magazines for his M-16, four fragmentation grenades, one claymore mine and one trip flare. Of food, there was enough in C rations to take care of six meals, since they figured they might be on their own for two days. Counting his rifle, bayonet and clothing, each soldier was carrying about fifty-five pounds. . . .

It took them not more than thirty minutes to walk from the landing zone to the ambush site. They had hoped to have about an hour of daylight after

arrival, affording time to choose the best possible concealment, but had cut things a bit short, as dark comes early in that latitude. Still, their passage had been both swift and silent . . . they were quite sure they had not been detected.

. . . Beyond the grass were two small fields framed by closely clipped, low hedges. Here they would set their deadfall, extending somewhere between thirty and forty meters. The clearing to their front was more than adequate.

There was no need for talk about how to dispose themselves. Having rehearsed the exercise and discussed their plan numerous times, they went to their stations automatically, silently.

They divided into two lines. The eleven riflemen in the rear rank were to about-face and point weapons across the hedges, with one machine gun in the center. Here was the insurance against counter surprise.

The twelve men in the front line were to spring the ambush. Here, too, was a machine gun in the center, pointed leftward along the trail toward the village. The violence and fury of this trap lay, however, in the twenty claymore mines evenly distributed along it frontally. The closest claymore was about twenty meters from the trail. The blast of this mine approximately equals that of a 60 mm. mortar round and its maximum effective range is about fifty meters. So as to concentration, the setup was superlative.

This particular ambush yielded fifteen enemy killed, with one slightly wounded American. But this was one ambush in a large area. As Marshall noted,

. . . The enemy too frequently declined to react sensibly when he was getting away, and it is axiomatic that if any escape route was left unguarded, he would invariably find it. Evasion was his one great talent. The net cast around the mountains was not only very large but very loose, one wide sector going wholly unmanned for lack of troops. So there were large hopes and small expectations.[12]

The battle of Vinh Thanh Valley, which did not yield spectacular results, was only one of dozens of such operations. Not all resulted in battle. Task forces ranging from reinforced companies and battalions to brigades and even divisions tramped through the highlands and border country to the west in almost constant pursuit of the elusive enemy. So successful did MACV deem search-and-destroy tactics, that over sixty operations a month were mounted in South Vietnam in the first six months of 1966, an effort that, according to MACV, yielded a "kill" figure of over sixteen thousand PAVN/VC troops.[13] Marshall has described several of these, and, from the standpoint of mobil-

12. Ibid.

13. Edgar O'Ballance, "Strategy in Viet Nam," *Army Quarterly*, January 1967; see also Dennis J. Duncanson, "The Vitality of the Viet Cong," *Encounter*, December 1966.

ity and organizational flexibility, they are indeed impressive. In one instance, in August, helicopters lifted most of one division to the Cambodian border area—sixty miles to the west—in less than twelve hours, to kick off a campaign that yielded 861 enemy dead (confirmed) and over two hundred prisoners. Still another operation, Hawthorne Two, yielded 459 enemy dead (confirmed) at a cost of thirty-nine U.S./ARVN dead and 196 wounded. In support of Hawthorne Two, artillery units fired 15,250 rounds of light shells and 4,020 rounds of heavy stuff. The attached helicopter battalion had transported 8,657 men and 395 tons of cargo in 1,579 flight hours—enemy fire struck fifteen of the machines.[14]

An equally impressive effort simultaneously was occurring in the more heavily populated I Corps areas on the coast. Here the build-up of III Marine Amphibious Force had been rapid and efficient. Commanded by Major General (soon to be Lieutenant General) Lewis Walt, the force soon numbered nearly sixty thousand troops, including air units.

We have already discussed the marines' early and, in some ways, successful clearing of Chu Lai Peninsula. Unfortunately, before that area could be pacified—that is, the Viet Cong infrastructure rooted out and replaced by government authority—Walt had been forced to expand his command area: In just over a year, it would grow from eight square miles to eighteen hundred-plus square miles, mostly under Viet Cong control. His mission also had altered: In addition to defending airfields at Da Nang, Chu Lai, and Phu Bai, he was supposed to destroy PAVN and main-force Viet Cong units in the area and root out VC infrastructure, as part of an extensive pacification program.[15]

Tactical operations at first remained at small-unit level and consisted primarily in patrol and ambush work essential to command security. By summer of 1966, marine units had carried out thousands of patrols, while helicopters and marine fixed-wing aircraft had flown thousands of sorties, an activity that, all together, resulted in several thousand confirmed enemy dead[16]—though how many were enemy and how many were peasants is a moot question.

For some time, marines relied on search-and-destroy tactics favored by the American army. Two reasons explained the choice. One was command ignorance. General Walt later explained that, when he assumed command in Vietnam, he did not understand the nature of the

14. S. L. A. Marshall, op. cit.

15. Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1970; see also Russel H. Stolfi, *U. S. Marine Corps Civic Action Efforts in Vietnam—March 1965–March 1966* (Washington: U. S. Marine Corps, 1968). Captain Stolfi describes this transition period in detail.

16. U. S. Marine Corps, "III Marine Amphibious Force—The Mission—And How It Is Fulfilled." Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, October, 1967; see also West, op. cit.

war, a failing we shall later discuss in detail.[17] Senior marine commanders echoed Walt's confusion (with some exceptions) and attempted to fight the war with conventional methods.

The second fact was I Corps area, which had been under VC control for a long time. I Corps area comprised five provinces (about ten thousand square miles) and over 3 million people, 90 per cent of whom lived in the narrow coastal strip. Although the South Vietnamese Government exercised some control in the cities, the countryside, in general, belonged to the Viet Cong. Marine units sent to outlying areas such as Duc Pho, in Quang Ngai province, lived in a sea of hostility provoked both by regional resentments of Saigon government and by fear of the Viet Cong. Jonathan Schell, who later centered a series of *New Yorker* articles on this coastal area, met a marine who had served in Duc Pho:

> . . . He said that for the first month they had been unable to travel five hundred yards beyond their camp without running into heavy enemy fire. After receiving reinforcements, they had moved out farther but had still been unable to penetrate many areas.[18]

One result, an important one, was lack of intelligence on which to base operations—a complaint common to all allied commands in Vietnam, and one generally met by random destruction of "suspected" VC hideouts. Schell, who was appalled at the amount of destruction in Quang Ngai province, explained its etiology:

> . . . The villages had been destroyed in many ways and in a great variety of circumstances—at first by our Marines and later by our Army. In accordance with the local policy of the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force, a village could be bombed immediately and without the issuing of any warning to the villagers if American or other friendly troops or aircraft had received fire from within it. This fire might consist of a few sniper shots or of a heavy attack by the enemy. Whatever the provocation from the village, the volume of firepower brought to bear in response was so great that in almost every case the village was completely destroyed. A village could also be destroyed if intelligence reports indicated that the villagers had been supporting the Vietcong by offering them food and labor, but in such a case the official 3rd Marine Amphibious Force rules of engagement required that our Psychological Warfare Office send a plane to warn the villagers, either by dropping leaflets or by making an airborne announcement. Because it was impossible to print rapidly enough a leaflet addressed to a specific village and specifying a precise time for bombing, the Psychological Warfare people had largely abandoned leaflet drops as a method of warning, and had begun to rely almost completely on airborne announcements. There was no official ruling on when troops on the ground were permitted to burn a village, but, generally speaking, this occurred most often after fire had been received

17. New York *Times,* November 18, 1970; see also Walt, op. cit.
18. Jonathan Schell, *The Military Half* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).

from the village, or when the province chief had given a specific order in advance for its destruction. In some cases, the villagers had been removed from an area in a big-scale operation and then the area had been systematically destroyed. . . .[19]

Such tactics did not endear the allied cause to local populations. So long as peasants remained hostile or apathetic, marines were not going to obtain information on enemy locations and movements, which they needed in order to fight successfully. In a relatively short time, the marines set about obtaining this information.

They approached the task in two ways: Area commanders instituted civic programs designed to win over local people. These varied considerably in effectiveness. Some of them proved outstanding. In August 1965, one enterprising commander instituted the Golden Fleece program, wherein marines guaranteed four villages a secure rice harvest in return for information on local Viet Cong.[20] Other programs seemed to prosper, but progress remained slow, due both to interruptions caused by enemy attacks and to widespread xenophobia and peasant apathy, perhaps the inevitable result of this particular civil war.

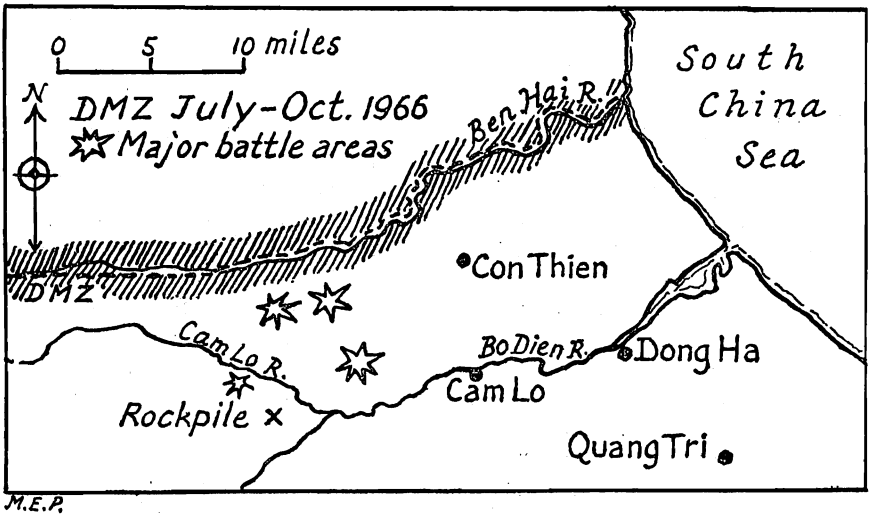
The second method was better. Beginning with villages south of Da Nang, marines provided medical services and began assisting in various construction projects. This necessitated working with I Corps commander Lieutenant General Nguyen Chanh Thi, a suspicious Buddhist nationalist who, in March 1966, would be involved in a minor civil war with the Saigon government.

Walt nonetheless persuaded Thi to co-operate in establishing a joint area-pacification council of civil and military members, under whose aegis the pacification program slowly spread to a nine-village area. Not content with creeping progress, Walt borrowed a page from the old Nicaraguan campaign and persuaded Thi to go along in establishing a Combined Action Group—an integrated company of marines and Popular Forces (local militia) designed to provide village security. First tried at Phu Bai, the experiment worked almost at once. Shaplen, who visited the village in early 1966, observed marines and militia working together and even learning each other's language:

. . . As a result of these joint patrols, the Vietcong network in four villages around Phu Bai has been measurably damaged, though the Communists still slip in eight or ten armed agents at a time to collect food and taxes from the population and nothing as advanced as a Census/Grievance and Aspiration unit can yet function safely. Road traffic in this area has picked up noticeably, and hamlet markets now attract buyers and sellers from as

19. Ibid. The author points out that printed warnings often failed in purpose, because villagers were illiterate. We have pointed out that a similar situation existed in the Rif Rebellion (see Chapter 28, Volume I).

20. Stolfi, op. cit.



far off as two kilometers, which may not sound like much but is a lot compared with what the safe-travel radius was six months ago.[21]

Such was the impact of Combined Action Groups that Walt extended the program as rapidly as possible. In September 1966, the commandant of the Marine Corps, General Wallace Greene, reported his favorable impression:

. . . The people, in turn, are casting out the Viet Cong from their hamlets and telling us where the enemy is hidden. And the people in the villages are defending their homes with Combined Action Companies composed of a team of US Marines and local militia. The success of these Combined Action Companies has surpassed our expectations. There are over 40 of these units now operating and we expect to have a total of about 75 by the end of this year.[22]

Two events now occurred to interrupt the burgeoning pacification program. In March, Buddhist riots, which involved Thi and brought an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between ARVN and Walt's marines, seriously impeded the pacification program.[23] By the time this crisis ended, intelligence was reporting indications of a planned North Vietnamese attack through the DMZ. This was the so-called "neutral strip,"

21. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra;* see also Mulligan, op. cit.; Corson, op. cit.; R. K. Stanford, "Bamboo Brigades," *Marine Corps Gazette,* March 1966; D. L. Evans, "Civil Affairs in Vietnam," *Marine Corps Gazette,* March 1968; Stolfi, op. cit.

22. (Editorial), "Marines in Viet-Nam," *Marine Corps Gazette,* September 1966.

23. Walt, op. cit.

established by the Geneva Accords, at the 17th parallel. It ran almost sixty miles inland to the Laotian border and extended three miles on either side of the parallel. Although Hanoi had used it for infiltration purposes (as undoubtedly had the South for covert purposes), most of their troops and supply were reaching the South by means of the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos and Cambodia, or by the sea route.

U.S./ARVN counteroperations in the central highlands and to the south were probably beginning to make the long land route less attractive, as were air interdiction operations, which, along with naval operations, we shall discuss shortly. A political factor also entered: The Viet Cong had controlled large parts of I Corps area for years; the Buddhist riots in Hué in March and April—in effect a civil war—must have further enhanced the area in the eyes of the North. All these factors have been discussed in still another brilliant *New Yorker* article by Robert Shaplen, whose book *The Road from War* is essential to an understanding of these crucial years.[24]

In spring of 1966, at least four PAVN divisions were known to be immediately north of the DMZ. Intelligence reports increasingly confirmed that PAVN units were crossing the line and busily ". . . preparing the battlefield" for subsequent operations. Communist movement began in late May, when vanguard units of Division 324B crossed the DMZ into the rugged terrain of northern Quang Tri province. This was a "regular" army division, some ten to twelve thousand troops well armed and equipped, though perhaps not so well fed. Soldiers carried Chinese copies of Soviet weapons, the AK-47 assault rifle with fifty to a hundred rounds of 7.62-mm. ammunition, RPD light machine guns, SKS carbines, RPG-2 rocket launchers, grenades. Shaplen later wrote:

> . . . Each man's supplies further consisted of two khaki, green, or purple uniforms, a canteen, a canvas bag, a raincoat, a pair of rubber sandals, a pair of boots, a hammock, a blanket, a mosquito net, some halazone water-purification tablets, some quinine tablets, some vitamin pills, a small can of chicken or shrimp, a kilogram and a half of salt, and seven kilograms of rice. According to information obtained later from prisoners and from captured documents, food, especially rice, was in very short supply, and several of the battalions had to be pressed into service as transport units, going back and forth a number of times to bring more rice down from North Vietnam before crossing the Ben Hai River for good.[25]

General Westmoreland, in Saigon, had been keeping a close eye on the situation, as had General Walt in Da Nang, and had worked out contingency plans that involved both Marine Corps and ARVN units. In July, a small marine reconnaissance team landed by helicopter but was soon spotted, and quickly evacuated by the same means. A few

24. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*
25. Ibid.

days later, it tried again, and, this time, reported enemy presence in strength, reports confirmed by ARVN units who had taken some prisoners in the same area. Operation Hastings, designed to intercept and disrupt the North Vietnamese units, now began.[26]

Operation Hastings called for "spoiling" operations by a marine force of seven battalions plus artillery units—Task Force Delta, some eight thousand troops, commanded by Brigadier General Lowell English. While Delta operated well to the northwest, an ARVN force of five infantry and airborne battalions—about three thousand men—moved into the eastern and southcentral zones.

English landed two battalions by helicopter at either end of a valley about a mile south of the DMZ and northeast of a prominent terrain feature known as the Rockpile. Shaplen later wrote that English's battle plan ". . . was brilliantly conceived to take the enemy by surprise on his key trails and behind his own lines and to smash and destroy him before he had a chance to regain his balance and his momentum." Unfortunately, the enemy did not seem sufficiently surprised to prevent his reacting furiously and effectively. He first prevented a juncture of the two battalions; by the time they did join, fighting was so intense that English decided to break it off in favor of a new attack from the south. The marine withdrawal provoked more severe fighting. English meanwhile committed other battalions to block the southern portion of the area, and, for several days, marines fought a series of hot actions ranging from squad to battalion strength. Throughout this period, a small reconnaissance team occupied the Rockpile to call in air, artillery, and naval gunfire on nearby PAVN columns. ARVN units to the south and east also, on occasion, engaged enemy units, and claimed several hundred enemy lives.

Operation Hastings ended in early August with a general backing off of PAVN regiments. Pointing to enemy losses—nearly nine thousand confirmed killed, with another eight hundred estimated killed and several thousand wounded—Marine Corps spokesmen claimed a "victory" of major proportions. In some respects, however, it was a Pyrrhic victory: The marines lost over two hundred killed and several hundred wounded. If PAVN division 324B had been knocked out, it was temporary, and three other divisions remained in the immediate area. Finally, as General Walt later noted, the enemy accomplished two major objectives: ". . . they had slowed the pacification of the I Corps area by forcing me to commit men into the largely barren north, and they had made many headlines in the United States about escalation and American casualties."[27]

Operation Hastings gave way to Operation Prairie. Increasingly bloody contacts soon confirmed that Division 324B, despite its pum-

26. Ibid.; see also Walt, op. cit.
27. Walt, op. cit.

meling, was still active in the DMZ, where it was fortifying the area in the vicinity of the Rockpile. In frustrating this plan, the marines fought another series of bloody actions, in some cases using tanks. The description of the fighting at the time in various papers and magazines reminded more than one marine veteran of both World War II and Korean actions, particularly the assault and capture of Hills 400 and 484, which dominated the enemy's main line of resistance in the DMZ and forced him once again to withdraw to the North.

Operation Prairie terminated in early October. The marines claimed over twelve hundred "counted" dead, with another sixteen hundred "probable," at a cost of about two hundred marine lives.[28] Unfortunately, the area would remain a hot spot; further action would center on Khe Sanh, not many miles to the south.

While army and marine units fought in the central highlands and coastal areas, Westmoreland continued to build up forces and to undertake operations in III Corps area, which included Saigon, and in IV Corps area, the Mekong Delta, which was almost completely a guerrilla challenge.

The enemy was strong in both these corps areas. In III Corps area, Zones C and D and the Iron Triangle had been Viet Minh centers of resistance and were extremely well fortified and organized. Early in 1966, a combined ARVN-U.S. force had swept part of Zone D in Binh Duong province to capture over six thousand enemy documents and large amounts of supply and munitions.[29] Probing efforts continued during the year and consisted both of search-and-destroy and more-permanent, clear-and-hold operations such as those undertaken by an Australian task force southeast of Saigon and very well described in a book by an Australian soldier and scholar, Robert O'Neill, *Vietnam Task*.[30]

Throughout 1966, allied troops, including Australians, a few New Zealanders, and the vanguard of a Korean division, continued to arrive in South Vietnam. Once sufficient numbers were on hand, the American command directed a series of giant "sweeps" through sanctuary zones. Toward the end of 1966 and in early 1967, such operations as Attleboro, Cedar Falls, and Junction City uncovered and destroyed miles of tunnel defenses, underground hospitals, and supply depots.

Simultaneously, other troops were fighting other wars.

The air war consisted of two parts. One was the out-country war already familiar to us: the continuance of Operation Rolling Thunder—the strategic bombing of North Vietnam and tactical interdiction of supply routes leading to and running through Laos and Cambodia. Rolling Thunder utilized both B-52 bombers (carrying 500- and 750-pound

28. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*
29. Pike, op. cit.
30. O'Neill, op. cit.

bombs) flying from Thailand and Guam, and a host of air force, navy, and marine planes flying from immediate land and carrier bases. In spring of 1966, President Johnson yielded to pleas of military advisers and authorized strikes against oil-storage depots, including those around Hanoi and Haiphong. This effort continued throughout the summer: ". . . By the end of July, the Defense Intelligence Agency reported to Secretary McNamara that 70 per cent of North Vietnam's original [oil] storage capacity had been destroyed."[31] In December 1966, President Johnson again yielded to pleas of military advisers and authorized strikes against the theretofore prohibited inner ring of Hanoi, an act that brought repercussions we shall discuss in the next chapter. The year's bombing tally was impressive: In 1965, planes had flown 55,000 missions, which dropped 33,000 tons of bombs in the North; in 1966, they flew 138,000 missions to drop 128,000 tons of bombs on targets in the North. In December, the President also agreed that, beginning in February 1967, B-52 flights would increase from sixty to eight hundred monthly (including missions over South Vietnam).[32]

Air force, navy, and marine planes, including giant B-52 bombers, also carried on an in-country aerial war consisting of conventional strategic bombing of VC base areas and defensive complexes, tactical interdiction of supply routes along borders and inside South Vietnam, and tactical and logistic support of ground units. During 1966, air force pilots alone ". . . flew more than 70,000 attack sorties in South Vietnam," an effort that, according to an air force writer, ". . . denied the insurgents the initiative. The enemy no longer can mass for sustained attacks, and the sanctuary he once knew in the darkened jungles is a thing of the past." During the first three days of Operation Attleboro, air force planes delivered three hundred thousand pounds of rations, ammunition, and other supplies to the ground forces.[33]

The air war also involved a host of special missions including around-the-clock rescue of downed airmen. High-flying planes bombarded Vietnam with millions of Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) amnesty leaflets, which exhorted the enemy to surrender (and prosper thereby)—according to the air force, these leaflets brought in over nineteen thousand "ralliers" by end of 1966.[34] RB-57s, RB-66s, ". . . supersonic RF-101 Voodoos and double-sonic RF-4C Phantoms" patrolled the skies on thousands of reconnaissance missions, each utilizing highly sophisticated techniques to photograph targets that ranged from the immediate ground battle scene to enemy lines of communication and suspected enemy concentration areas. During 1966, air force technicians were processing four million feet of film a month, while aerial reconnaissance

31. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 480).
32. Ibid. (p. 523); see also U. S. Air Force, op. cit.
33. U. S. Air Force, op. cit.
34. Harvey, op. cit.; see also U. S. Air Force, op. cit.

was furnishing ". . . 85 per cent of all immediate intelligence data in Southeast Asia."[35]

Still another aerial effort involved chemical defoliation, the theory being to deprive the enemy of natural cover as well as of food in his base areas. This mission fell to the Ranch Hand Squadron, whose motto, according to one correspondent, Frank Harvey, was: "Only You Can Prevent Forests." The squadron's motivation was noteworthy for its brevity:

> . . . Dresser showed me around the squadron rooms. It was a spartan place. The familiar sign, FUCK COMMUNISM, which was painted horizontally in stripes of red, white and blue, was tacked to one wall. . . .[36]

Ranch Hand pilots performed the hazardous duty of spraying from a hundred fifty feet at a slow speed over generally enemy-infested areas. An eleven-thousand-pound pay load, which cost five thousand dollars, took four minutes to spread and killed everything green over three hundred acres.[37]

The American navy was also fighting two wars: an out-country effort, which attempted to intercept coastal junks bringing arms and supply from North to South, and the in-country effort, which involved coastal and inland-waterway patrols to intercept supplies intended for the Viet Cong. The out-country naval war also included a support role for American marines and ARVN units in I Corps area, a role later expanded southward to include operations in the Mekong Delta. A flotilla of cruisers, destroyers, and smaller craft furnished on-call naval-gunfire support, while other craft landed amphibious teams as necessary to fight coastal operations.

Both efforts quickly escalated to majestic proportions. The out-country interdiction task fell to Task Force 77, an armada of five aircraft carriers, four hundred aircraft, about twenty-five support ships, and over thirty thousand men operating from "Yankee Station," in Tonkin Gulf. A pamphlet issued by Seventh Fleet described the mission in precise-enough terms. Besides aerial bombardment (planes were soon flying thousands and even tens of thousands of missions), TF 77's surface arm—

> . . . the guided missile cruisers, frigates and destroyers—are prowling the Vietnamese coast, foiling attempts to infiltrate by sea and pumping tons of ordnance into shore battery positions and coastal supply routes.[38]

Interdiction of coastal operations north of the DMZ became the task of destroyers charged with Operation Sea Dragon, which, in its first six months, destroyed or damaged more than one thousand barges and

35. U. S. Air Force, op. cit.
36. Harvey, op. cit.
37. Ibid.; see also U. S. Air Force, op. cit.
38. U. S. Seventh Fleet, "Task Force 77." No place, no date.

junks that were allegedly carrying supplies South. Still another armada, of radar-picket escorts and smaller craft, both navy and coast guard, carried out Operation Market Time, below the DMZ, in an effort to disrupt infiltration of supplies along the thousand miles of coastline. Naval-gunfire support hinged on another armada, of heavy and light cruisers, guided-missile destroyers and frigates, destroyers, destroyer escorts, and radar-picket escorts. This combined might could send eight-inch 55-caliber shells, each weighing over 250 pounds, some fifteen miles, or six-inch, five-inch, or three-inch shells to a lesser range.[39] This effort would soon be garnished with a battleship, USS *New Jersey,* removed from mothballs and reconditioned at a cost of $40 million.

The in-country, or riverine, warfare also quickly grew. Fought mainly in the Mekong Delta, it introduced a host of specially adapted craft ranging from PGM patrol gunboats to PBR river patrol boats and ". . . unsinkable styrofoam and fiber-glass swimmer support boats, Swift Boats, patrol air cushion vehicles (capable of traveling over 65 knots, combat loaded, over land or water), and an impressive list of modified amphibious craft, including monitors and armored troop carriers, sampans and junks." These operated either on their own or in conjunction with American and ARVN troop units: sea-air-land, or SEAL, teams extended the offensive aspect of river patrol operations inland, and the Navy-Army Mobile Riverine Force, an amphibious strike force of two army battalions, eventually began to penetrate fortified Viet Cong areas.[40]

There remained the final war: the "other war"—the war for people's "hearts and minds"—the real war. This had also gained impetus in mid-1965, when the new American ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, brought with him, as principal assistant, a counterinsurgency expert, veteran of the earlier Philippine and French Indochina campaigns, Edward Lansdale. Lansdale had always advocated grass-roots pacification as the key to revolutionary warfare. As opposed to centralized direction of the program from Saigon down to hamlet level, Lansdale wanted to begin at hamlet level and work outward and upward—a decentralized, horizontal concept practiced with such telling effect by the National Liberation Front.

Like previous regimes, the Thieu-Ky government opposed such an approach, since it would force Saigon to yield partial control not only of provinces and of pacification cadres but of immensely valuable supplies daily arriving from the United States and daily adding to personal fortunes of South Vietnamese officials. In addition to Vietnamese bureaucracy, Lansdale also found himself at odds with a vast number of

39. U. S. Seventh Fleet, "Cruisers and Destroyers in Vietnam." No place, no date; see also, U. S. Navy, "Riverine Warfare," Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967.

40. U. S. Navy, op. cit.; see also Asprey, op. cit.

American agencies, a proliferation of bureaucracy, civil and military, so ably described by Robert Shaplen.[41]

The end result was a sluggish pacification program. Thanks mainly to Lansdale, the Johnson administration was not allowed to forget this vital failure, and pressure continued on the Thieu-Ky government to take necessary action. In January 1966, Prime Minister Ky, in a major speech,

> . . . set three primary goals for his country and for the government: to defeat the enemy and to pacify and rebuild the countryside; to stabilize the economy; and to build a democracy. He advanced specific programs to help achieve each objective.[42]

In early February 1966, President Johnson met with South Vietnamese leaders in Honolulu, where Ky impressed the President by his determination to build ". . . a really democratic government, one which is put into office by the people themselves and which has the confidence of the people." The pacification program, Ky promised, would go ahead full steam; in return, Johnson promised a priority effort from Washington and by the American mission in Saigon. In the President's later words,

> . . . I remember Ambassador Lodge saying: "We have moved ahead here today in the fight to improve the lot of the little man at the grassroots. That is what this is all about."[43]

The President himself expected rapid results: By the next meeting between the South Vietnamese and Americans, he wanted ". . . coonskins nailed to the wall." He later wrote,

> . . . As a result of the Honolulu conference, the government of Vietnam under Thieu and Ky was pledged to an all-out effort to win "the other war" in their country. We were equally pledged to help them in that struggle. I ordered a reorganization of our Mission in Saigon to reflect this new emphasis on nonmilitary programs. At the meeting in Hawaii, I selected our Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam, William J. Porter [who had replaced U. Alexis Johnson in 1965] to take charge of this drive. During the next month I established a special office in the White House headed by Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council staff. As my special assistant, he coordinated and supervised Washington support for pacification and other nonmilitary campaigns.[44]

To fight the other war, Thieu and Ky already had established a Ministry of Revolutionary Development, headed by Major General Nguyen Duc Thang, whose principal assistant was Major Nguyen Be.

41. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra;* see also Corson, op. cit.
42. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
43. Ibid.; see also Johnson (*Public Papers*—1966, Book I), *supra.*
44. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

The reader will perhaps remember that past South Vietnamese governments had tried a number of pacification programs involving cadre administration: the Agroville cadre, Mobile Administration cadre, Rural-Political cadre, and Armed Propaganda cadre. The Khanh government had instituted a new pacification program cored by Advance People's Action Groups, and this had been expanded into People's Action Teams.

General Thang and Major Be had recognized for some time the shortcomings of earlier programs. As early as summer of 1965, Be and an American adviser, Richard Kriegel, had worked out a pacification program in conjunction with an American marine battalion whose tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) comprised two hamlets ". . . which had been under VC control for nearly one year." Kriegel later wrote,

> . . . As a result of the Marines' efforts in support of the GVN plan over 2,000 people returned to the two hamlets within a period of 45 days. Hamlet government was reactivated and the people openly demonstrated their support of the GVN. Thus the first successful pacification effort was completed in Binh Dinh [province] after nearly one year of VC military and political victories.[45]

The experience impressed Be and Thang, who agreed that the government's principal pacification instrument of the time, the forty-man People's Action Team, was neither large enough nor sufficiently motivated to provide ". . . sufficient guidance to the hamlet people in the essential areas of hamlet administration, construction and motivation." The result was a fifty-nine-man Revolutionary Development Group, trained at a special center run by Be.

In theory, little fault could be found with the new program, which emulated existing Communist doctrines. Its over-all objective was twofold: to pacify the hamlet and to help build a better life for its people. Revolutionary Development Groups were to be guided by four principles:

> . . . 1. The cadre are to be the link between the people and the government of Viet-Nam.
>
> 2. The people are the main force and the cadre are to be their guides.
>
> 3. The old life is to be destroyed, and in its place, a new life is to be created. The result of the creation of a new life will be the New Life Hamlet (Ap Doi Moi).
>
> 4. The cadre are guided by the Ministry of Revolutionary Development's policy and doctrine and by the people's will.

Once a hamlet was militarily secure, government forces would concen-

45. Richard Kriegel, "Revolutionary Development," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1967.

trate on rooting out VC infrastructure, while simultaneously helping the people to build a viable "community of responsibility." Two of seven "basic techniques" were particularly to the point:

> . . . More reliance will be placed upon the people's ability to provide local resources. When the people have done their utmost to tackle a particular problem, including the construction of buildings, etc., and are unable to progress on their own, then and only then will the Government of Viet-Nam step in to help. New Life Hamlets will not become beggars.

Again,

> . . . The people build; the cadre guide and assist; and the soldiers defend. In 1967, it is planned that each of the ARVN divisions will be assigned a TAOR which will provide the outer protective shield behind which the pacification program can be carried out.

All this was good common sense, but more was to come. The RD program spelled out eleven steps necessary to create a New Life Hamlet. The first four were essential to building a community of responsibility: eliminating the Communist infrastructure *as well as* ". . . hamlet bullies, grafters, thieves and corrupt village officials"; clearing away ". . . the petty grievances and problems: the distrust and suspicions which exist in the hearts and minds of the hamlet people . . ."; instituting hamlet elections; organizing local militia forces. However, seven more steps were spelled out to turn a "community of responsibility" into a "community of prosperity." In Kriegel's words, ". . . The newly reactivated forces of cooperation, understanding and love must be channeled into a positive program—into a socio-economic program": a program built on educational, health, and economic reforms.

The instrument to do all this, the fifty-nine-man RD cadre consisting of men and women recruited by province chiefs on a two-year basis, consisted of a thirty-nine-man People's Action Team, which provided security for the work of Census-Grievance, Civil Affairs, and New Life Development cadres. Census-Grievance teams were trained to identify and classify hamlet population and also to take swift action on important local grievances. Civil affairs work followed, in which village administration was reorganized and elections held. New Life Development cadres simultaneously began helping people to help themselves. Large doses of political propaganda accompanied cadre efforts.[46]

The new program faced a number of difficulties, which we shall discuss later. Buddhist riots in spring of 1966 added to manifold problems already faced by the RD program, and it failed to make significant headway during the summer.

46. Ibid.; see also W. L. Traynor, "The Political War in Viet-Nam," *Marine Corps Gazette,* August 1967; Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*

An effective pacification program depended, as always, on an effective government, and here some progress seemingly did appear. At American urging, in September 1966, the junta held elections for a constituent assembly that would write a new constitution. Although polls opened in only 55 per cent of the country, American officials applauded a turnout of ". . . 81 per cent of over 5 million registered voters, in spite of Vietcong intimidation and terrorism."[47] In general, American observers commented favorably on electoral procedures. If the mechanism appeared clumsy and in places questionable, no one could deny that the elections introduced the "democratic idea" to the South Vietnamese.

And few denied that definite progress was being recorded in general. The enthusiasm of both governments was plain at a conference in Manila in October 1966. One of President Johnson's most intimate advisers, Clark Clifford, later wrote:

> . . . In 1966, I served as an adviser to President Johnson at the Manila Conference. It was an impressive gathering of the Chiefs of State and Heads of Government of allied nations; it reassured me that we were on the right road and that our military progress was bringing us closer to the resolution of the conflict.[48]

Johnson's other advisers apparently agreed. One result of the conference was ". . . specific plans for the postwar and long-term civil development of Viet Nam." To accomplish these, a Joint Development Group soon came into being, ". . . an organization composed of a private American company, Development and Resources Corporation, and a group of Vietnamese professionals," with ". . . the task of postwar planning, of creating a design and a strategy for the transition from a wartime to a peacetime footing, and of making an objective assessment of the prospects of South Viet Nam's economy in the years ahead."[49]

As the year ended, a new optimism seemed to have emerged in South Vietnam, and with some justification. ARVN forces totaled 285,000, with another 284,000 Regional and Popular troops, plus about 130,000 police and some thirty thousand Revolutionary Development cadres. The infusion of American strength was daily freeing ARVN units for pacification duties. Although the Viet Cong continued to control over half of the countryside, American counteraction, without doubt, had blunted their offensive plans. American troops numbering 350,000 had

47. Thompson (*No Exit*), *supra;* see also Shaplen in *The Road from War,* who questions the 81 per cent figure as optimistic; Tran Van Dinh, "Elections in Vietnam," *The New Republic,* July 2, 1966, offers interesting background on electoral problems.

48. Clifford, op. cit.

49. David E. Lilienthal, "Postwar Development in Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs,* January 1969.

now arrived in South Vietnam, and more were on the way—though not as many as Westmoreland and the JCS would have liked. The ground, naval, and air wars continued to escalate. More than ever, the U.S.A. seemed determined to win the war.

Chapter 83

Blurs on the operational canvas • Failure of Operation Rolling Thunder • Increasing cost of aerial warfare • Shortcomings of attrition strategy and search-and-destroy tactics • The refugee problem • Manpower facts • The numbers game • Russian and Chinese aid to the North • The ground war • Increasing American costs (I) • The logistics picture • The Jurassic dinosaur

A NUMBER OF BLURS unfortunately marred the operational canvas in Vietnam. One was the failure of Operation Rolling Thunder —bombing North Vietnam—to accomplish its objectives (already being variously changed by Administration officials). The reader will perhaps remember that the theory advocated by the JCS and such presidential advisers as Walt Rostow was to hurt the North sufficiently to cause Hanoi to call off the war in the South. Although planes flew fifty-five thousand sorties in 1965, to drop thirty-three thousand tons of bombs and otherwise shoot up military targets, top-level intelligence reports at end of 1965 confirmed that bombing had indeed ". . . reduced industrial performance." But: ". . . the primary rural nature of the area permits continued functioning of the subsistence economy." Moreover, reports agreed, Hanoi seemed as determined as ever to support the war in the South.[1] The effort expanded during 1966, when planes flew 138,000 missions to drop 128,000 more tons of bombs. According to Bernard

1. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 462, 469, 494).

Fall, who quoted McNamara, the 1966 "bombing plan" called for expending 638,000 tons of "aerial munitions"—thirty-eight thousand tons *more* than dropped in the Pacific theater in *all* of World War II[2]—yet the Pentagon report quoted CIA estimates that the bombing ". . . accomplished little more than in 1965."[3]

But operational costs were nonetheless enormous. In 1965, Rolling Thunder cost 171 planes and a direct operational expense of $460 million; installation of Russian surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in the Hanoi-Haiphong areas insured higher losses. In 1966, American planes encountered ". . . the most sophisticated and concentrated air defense network ever faced in any war."[4] Although American fliers shot down thirty-six MIGs and otherwise carried out bombing and interdiction missions, the effort cost another 147 American aircraft—a total of 318 lost. Direct operational costs rose from $460 million to $1.2 billion in 1966.[5]

Operation Rolling Thunder also continued to reap heavy criticism both within and without the Administration. Although raids in June and July knocked out an estimated 70 per cent of North Vietnam's oil-storage capacity, it soon became clear that the North Vietnamese could get by on fuel dispersed in drums, which meant that the flow of men and supply to the South did not diminish. This failure added to McNamara's disillusionment. According to the Pentagon report,

> . . . The Secretary was already in the process of rethinking the role of the entire air campaign in the U.S. effort. He was painfully aware of its inability to pinch off the infiltration to the South and had seen no evidence of its ability to break Hanoi's will, demoralize its population or bring it to the negotiation table.[6]

Escalation of bombing, in December, to the theretofore prohibited inner ring of Hanoi brought two major consequences: First, reports of civilian casualties raised an uproar in the world press, the more so since Harrison Salisbury, of the New York *Times,* was reporting directly from Hanoi at the time. Although the Johnson administration denied the accusation, top-secret CIA estimates, according to the Pentagon report, put the casualty figure in North Vietnam at thirty-six thousand for 1965 and 1966; of this figure, about 80 per cent were civilians.[7]

2. Bernard Fall, "Viet Nam in the Balance," *Foreign Affairs,* October 1966.
3. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 523; see also pp. 502–9, 518, 522).
4. U. S. Air Force, op. cit.
5. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 523).
6. Ibid. (pp. 480–81); see also p. 499: arguing from a World War II bias, Walt Rostow wrote in a memorandum to Rusk and McNamara in May 1966, ". . . I nevertheless feel it is quite possible the military effects of a systematic and sustained bombing of POL [petroleum-oil-lubricants] in North Vietnam may be more prompt and direct than conventional intelligence analysis would suggest. . . ."
7. Ibid. (pp. 513, 515, 523).

Second, the new effort may have caused Hanoi to back off from talks that some hoped would lead to negotiation. According to John Hightower, AP diplomatic correspondent in Washington, the Soviet Union and European satellites brought considerable pressure on North Vietnam at the Bulgarian Party Congress in mid-November 1966 to open the way for a peace conference. Negotiations by Polish intermediaries were allegedly proceeding favorably when American planes bombed Hanoi's outskirts, on December 13–14, causing Hanoi to break off proceedings. President Johnson later made light of this effort in his memoirs; Mr. Hightower, however, suggested that, in reality, the bombing was a major blunder, recognized as such by the President, and was the major reason for the later, four-month halt in bombing Hanoi as well as for a secret peace initiative (admitted, in part, by Johnson).[8]

The second blur centered on the ground war and emerged from Westmoreland's choice of attrition strategy and search-and-destroy tactics.

The problem faced by allied forces was essentially pacification. It demanded a qualitative and selective approach. The tactical task was to clear an area of Viet Cong so that civil teams could move in to build a viable and secure community. The military tactic thus required was clear-and-hold. The first task was to free an area from main-force guerrilla control. This called for fragmenting, dispersing, and destroying main-force units.

But that was only the beginning. Having cleared an area, military units had to "hold" it—that is, they had to provide area security while helping police forces to root out the all-important Viet Cong infrastructure, while, simultaneously, other specialized government forces undertook area rehabilitation and established viable government. Military strength was insufficient to clear and hold *all* enemy-infested, or even challenged, areas simultaneously. This meant that priority areas of operation had to be established, along with "economy of force" areas, which received only limited military pressure. Some challenged areas would perforce have had to be ignored until later in the pacification process. The real target was the peasant, not the guerrilla, and the only way the peasant's support could be gained was by establishing secure and viable local-area government—a slow and difficult task.

American strategy and tactics did not respect this essential requirement. Large "sweeps" through an area, though uncovering supply dumps and killing a few enemy, essentially answered nothing. The marines learned this in mid-1965, in their first major aggressive action, Operation Starlight. When combat units left the area for more-urgent duties, Viet Cong cadres and units slipped back to prevent civil teams from carrying out the vital pacification mission. The marines had not

8. Zagoria, op. cit.; see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra;* Henry Brandon in *Anatomy of Error: The Secret History of The Vietnam War* (London: André Deutsch, 1970), discusses this in detail.

realized that Operation Starlight, while allegedly killing some seven hundred Viet Cong, did not kill the NLF-PRP village infrastructure that made Viet Cong existence possible.

Neither did search-and-destroy tactics respect the essential military task. If such tactics had a place, it was a specialized place: On rare occasions, enemy concentrations, such as those in certain areas of the DMZ, could be countered by conventional-warfare methods. As a rule, however, such methods inflicted grievous damage on people whose co-operation was necessary if the over-all mission was to be accomplished. Instead of clearing and holding small areas as first essential steps in winning peasant support, marine and army units pushed out in all directions in huge, awkward attempts to "kill" the enemy. The results were several, and each contained the seeds of important failure.

The first was to widen the war. Up to spring of 1965, fighting in South Vietnam had remained selective, on the whole. Douglas Pike, an official and careful observer and analyst, later wrote:

. . . To those outside Vietnam there was a general perception, one shared neither by Vietnamese nor by foreigners within the country, that South Vietnam was a place of terror and sudden death, of coups d'état and bombings, of alarms and excursions by night. These things did exist. Yet somehow they remained in perspective and did not dominate the lives of either Americans or Vietnamese, in or out of Saigon. . . . Thousands of Vietnamese villagers lived through the entire 1960–1965 period without being involved in, and hardly ever being inconvenienced by, either the NLF's armed struggle or the GVN's military operations. Although subjected to great NLF organizational and political attention, the average rural Vietnamese was seldom if ever a direct victim of its violence program. The mental picture held by most Americans of rural Vietnam as a vast, boiling battlefield, of innumerable military engagements by day, of villages again and again torn apart by ARVN-guerrilla clashes, of a people in the midst of constant fighting and bloodshed, with no place to hide, living in a sort of no man's land between two contending armies—that picture simply does not hold up under scrutiny.

A villager of course would be monumentally affected if his village found itself under guerrilla attack, was the scene of a battle between ARVN troops and the guerrillas, or, if in a liberated area, was bombed or napalmed. But the odds of this happening in the 1960–1964 period were not much greater than the odds of being hit by lightning. If, on a statistical basis, a single rural villager was selected at random and studied in terms of how much the war impinged on his life, how often he witnessed combat or even saw combatants, it is most likely that he never would have been directly affected to any degree. The author talked to innumerable villagers in all parts of Vietnam, and most of them spoke of the effects of the war on others but admitted that it had never fallen on them.

The average rural Vietnamese could plant his rice, watch it grow, harvest it, and begin the cycle again, placidly unconcerned, unaffected by the swirl

around him. The result was that he did not perceive the situation in Vietnam as a "war" in the same way that Americans regard the Vietnam "war." Thus the frequently stated observation that the Vietnamese peasant "has known nothing but war for twenty years," although technically accurate, is also misleading. An American reading this formed a mental picture of the peasant in "war" under circumstances quite different from reality.[9]

Escalation inevitably changed this low-key situation. By July 1965, over four hundred thousand refugees had fled South Vietnam's countryside. The bulk of these unfortunates either ended in ghastly shantytowns around larger cities or in hastily constructed and very primitive camps. Their potential importance was tremendous. Roger Hilsman testified before the Senate in late 1965:

. . . The refugees are, in my judgment, a key [to an effective counterguerrilla program]. . . . What I am suggesting is that the refugee program should not be just to feed, house, and care for these people, but to train them for the job of making their villages guerrilla proof when they return—to train them as village defenders, as school teachers, medical technicians, agricultural advisers and so on. If an imaginative, positive effort is made, in sum, the refugees can become the vanguard of a peaceful revolution in the Vietnamese countryside sponsored by the free world—which is the only way that the bloody, Communist revolution can be circumvented.

Wesley Fishel, who was originally involved in Ngo Dinh Diem's government, warned the same Senate committee:

. . . If this refugee problem is badly handled, these people . . . could further intensify the political instability of South Vietnam and create even greater problems for the Government than it now faces.

If this situation is treated with some intelligence, then these 600,000 refugees of the moment could become a major asset to the Vietnamese Government. . . . If these people are handled well the Saigon government is going to secure the manifest loyalty which it needs. . . .

Alas, the refugees were not being well handled. Fishel, who visited the area in summer of 1965, told the committee that ". . . thus far I believe the military regime in Saigon has failed to grasp the tremendous implications of this flood of humanity which now threatens to engulf it." The Americans performed no better. AID had estimated a hundred thousand refugees and was unprepared to cope with a larger number. GVN's 1965 budget called for 370 million piasters for refugees, but, as of July, just less than 25 million piasters had been spent. The results were perhaps inevitable. Fishel testified:

. . . I think one generally is surprised by the aimlessness of much that goes on in the camp, by the fact that it is not the kind of planning for these people which would quickly restore them to some useful position in society.

9. Pike, op. cit.

The committee concluded that the refugee program

> . . . reflected the absence of an overall strategic concept and program which fully integrates the political, economic, and social aspects of the Vietnamese conflict with the needed military effort.[10]

The second result of promiscuous search-and-destroy tactics, equally unfortunate, was frequent damage to either person or property or both of peasants who remained and whose strength was necessary to effectively counter the insurgency. The third result was frequently to tire the troops with "Yorkish" operations that produced no real benefits:

> The noble Duke of York,
> He had ten thousand men,
> He marched them up to the top of the hill,
> And he marched them down again.

The fourth result was to flood the country with foreign troops. The fifth result was to increase the troop commitment and eventually relieve ARVN of combat duties, which, in turn, called for a larger American military investment, which compounded incipient failures.

By end of 1966, it was becoming clear that American troops had undertaken a task for which they were neither organized nor trained, a task that they did not understand—indeed, a task that could only have been accomplished by the South Vietnamese themselves. Such was the nature of the insurgency, the weakness of the South Vietnamese Government and army, and the limitations of American armed force, that search-and-destroy tactics *had* to fail in Vietnam.

It is a great pity that the innate ineptness of Westmoreland's strategy and tactics was not more obvious. Unfortunately, the "indicators," or criteria selected by the military, to judge progress in Vietnam seemed reasonable to many Americans, who, bless them, at first trusted their government and armed forces. But, as any number of experts had earlier pointed out and as Bernard Fall once again emphasized in 1966, MACV and the JCS continued to judge progress by such military indicators as troop increases, expended ammunition, enemy dead, structures destroyed, rice confiscated, and weapons captured—conventional criteria meaningless in a counterinsurgency.[11]

The military's chief criterion was "kill" figures; pointing to seven to eight hundred enemy deaths a week or forty to fifty thousand a year as well as thousands of wounded and thousands of deserters, they argued that enemy morale would have to crumble. As James Reston wrote, ". . . Death became the official measure of success."

10. U. S. Senate, *Refugee Problems in South Vietnam* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

11. Fall ("Viet Nam in the Balance"), *supra.*

But enemy morale showed little sign of crumbling. One qualified British observer, Dennis Duncanson, writing at the end of 1966, pointed out:

> . . . Perhaps the day is not far off when it will happen; and yet, for the moment, Viet Cong surrenders do not exceed Government desertions, and the visible, overwhelming might of US armament, though it sustains the Government forces, has made only some—very few—guerrillas think again.[12]

Despite optimistic field reports from American commands, the enemy did not seem to have much difficulty in keeping units up to strength or bringing in new ones from the North. Despite an estimated sixty thousand battle deaths, local VC recruitment continued at thirty-five hundred a month; by mid-1966, VC-PAVN forces had increased within a year from 110,000 to 270,000.[13] The bulk of the increase came from the South: In January 1966, Senator Mansfield had reported that, although total enemy strength in South Vietnam numbered 230,000, the figure included only fourteen thousand North Vietnam regular troops (versus 170,000 American troops in the country)[14]; of an estimated 230,000 enemy at end of 1966, only fifty thousand were North Vietnamese (versus three hundred thousand American troops).[15]

If American marines had thwarted enemy plans in the DMZ and had given Division 324B a bloody nose, Division 324B had shortly reappeared in action—and the enemy had four divisions deployed north of there, nine more divisions farther north, and the Chinese army north of there. If American army units had hurt him in the central highlands and along the Cambodian border, he still had numerous units in reserve, with replacements coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos.

Manpower facts alone fatally opposed attrition theory. As one analyst, Herman Kahn, has pointed out:

> . . . as long as morale is not too eroded the NLF and the North Vietnamese clearly can replace their losses at the present rate for the rest of history. About 250,000 young men come of age each year in North Viet Nam and about 200,000 in South Viet Nam. In principle, the NLF could replace the 50,000 or so losses that it has been suffering each year, either by drawing on the rural half of this pool or by substituting North Vietnamese. North Viet Nam by drawing on its large pool not only can replace its casualties indefinitely but can also provide "recruits" for the NLF.[16]

12. Duncanson ("The Vitality of the Viet Cong"), *supra.*
13. Fall ("Viet Nam in the Balance"), *supra.*
14. Howard Zinn, *Vietnam—The Logic of Withdrawal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).
15. Corson, op. cit.; see also Edgar O'Ballance, "The Ho Chi Minh Trail," *Army Quarterly,* April 1967.
16. Herman Kahn, "If Negotiations Fail," *Foreign Affairs,* July 1968.

A more subtle difficulty also existed. This was the fallacy inherent in the numbers game. Ever since Dorothy Parker's classic remark ". . . If all the girls at Vassar were laid end to end, I wouldn't be surprised," American analysts had become slaves to statistical studies. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1966, Maxwell Taylor stated:

> . . . Encouraging though the results have been in increasing the Vietnamese strength, during the year cited, our intelligence authorities believed that the Viet Cong increased their total strength by some sixty thousand. In other words, we were advancing at a rate only a little better than two to one in our favor. Since history has shown that the government forces successfully opposing a guerrilla insurgency in the past have required a much greater preponderance of strength, ten to one or twelve to one for example, it was quite clear the Vietnamese could not raise forces fast enough to keep pace with the growing threat of the Viet Cong in time. It was this sobering conclusion that led to the decision to introduce American ground forces with their unique mobility and massive fire power to compensate for the deficiency in Vietnamese strength. With such forces available, it was felt that the ratios of required strength cited above would lose much of their validity.[17]

Taylor was trying to mount cannons in sand. As Richard Clutterbuck, the British counterinsurgency expert, has argued, the 12:1 or 10:1 soldier vs. guerrilla ratio is virtually meaningless, since the guerrilla's strength derives from the people, and his numbers must include not only those persons sympathetic to his aims but those too frightened or too apathetic to contest those aims. Successful Roman commanders in Spain had realized this before the birth of Christ. In 1775, General Gage had warned that American rebels would not be easily subdued (see Chapter 7, Volume I):

> . . . Since other colonies would undoubtedly come to the aid of the north, ". . . he urged that the Ministry estimate the number of men and the sums of money needed, and then double their figures."

When another realist, William Tecumseh Sherman, was asked how many men he would need to pacify the Cumberland area during the Civil War, he replied: "Two hundred thousand" (see Chapter 11, Volume I).

A further difficulty existed: The enemy, both South and North, was not standing alone. Although Soviet aid in 1965 amounted to only about half a billion dollars, it substantially increased during 1966, after Alexander Shelepin's mission to Hanoi in January, when he promised ". . . ground-to-air missiles, 'complex' antiaircraft guns with radar

17. J. William Fulbright (ed.), *The Vietnam Hearings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

guidance systems, and antiaircraft automatic guns of 'large caliber' "; the U.S.S.R. quickly furnished these, along with some fighter aircraft. Later in the year, at an October conference of Communist countries, the Soviet Union agreed to contribute $800 million of a proposed billion dollars of additional aid. Hanoi, meanwhile, was successfully playing off Moscow against Peking, which was also supplying arms and equipment[18] and probably stood ready to supply "volunteers" if necessary.[19]

American bombing and interdiction of supply routes in the North and Laos and in South Vietnam were only partially successful in interrupting the flow of supply south. Planes could bomb and strafe roads and railroads and warehouses and vehicles, but thousands of peasants repaired roads and bridges, and trucks continued to travel at night. Moreover, enemy supply did not depend entirely on the Ho Chi Minh Trail or on vehicles. An experienced American marine observer pointed out in March 1966

> . . . that South Viet-Nam is fronted by over 500 miles of penetrable national boundary. Though the general trace of the Ho Chi Minh trail does exist, the actual points of entry into South Viet-Nam are subject to the latest VC intelligence. It is still more difficult to comprehend the number of personnel involved in logistic transportation. Of primary impact is the individual carrying capacity of the Vietnamese people. Eighty-pound women can carry 100-pound loads for long distances; children easily carry their own weight. Viewed as a military application, 100 pounds is four 75mm recoilless rifle rounds or 33 60mm mortar rounds. If each supply column is composed of at least 100 persons, and over 100 columns are in motion in different areas at the same time, the potential "pipe-line" is shown in realistic perspective. Security is provided by local guerrilla forces. Coordination is facilitated by restricting supply columns to fragmented routes of march. Group One moves only from town A to town B and return. At town B, Group Two picks up the load and moves it on to town C where the next Group takes over. Though this method requires more time and personnel than Western organizations, it is not dependent on any specified or vulnerable routes, or is there any threat of mechanical failure. People are the only required item of equipment. Even if five columns are interdicted, others are simultaneously rerouted and the ant-like procession continues.[20]

The Viet Cong also received supply from sampans sailing from the North, from peasants sympathetic to the rebel cause, from corrupt South Vietnamese officials, and, not least, from attacks on government outposts and hamlets and villages. Such was the extent of local support

18. Zagoria, op. cit.
19. Albert Parry, "Soviet Aid to Vietnam," *The Reporter*, January 12, 1967.
20. Lane Rogers, "The Enemy," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1966.

and participation, that Dennis Duncanson has called Vietnam a *symbiotic insurgency:*

> . . . one, that is, in which, for the great bulk of its resources, the revolutionary movement draws its requirements from the supplies of its adversaries.[21]

Kill figures contained two other weaknesses: First, they were suspect. Such was the tactical environment, that "body counts" were often hasty even when taken from the ground. When made from a helicopter or even an aircraft, they were generally fraudulent. "Probable kills"—usually exceeding "confirmed kills" and generally complemented by two or three times the number of vanished wounded—represented more wishful thinking than corpses. Far more sinister, however, was the almost constant gap between enemy dead and number of weapons captured; we shall never know how many civilians were included in "kill" figures.

We do know that American tactics had been used countless times in history, as earlier chapters have demonstrated. Whether called search-and-destroy or burn-and-bolt (see Chapter 29, Volume I), they amounted, too often, to indiscriminate use of force against peasants, some of whom were armed and a great many of whom were not. These tactics made about as much sense as early Cornish law, or, as Browne put it:

> I oft have heard of Lydford law,
> How in the morn they hang and draw—
> And sit in judgment after. . . .

Search-and-destroy tactics replaced the Lyauteyan concept, of winning hearts and minds, with the Western concept quoted by one senior American commander in Vietnam: ". . . Grab 'em by the balls and the hearts and minds will follow."[22] Too often, it was warfare at its most violent and stupid, and those who ordered it and condoned its excesses were placing themselves in a dangerous legal and moral position.[23]

Even when senior officers controlled the tactic, operations generally hurt or destroyed peasants, whose support was necessary if the government was ever to counter the insurgency. So long as peasants remained hostile or apathetic, American and ARVN forces were operating largely in the dark (despite intelligence furnished by the air force). Senior American commanders were only too well aware that, although American infusion of combat strength had blunted the enemy offensive, American "spoiling" tactics had not claimed the initiative except in isolated tactical instances and then only rarely.

21. Duncanson ("The Vitality of the Viet Cong"), *supra.*
22. Corson, op. cit.
23. Telford Taylor, *Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1970).

The choice of search-and-destroy tactics was perhaps inevitable, considering the tactical "shape" of American units—and this introduces still another blur. Despite emphasis placed on counterinsurgency warfare since 1961, U.S. divisions, regiments, and battalions were more suitably formed for conventional than for irregular warfare. This meant, among other things, a quantitative approach that proved expensive in manpower and resources. In 1965, U.S. officer death rate in South Vietnam soon rose above the 5 per cent of World War II and Korea; U.S. casualty figures for 1966 totaled four thousand killed and twenty-one thousand wounded by spring, cumulative totals that would rise sharply by year's end. Also upsetting, of 240,000 U.S. troops in South Vietnam, ". . . only 50,000 at most were actual combat troops"—and those suffered the bulk of casualties.[24] Westmoreland perforce developed an insatiable appetite for troops, only a relatively small percentage of whom could undertake combat/pacification tasks. Added to this was a personnel policy that limited a tour of duty to one year: thus, those who fought the enemy did so for only twelve months before returning to the United States—in the case of draftees, for discharge.[25] But, such was (and is) the American military's administrative requirement, that roughly three months was spent coming, three months going. And such was the peculiar nature of the war, as we shall shortly examine, that a man needed the other six months to learn how to fight it. If he survived enemy mines and booby traps and ambushes and pungi stakes and jungle rot and malaria—if he lived and remained intact in body and mind—he was just becoming valuable when he went home.

An enormous logistics requirement also existed and adversely affected the situation in several ways. Search-and-destroy tactics in a hostile country utilized an expenditure of ammunition that is difficult to comprehend. The official explanation for abrogation of what older soldiers know as "fire discipline" is to the effect that, lacking sufficient numbers to fight the war (the old shibboleth 10:1 or 12:1 was constantly invoked by such as Maxwell Taylor), American forces had to compensate by increased mobility and firepower. The true explanation is far more complex and stems from fear derived from ignorance of the enemy. Versions of the army's "mad minute" described in the next chapter existed throughout American operations in South Vietnam. In describing one patrol action in mid-1966, Captain West wrote:

> . . . Less than two minutes after reception of the message, the guns were firing. So swift was the reaction that the message alerting the patrol of an impending fire mission reached the patrol via the relay station after the shells had fallen. The battery fired 1,188 pounds of high explosives to discourage the trackers. It did.

24. Fall ("Viet Nam in the Balance"), *supra*.
25. C. N. Barclay, "The Western Soldier Versus the Communist Insurgent," *Military Review*, February 1969.

Twenty minutes later, from task force headquarters came the order to blanket the entire target area. At higher headquarters, the thinking was that, if the North Vietnamese had organized a pursuit, they must have returned to their base camp and been in the process of digging out. The battery fired another area saturation mission, dropping 10,692 pounds of high explosives in the stream bed, base camp, and hill complex.[26]

This was theater policy, and, far too often, it amounted to promiscuous firing that accomplished very little, oftentimes damaged a great deal—and, in any event, was very expensive.

Quasi-conventional operations were equally expensive. To field what amounted to nearly a marine division during Operation Hastings required a supply effort that suggested a World War II amphibious landing. Robert Shaplen, who was on the scene, later described the combined arms effort utilized against a North Vietnamese division of ten to twelve thousand troops:

. . . Between July 15th and August 3rd, the day Hastings ended, some seventy helicopters made more than twelve thousand sorties, lifting more than seventeen thousand troops about and delivering thirteen hundred tons of cargo. During this period, twelve hundred tons of ordnance—bombs, napalm, rockets, and other forms of ammunition—were either fired or dropped by helicopter into the battle zones, and fighter-bombers based at Danang and Chu Lai, south of Danang, made more than twelve hundred sorties. During some of these attacks—particularly at night or in poor weather—targets were hit by radar control, the bombs being dropped when buttons were pushed in Dong Ha. In some respects, the most amazing job was that performed by the lumbering, awkward-looking C-130 transport planes, which during the Hastings period flew ten and a half million pounds of cargo from Danang into Dong Ha, which at the outset had only a small dirt airstrip. . . .[27]

To give the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division helicopter mobility meant supplying five hundred tons of material a day.[28] Such was the appetite of conventionally organized American units that a division required a logistics "tail" of over forty thousand troops. Put another way, of every hundred thousand troops committed in South Vietnam, perhaps twenty thousand would serve in a combat role, and, of the twenty thousand, a significant percentage would be performing service and logistic duties.

Another factor, meanwhile, inexorably exacerbated the supply problem. With exception of a few elite units, American armed forces had grown used to comfort, and even elite units expected amenities pro-

26. West ("Small Unit Action in Vietnam—Summer 1966"), *supra.*

27. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra.*

28. Jac Weller, "The U. S. Army in Vietnam: A Survey of Aims, Operations, and Weapons, Particularly of Small Infantry Units," *Army Quarterly*, October 1967.

vided by no other armed forces in the world or in history. This disturbing trend began after World War II and stemmed in part from a national pride of an affluent society buttressed by swollen defense budgets. By the time of Korea, it had grown sufficiently for one commander, General Mark Clark, to complain. Shortly after assuming command in Korea, he later wrote,

> . . . I felt strongly that we would have to pull in our belts, cut off some fat. We have always wanted the best of everything for our men—the best medical care, the best equipment, the best-stocked post exchanges, the best service clubs, the best entertainment, the best in food and clothing. In Korea that search for the best went so far as to make ice cream an item of regular distribution to front-line units.
>
> Our rotation system in Korea sent hundreds of thousands of our men home after nine to twelve months service in the front line. . . .

The experience strongly impressed Clark, who concluded:

> . . . I always insisted that my men in battle have the finest care that our medical profession can provide. The same goes for fighting equipment, clothing and food.
>
> But the amenities in the American Army will have to be the first casualty in any big war with communism.[29]

By the end of 1966, the amenities in South Vietnam had not gone, and they added heavily to the logistics requirement.

Aside from expense, the logistics burden influenced the situation in two ways: First, as General Ridgway's 1954 report had emphasized, the theater of war was not compatible with support of conventional forces. Base development, as Ridgway forecast, proved an enormous task. Westmoreland himself later wrote that, lacking ". . . a fully developed logistic base" to support combat units rushed into South Vietnam, he had to use ". . . backed-up ships as floating warehouses."[30] What he did not point out was the large number of combat troops initially tied up in base-construction tasks during this crucial period. But conventional organization also meant undue reliance on mechanical transport and on supporting weapons that tended to "tie" small units to centralized operations and also consumed "combat troops" in administrative and support duties. Each new installation produced a new security requirement, both to protect the installation and to provide security for convoys carrying material to combat units, and this, in turn, demanded more troops.

A second result was more indirect but equally invidious. To supply the insatiable hunger of a few combat divisions, base supply areas developed and rapidly expanded. Each held thousands of troops who

29. Mark W. Clark, op. cit.
30. *U. S. News and World Report,* November 28, 1966.

could not but influence local economies—too often, adversely. A heavy expenditure of piasters contributed to an already ugly inflation. A black market invariably sprang up, one not alone fed by PX and commissary supplies but often by combat equipment and arms—significant quantities of each ultimately ending in Viet Cong hands. Bored garrison soldiers also constituted a problem: bars, dance halls, whorehouses, each multiplied to exacerbate already difficult community relations, particularly between American and ARVN soldiers.[31] Large numbers of Vietnamese employees—around a hundred thousand, many in servile occupations—inside American bases not only upset local economies but insured that Americans continued to live inside a fish bowl.

All these factors combined to produce a highly unsatisfactory military profile. By the end of 1966, Westmoreland's military plant, which should have been lean and fit, resembled the Jurassic dinosaur, which became weaker as it grew larger.

31. Malcolm W. Browne, "Why South Viet Nam's Army Won't Fight," *True Magazine,* October 1967.

Chapter 84

More blurs on the canvas • American tactical problems • The failure of Operation Crazy Horse • Colonel Emerson defines the tactical challenge • U. S. Marine Corps operations • Captain Miller's observations • The intelligence failure • Mines and booby traps • VC intelligence network • Captain Cooper's discovery • The pacification failure • Continued governmental abuses • ARVN's failure • Dissent in the U.S.A. • The Vietnam hearings • The thoughts of James Gavin and George Kennan • The secret thoughts of Robert McNamara • Escalation pressures • The hawks win again

THREE OTHER BLURS had appeared on the allied operational canvas by the end of 1966: One was the difficulty of American combat units in adapting to the tactical challenge; one, the continued inept performance of South Vietnam's government and army; and one, the influence of these on American opinion, both official and public.

American combat units faced severe tactical problems in South Vietnam, most of which resulted from trying to impose Western tactical doctrines on an insurgency environment. Contemporary accounts of fighting in 1965 and 1966 leave little to be desired regarding individual and unit bravery. Young officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen generally fought hard and gave as much as, and more than, they got.

But were they fighting wisely?

Let us return for just a moment to Operation Crazy Horse, so well described by S. L. A. Marshall and cited briefly in Chapter 82. Did anyone at corps or division or brigade level consider the possibility of ac-

complishing the mission by beating the enemy at his own game? The CIDG had made a good start by bushwhacking an enemy patrol—a prosperous tactic that should have impressed senior commanders. Marshall does not suggest alternate plans. No mention is made of carrying on as usual while setting a trap for the enemy lurking up in the mountains.

Estimate of enemy intentions is relatively simple: He is going to attack the CIDG camp—a small and minor installation—or he is going to shell Camp Radcliffe with mortars, or he is going to do nothing until more reinforcements reach him by means of routes shown on the captured map. To accomplish either of the first two objectives, he would have to bring forward his units and thus subject them to ambush. What would have been the result had not one ambush team of the type described by Marshall (which is larger than necessary) but a score or forty or eighty such teams spotted the few routes of approach? What would have happened had similar teams staked out ingress routes?

Put another way, why hurry to ferret out the enemy on other than your own terms? The war was not going to end the next day. Corps, division, and brigade commanders knew enough of the area to know their ignorance concerning enemy strength and locations. Intelligence had furnished some reasonable indications of enemy presence in strength. By this time, senior commanders knew that the enemy rarely acted impulsively—that he prepared the battlefield, in this case his mountain base. Lacking patience to prepare a reception for the enemy, did no one want to find out more before committing a company? What was the matter with using the CIDG force, which operated extremely well in the mountains? Lacking this force, where were the small guerrilla teams that were needed to work the area? Why an orthodox approach, when, from beginning to end, the units would be operating in the blind? Marshall's only explanation is unsettling in the extreme:

> . . . So it became agreed, as it was later done, an inspiration of which nothing better can be said than that it seemed to look good at the time. At the top level of the cavalry division there was still no firm belief that the hills so close to home base were loaded with big game.[1]

According to Marshall—traditionally pro-army—the company patrol was committed in an incredibly casual fashion: ". . . First Brigade had been looking for a low-grade operation of company size in enemy country, with small risk," for the purpose of "conditioning" a new company commander and first sergeant, neither of whom had had combat experience. ". . . Every platoon sergeant was without experience at fighting in Vietnam." The company was not properly alerted—". . . they thought of the outing as a training exercise." The company was also understrength by thirty-one men. Two more men collapsed at LZ Here-

1. S. L. A. Marshall, op. cit.

ford, where helicopters landed them in daylight, and two more came down on pungi sticks and had to be evacuated. The remainder landed in channeled terrain in full view of whatever enemy occupied the area.

What was the kit for people moving in mountainous terrain, in very hot humid weather, where mobility was all-important?

> . . . Every man carried at least twenty magazines, or 400 bullets for his M-16. There were 1000 rounds apiece for the six machine guns. All hands had a minimum of two, but most of them carried four hand grenades. There were two M-79 grenade launchers per squad, with fifty rounds for each weapon. Also they carried food for six meals, in C rations. For the one 81 mm mortar that was carried along there were twenty-six rounds. This last was useless weight. The mortar crew never found a spot where they could fire the tube without hitting the jungle mass in the immediate foreground.

Whether the presence of pungi sticks, not a few but hundreds, was reported back to brigade commander Colonel John Hennessey is not related, but the presence of communications wire was reported. At LZ Hereford, they left a platoon in defense and took off on a single jungle trail for the top of the mountain. Midway, they discovered more communications wire and reported this to Hennessey. Pungi sticks, not a few but hundreds, and communications wire—either one suggested trouble. The enemy hit them at the top of the slope, at the same time blocking their retreat. Forming a small perimeter, they called in Huey gunships and held until a reinforcing company arrived. Throughout the long night, Puff the Magic Dragon dropped flares and Huey gunships plastered the area with rockets. At first light, the force staged a World War I tactic called the "mad minute":

> . . . all hands fire all weapons around the perimeter and keep the blast going for sixty seconds, the central idea being that if the enemy is preparing to charge as the darkest hour ends, the shock fire will turn him about.

The enemy did attack, but then withdrew pursued by guns firing from LZ Savoy. Hennessey landed the vanguard of a reinforcing battalion, and the veterans of the night evacuated with some twenty dead and fifty-four wounded.

Very little of the above suggests tactical mastery or even excellence. In subsequent actions, PAVN units used both ambushes and envelopment with telling effect. American units twice walked *through* areas holding sizable numbers of enemy, hidden, weapons zeroed in, patiently waiting for a propitious moment to strike. They paid for their carelessness.[2]

And if they replied in kind, that does not erase the unpalatable fact that the enemy had made friends with the terrain and had either won

2. Ibid.

over or neutralized most of its inhabitants. The Americans may have been technologically superior, but, despite a panoply of firepower, despite magic dragons and mad minutes, they never owned more than the ground they walked on or fought from. They were operating in the blind, and they continued to pay for it, and the debt did not lessen because ten times as many or twenty times as many (or whatever ratio MACV claimed) of the enemy died as well. As one disillusioned veteran, Donald Duncan, told one of his mates: ". . . Sure we have the skills—and thousands of dollars worth of sophisticated radios, helicopters, C-47s to fly contacts, choppers to stand by in case we get in trouble, helicopters to bring us home. With all that going for us, if we survive the first couple of hours [of a patrol], we have a fifty-fifty chance of getting out five days later. We have to be skillful with our equipment, because it's all we've got. As we've learned the hard way, nobody living in the area will help us. The VC have the people, we have our helicopters. I don't call that effective, and I don't think it's the same game."[3]

A veteran lieutenant colonel commented feelingly on the problem to Jac Weller:

. . . We can use some sophisticated detection devices, but we must rely mainly on the eyes and ears of the foot soldier. He is the best source of useful intelligence. I feel that we do not always employ the foot soldier to his maximum capability. Properly trained and led, small reconnaissance patrols could roam the country in depth and could provide a wealth of information. Our old Ranger companies of Korean days and Special Forces mercenary patrols *under U.S. command* could do a superior job along this line. We could, and should, enhance their ability by introduction of the "Katusas" (Koreans in U.S. units serving in South Korea) system.

The colonel touched on another major deficiency:

. . . Night operations don't require comment; they require doing. The average American seems to have an innate fear of darkness and will avoid night operations whenever possible. This applies alike to new recruits and officers in high commands. Moving and fighting at night takes training and professional expertise, but some U.S. units have developed this capability. . . . until we can teach every U.S. soldier to consider darkness an advantage, the night will belong to the V.C.

If I were C/S [chief of staff], I would see that the work of one month in three was done entirely at night. All training including classroom exercises, close order drill, and so on would be done during darkness and with a minimum of artificial light. When we conquer this fear of the night, we will minimize our defensive thinking and move out of our camps at sundown, not into them.[4]

3. Duncan, op. cit.
4. Weller, op. cit.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Emerson, who commanded a battalion of 101st Airborne paratroopers, early recognized the tactical challenge and adapted accordingly. Emerson told a *Newsweek* correspondent:

. . . It is a fast-moving, exhausting, subtle style of war, requiring heavy firepower even in a small unit patrol. The men in the Second Battalion are walking arsenals, carrying everything from light-weight M16 automatic rifles and M60 machine-guns to grenade launchers, hand-grenades and sharp-bladed Bowie knives. As often as possible, they operate by darkness. Each soldier carries one or two cans of meat rations and 2½ lb. of rice—enough for five days. "I try to get my men to sustain themselves for five days without resupply," says Emerson. "My effort is to try to beat the damned guerrilla at his own game."[5]

Up north, marines also found the tactical going extremely difficult, be it in fighting guerrilla warfare south of the DMZ or in fighting larger, quasi-guerrilla operations in and around the DMZ. Part of the problem was normal: that of adapting to a new tactical environment. An experienced veteran of these early days, Captain John Miller, later offered a remarkably candid analysis of small-unit actions and problems encountered by the newcomers. Miller found the climate to be hostile:

. . . The constant heavy rains of the wet monsoon can swell rifle stocks to the point where the trigger cannot be depressed completely and where disassembly and assembly are out of the question. Rust and corrosion of metal surfaces are, of course, accompanying side effects.

Terrain, too, posed immense problems:

. . . The unit leader must constantly fight the recurring problem of canalization. Both the thickly wooded highlands and the open paddy areas tend to force his unit—be it squad or company—into a column, vulnerable to directional mines, ambushes, and similar evils. His choices are limited. If he departs from a jungle trail, he must cut his own—and pay the price in terms of slow movement plus wear and tear on his trailbreakers. If he leaves the paddy dikes, he can count on the same slow pace in moving through the muck and (sometimes) high water and high grass. In deciding, he must constantly weigh the requirements of his mission against his vulnerability, adopting whatever dispersion and security measures he can effect.

Rains frequently altered terrain to an amazing degree. Like Alexander's forces in Bactria,

. . . Coils of line and flotation material for improvised rafts become standard patrol accessories during this period. More than passing attention must be devoted to stream-crossing techniques and to security measures which must

5. Ibid. quoting *Newsweek,* May 23, 1966.

be employed during crossings. At times, small boats must be bought, borrowed, or commandeered in an attempt to match the enemy's sampan mobility.

Marines had to learn how to keep as dry as possible and avoid omnipresent evils such as immersion foot (from wet socks) and flu/pneumonia (from generally wet surroundings). Miller also commented feelingly about "the load":

. . . It is still too heavy. A Marine wearing a flak jacket [body armor] will not match the cross-country speed of a guerrilla who is not wearing one. Unit commanders, through judicious pacing of their moves, can avoid excessive heat casualties, but the box score of heat-evacs does not tell the whole story. The biggest hazard is the sluggishness and slow reaction of an overheated, overtired Marine to a fast-breaking combat situation. Without question, the jackets have saved many lives. The heavy preponderance of wounds sustained by Marines are still of the fragmentation type. Because of these undisputable facts, the unit commander will usually find that the jackets-or-no-jackets decision has already been made for him. The issue then becomes a "leadership problem."[6]

Another marine officer, Captain West, later described a patrol with the 9th Marines:

. . . The Marines wore helmets and flak jackets. Each rifleman carried 150 rounds of ammunition and 2 or more hand grenades. The men of the two machine gun crews were draped with belts of linked cartridges totalling 1,200 rounds. The two 3.5-inch rocket launcher teams carried five high explosive and five white phosphorus rockets. Four grenadiers carried 28 40mm shells apiece for their stubby M79s. Sergeant Cunningham had given six LAAWs [a 66 mm one-shot disposable rocket launcher for use against tanks] to some riflemen to provide additional area target capability. . . .

The platoon moved out at 1100. There was no breeze and no shade. The temperature was 102 degrees. Within five minutes, every Marine was soaked in sweat. . . .[7]

Although the patrol acquitted itself well, the weight problem continued to bother unit commanders. Captain Miller noted that company commanders could lighten loads by replacing bulky C rations with dehydrated and lightweight foods, and that a lighter radio also helped. The problem nonetheless remained:

. . . Heavy loads, heat, canalizing terrain, and flooding combine to create significant dilemmas of movement for the unit leader who is constantly attempting to trap an elusive enemy. The company commander can assist in

6. John G. Miller, "From a Company Commander's Notebook," *Marine Corps Gazette,* August 1966.
7. West, op. cit.

resolving these dilemmas at squad and platoon level by deploying his forces—when possible—in a manner to provide mutually supporting maneuver units. This requires careful preliminary study of the area of operations and some degree of anticipation of the "danger spots" within each area—when time is available.[8]

Other accounts substantiated Miller's observations as marines familiarized themselves with various areas of operation. One of the most difficult problems faced was enemy use of mines. Whether planted passively or electrically detonated by guerrillas, they extracted a heavy toll, not alone from the initial explosion but often in subsequent pursuit actions that involved enemy-prepared terrain and ambush. Discussing small-unit operations in spring of 1966, Captain West pointed out that of ten marines killed and fifty-eight wounded in one company in five weeks, ". . . two men were hit by small arms fire, one by a grenade. Mines inflicted all the other casualties."[9]

These and other substantial problems usually stemmed, at least in part, from a supreme problem: lack of intelligence. Marine patrols, more often than not, were operating in the dark, trying to guess enemy locations while keeping oriented with unsatisfactory, 1:50,000 maps. Marines were not long in the field before they agreed with Captain Miller's conclusion that the enemy presented ". . . a constantly changing face in small unit tactics and techniques, as he seeks to counter Marine methods of operation."

Lack of intelligence told in a number of ways. Captain Miller noted that:

. . . target acquisition is one of the rifleman's biggest problems. The presence of civilians on the battlefield requires each Marine to exercise the finest degree of judgment in applying any number of local rules of engagement. This situation sometimes puts Marines in the unhappy position of having to "lead with their chins" in order to make contact with the enemy.[10]

Leading with their chins was exactly what the enemy wanted marines to do. They reacted in one of several ways. Sometimes they slipped away, usually leading the marine unit a merry chase before so doing. Sometimes they fought and, though suffering themselves, usually inflicted relatively high casualties on the marine units involved; but, more important than that from the enemy standpoint, he usually arranged the firefight so that peasants tasted marine wrath.

Examples in each category abound. Only too often, patrol radios crackled out this type of bad news:

. . . This is Bound-3, let me speak to Blade-2 . . . we have just drawn another nothing-zero-blank! Delta and Bravo [companies] cordoned off the

8. Miller, op. cit.
9. West, op. cit.; see also O'Neill, op. cit.
10. Miller, op. cit.

area and we've been searching for two days. No sign of the VC. No indication that there have ever been any VC in this area.

Again,

. . . Blade 00 this is Blade-3. Nothing! We have searched every inch of that hamlet and there's no sign of the VC. Somebody is passing us bum dope . . . this is the third time in two weeks.[11]

Sometimes marine patrols were fired on from hamlets or had visual evidence of VC occupation. Captain West described one such occasion, a platoon patrol of the 5th Marines:

. . . Occasionally they saw the Viet Cong. Some were carrying weapons, some wore packs, some were dressed in black peasant shirts and shorts, some in green uniforms. They traveled freely in small groups of from two to eight men. They crossed the rice paddies, chatted with the women hoeing or the boys herding cows, and entered various hamlets, without any apparent military pattern or plan to their movements. The enemy seemed unaware that the shells which fell sporadically near them were observed fire missions [called by the marine patrol], although some were hit and dragged away.

Monroe requested that a Marine company sweep the area. From his observation post, he could direct their movements. Charlie Company arrived by foot two hours later and the platoons spread out on line to sweep the hamlets.

A quarter of a mile in front of the company, Robinson saw a group of armed VC in uniforms run across a rice paddy and enter a large house. They reappeared moments later, wearing black pajamas, straw conical hats, and carrying hoes. They split up and waded into the rice paddies.

"Look at them—the innocent farmers. They're going to get the surprise of their lives when they're scoffed up—hoes and all—in a few minutes," Monroe said.

It was Monroe who was surprised; the company was ordered back to base camp to perform another mission.

"We'll get that hooch [native house] ourselves on our way in tomorrow morning," he said.[12]

On occasion, similar patrols walked into enemy ambush and, though fighting valiantly and well, were often badly hurt. Even where ambushes were avoided, other dangers constantly lurked. Mines and booby traps (minbotraps) are always difficult to detect, but were particularly so in

11. John P. Murtha, "Combat Intelligence in Vietnam," *Marine Corps Gazette,* January 1968; see also Otto Heilbrunn, "Counter-Insurgency Intelligence," *Marine Corps Gazette,* September 1966; Leon Cohan, "Intelligence and Viet-Nam," *Marine Corps Gazette,* February 1966.

12. West, op. cit.

Vietnam. One experienced adviser later discussed various clues as to presence of mines, for example soil disturbance:

. . . Another signal that should arouse suspicion is the change of the natural scene in any form. A small branch of a tree blocking the jungle trail may be the actuator for an explosive. The hand that casually brushes it aside is the objective.

The means that the enemy uses to identify the minbotrap is closely allied to detection. The branch mentioned above might also indicate to the VC that a mine is buried in the trail ahead. Broken sticks, a dead snake, a worn out conic [head gear], a piece of cloth, and an old sandal have all been used in the past for identification purposes. It's a battle of wits and no matter how insignificant, all suspected means used by the insurgent for recognition of minbotraps should be reported. This is an enemy code and the best source of information to break the code is the man in daily contact with the VC.

Once again, war reverted to the peasant: ". . . The peasantry often know about the enemy's minbotrap tactics; everything from restricted areas to actual MBT locations."[13] As one senior intelligence officer pointed out to this writer, the peasant *invariably* knew the location of booby traps and mines, but, for one or more reasons, usually fear of the VC, would not warn the intended victim, thereby further eliciting American fury.

What allied forces in Vietnam refused to recognize, at least for some time, was what Callwell had pointed out nearly a hundred years earlier: In a guerrilla situation, the guerrilla is the professional, the newcomer the amateur. A veteran marine intelligence officer later wrote of a VC intelligence officer, ". . . a wizened little man wearing black pajamas and tire-tread sandals":

. . . Ai No U does not have aerial observers; no infra-red, no SLAR, no TV; no digital data "real time" readout computerized equipment. But he is successful. This confounds Americans. The result is a communist psychological operation by accident; more effective than if by design. How does he do it?

Ai No U relies upon two things: (1) the People's Military Intelligence Concept, and (2) the American Military penchant for the SOP [standard operating procedure], a commander's tactical signature.

The peasant formed the core of the VC intelligence organization,

. . . a form of reconnaissance broadly participated in by the masses. The concept consists of organizing the population, teaching them how to take advantage of their normal activities to perform reconnaissance. It is visualized as an immense information collection network with thousands of ears and eyes concentrated upon all enemy activities—military, political, and social.

13. R. E. Mack, "Minbotrap," *Marine Corps Gazette,* July 1967.

Reconnaissance is only one function, however:

. . . this vast network provides commo-liaison agents, warning services, and a pipeline for agent infiltration; conducts military proselyting, participates in psychological operations; and takes diversionary action to provide security for cadre personnel.

Cellular organization makes it particularly difficult to penetrate:

. . . An elaborate apparatus known as commo-liaison provides communication between intelligence cells. Together these form an integrated intelligence system extending through every province and district, city and town, village and hamlet. Intelligence cadre actively supervise each of these echelons.

Much of the success of this effort, in turn, rested on American tactical predictability, or SOP operations. Fragmentary reports (frequently from VC sympathizers) too often tipped the American commander's hand and allowed a VC unit to disperse. The ensuing operation, while accomplishing no concrete result, often further antagonized the peasants, strengthening VC control over them.[14]

The key remained the peasant. Despite the aggression-from-the-North theme, constantly hammered home by senior American officials and officers, the real enemy was indigenous to the area; as Viet Minh, he had fought the French; as Viet Cong, he was fighting ARVN and the Americans. He had lived in this area for a long time; he had devoted his every effort to his task. Here is one marine description of a VC complex, by no means extraordinary:

. . . All the tunnels had well-concealed entrances located in the heavy vegetation, generally in close proximity to the houses. In one area, six caves were located in what appeared to be a graveyard. The entrances were well concealed under cactus plants. It was noted that almost all the tunnels were dug on a bank or on high ground to afford good drainage. They were well constructed and thoroughly waterproofed. Despite heavy rain only two tunnels were found with water in them. Tunnels were reinforced with concrete and almost all had a corrugated tin roof. In addition to the enemy killed and captured, numerous weapons, 62 mines, various equipment and many documents were discovered by the search force.

It is significant to remember that the Viet Cong were hidden within 500 meters of the original cordon, and could have easily ex-filtrated during the night. The Viet Cong did not actually believe the Marines could find them. . . .[15]

Nor could marines have found them without valid intelligence procedures. Once the area intelligence concept was refined and became productive, tactical success resulted. The above position was uncovered

14. S. L. Grier, "Black Pajama Intelligence," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 1967.
15. West, op. cit.

in a cordon operation in October 1966, in which twenty-two VC were killed and forty-three captured.

Here, then, was the real problem: The enemy profited from detailed knowledge of most operational areas, knowledge gleaned from personal reconnaissance, often over the years and sometimes even decades, and from information supplied either by guerrillas or local peasants who either sympathized with the VC cause or were coerced into co-operation. The enemy also profited from an adaptive ability noted by one experienced marine officer: ". . . His techniques and tactics are not exotic innovations; his strength lies only in the ability to apply fundamentals and to adjust his tactics to those of his opponent."[16]

This was precisely the challenge faced by marines. They were fighting to clear an area infested by gophers: For too long, their answer was to rip up terrain in an attempt, vain of course, to kill the gophers rather than to make that terrain sufficiently unpleasant for the gophers to go away. Some commanders twigged the essential problem and tried to do something about it. In mid-1966, one company commander, Captain Jim Cooper, saw the futility of operating from an isolated combat outpost on top of a hill:

> . . . After a few weeks of fruitless forays and grimy living, Echo Company changed its tactics and position. "I just got plain sick and tired of baking on top of some hill while the VC ran the villagers down in the valleys. So I decided to move," Captain Cooper said.

Cooper moved his people into a hamlet of about three hundred fifty peasants, one of several in a village complex of some six thousand population, set up proper security, increased patrols and ambushes, and slowly integrated a theretofore isolated Popular Forces unit into hamlet life:

> . . . The hamlet chief moved from the ARVN fort back into his own home. . . . Cooperation followed friendship. The hamlet chief showed the Marines the favorite ambush and hiding places of the Viet Cong.

Cooper was on to the real secret of fighting an insurgency. But, despite his impressive success, he learned by a cunning maneuver that VC sympathizers and informers continued to live *in the hamlet*. What had happened, in other words, was that surrounding VC units had shifted operations elsewhere. Converting the village to the government's side would have taken a major effort and much patience and time. And here is what happened:

> . . . Less than a month after their arrival, the Marines did leave to go on an operation. They left the marks of their influence behind in the village

16. Rogers, op. cit.; see also R. E. Mack, "Ambuscade," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 1967.

and especially in the hamlet. The Vietnamese had reopened two schools and a pagoda. They were washing. Their medical ills had been treated. A Vietnamese public health nurse and two school teachers had come to the village. The hamlet and village chiefs had returned. The Popular Forces were acting more like disciplined troops.

What would happen in the future, Cooper was not about to guess. . . .[17]

What happened to that particular village, we are not told. What frequently happened both in I Corps area and elsewhere was a return of the VC the moment allied troops departed.[18] Once again, the situation cried for clear-and-hold tactics followed by a viable pacification or rehabilitation campaign. General Walt and his marines finally came to understand this, at least in part, and were on the right track with Combined Action Groups. In time, marines might have overcome the language obstacle and even innate corruption of most Saigon and I Corps area officials, who did not want viable government in the villages and sabotaged the American effort at almost every turn.[19] But marines lacked time and, so long as Giap sucked marine units into quasi-conventional warfare, they lacked men. The marine pacification effort was never more than a drop in the bucket. In 1966, the Viet Cong controlled about three quarters of I Corps area, either outright or through parallel hierarchies. By mid-1966, of 169 villages within the marine area, only thirty-seven were regarded as 80 per cent or more pacified; less than half of the area's nine hundred thousand people lived therein.[20]

Even in areas where local South Vietnamese officials performed well, such as the Australian TAOR southeast of Saigon, the task demanded patient, low-key (and economical) operations. The Australians, who were not blessed with prodigious logistic support, learned faster than the Americans what Lyautey long ago had taught: Pacification is a slow business.

Pacification was a particularly slow business in South Vietnam. Ky's highly touted Revolutionary Development program, so fervently embraced by President Johnson, suffered from two perhaps irreconcilable difficulties.

The first was a definition of terms. The democracy that the Johnson administration wanted in South Vietnam was an ambition, not a feasible goal; the assumption that this was a form of government also wanted by Thieu and Ky and the special interests they represented was false.

17. West, op. cit.
18. O'Neill, op. cit., writes feelingly on the subject.
19. David A. Clement, "Le May—Study in Counter-Insurgency," *Marine Corps Gazette,* July 1967; see also Corson, op. cit.
20. U. S. Marine Corps ("III MAF"), *supra.*

Here was a dual failure, as later noted by the *enfant terrible* of the Marine Corps, Colonel Corson:

> . . . My own reaction to the Honolulu Conference [of February 1966] was that our leaders, outside of a very few, did not know what they were talking about. The Great Society was hardly fit for domestic consumption let alone export. I felt sure that the semantic differential between our officials and the smiling Vietnamese officials was overlooked once again, that is, we call it democracy—they call it obedience. Honolulu left unanswered the questions "What is pacification?" and "What are we really trying to do?" The generalized and idealized statements about a "better world," "hearts and minds," and such are not, and were not then, operational. You can't sell a product if you can't define it.[21]

Corson had a good point. The situation in South Vietnam did not fit the picture being reported by Lodge and Westmoreland, whose claims of significant pacification progress were frequently broadcast to the nation by its President, despite his being informed to the contrary by Robert McNamara (among others), as we shall see shortly. While Johnson promised Thieu and Ky the moon and a piece of cheese at the Manila conference in October 1966, *all* governmental abuses so far discussed continued in force. No matter who was elected to the constituent assembly or what type of constitution would result, neither Thieu nor Ky nor the ruling junta of generals intended to liberalize government, much less institute a representative government that would appeal to either peasants or dissident sects or Buddhist or minorities or classes or professions—that would appeal to those complex elements constituting the political invention of South Vietnam. The generals stood as far removed from peasant aspirations as their American counterparts: ". . . only one [of them] . . . had fought for Vietnamese independence against the French. The others had either fought with the French or, like Ky, spent the war period being trained by the French."[22] As with former regimes, a preponderance of northern Catholics occupied major posts both in Saigon and the countryside. The peasants were as badly off as formerly, and in some cases worse. Land reform was a dead issue: Landlords continued to accompany troops to claim back taxes from peasants, and to invoke heavy, usually illegal rents.[23] Friction continued, not only with increasingly militant Buddhists, but with other dissident southern groups such as remnant Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. GVN failure to live up to promises made to the Montagnards also cost heavily: More than two thirds of the two-hundred-fifty-man Montagnard garrison at Plei Me had defected the day prior to the Viet Cong attack! And some Montagnards had subsequently gone over to the enemy.[24] Divi-

21. Corson, op. cit.
22. Zinn, op. cit.
23. Fall ("Viet Nam in the Balance"), *supra.*
24. Corson, op. cit.

sive elements within the Military Revolutionary Council also constantly jockeyed for power positions.

Government failure meant that old abuses continued. The administration's chief hatchet man, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, used the most violent methods to eliminate political opponents.[25] Jails remained jammed with political prisoners; favored sons remained exempt from military duty; bribery and corruption claimed almost every transaction. At virtually each level of government, officials extracted "squeeze." Peasants bringing vegetables and fish to market paid squeeze to the police for protection; people buying and selling commodities paid squeeze for necessary licenses; students wanting scholarships to the U.S.A. paid for them; sick people wanting treatment on American hospital ships paid for it; peasants and refugees wanting food and clothes supplied by American funds paid for them.

This would have been bad enough under normal circumstances, but, considering South Vietnamese needs, it proved catastrophic. A dangerous political climate suppressed intelligent opposition and discouraged worthy Vietnamese who had fled abroad from returning at a crucial time. As one example, of the country's eight hundred doctors, five hundred served the army, a hundred fifty served private patients, and a hundred fifty treated fifteen million people[26]; yet, over seven hundred Vietnamese doctors were in Paris and refused to return![27]

Continuing VC gains in the countryside and the infusion of American troops exacerbated the situation. Rampant inflation developed, as did an enormous black market—an economically confused situation ably exploited by VC resident agents and infiltrators in two ways: by buying or stealing military needs from American stockpiles (while MACV and the JCS continued to worry about enemy supply lines from the North), and by agitation and propaganda among the hundreds of thousands of refugees generated from search-and-destroy tactics—from fighting in villages, and from bombing and shelling and burning them as part of an attrition strategy.

Governmental failure inevitably influenced ARVN, which contained nearly as many organizational and operational flaws as previously. The advisory system, in which so much hope had been placed, had already backfired—just as it had in the case of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang army. A good many American army advisers were ill-equipped for the task and proved ineffective and, in some cases, dishonest and dangerous. The turbulent military situation, language deficiencies, and a one-year tour of duty combined to thwart the hard work of a good many capable and courageous Americans. Try as they would, they could not

25. Karl H. Purnell, "The Man Who Fired the Shot . . . ," *True Magazine*, July 1968.

26. U. S. Senate, *Refugee Problems in South Vietnam* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

27. Corson, op. cit.

overturn a ruling mandarin philosophy and get ARVN units into the boondocks and keep them there. Bernard Fall pointed out in the article in *Foreign Affairs* quoted above that the bulk of ARVN casualties, allegedly eleven thousand dead and 21,600 wounded in 1965, ". . . are suffered passively, i.e. by units garrisoned in forts or ambushed on roads rather than engaged in offensive operations." ARVN increased in 1965 from 493,000 to 640,000, but it counted ninety-three thousand desertions for the year.

Continued government and ARVN failures explained the second difficulty of the Revolutionary Development program, which was operational. Few GVN officials and ARVN officers shared Major Be's expressed idealism (see Chapter 82). Although ARVN units became increasingly available to provide hamlet security (as American units—army and marines—took over virtually the entire combat role), and at the same time reorganized themselves, they proved, in general, as unsatisfactory in pacification as in combat. One American adviser, Dwight Owen—a highly motivated and sincere young man who left a postgraduate course to serve in Vietnam, where he would shortly die—wrote of this period:

> . . . At present the ARVN has little or no responsibility or responsiveness to the people of Vietnam. They fight but do not build. . . . Garrisons in towns and villages are notoriously inactive in CA [civic action] work. Often this is because they lack initiative and spirit. . . . Good pay, promotions, decent quarters, good rations, leave, and many other benefits most armies enjoy are lacking in many respects in the Vietnamese army. This undercuts morale and thus troop effectiveness. . . .[28]

ARVN officers, from corps commanders down, received squeeze to the extent that peasants saw little difference between friends and enemies. A veteran correspondent, Malcolm Browne, wrote that ARVN's most serious fault was corruption, but running a close second was ". . . mutual distrust and even hostility between most American soldiers and most Vietnamese soldiers." Viet Cong infiltration was another major fault, as was an inadequate officer corps and also inept tactical influence levied by American advisers. Browne pointed out that ARVN's pay scale, when taken with inflation, made it mandatory for officers and men to steal or otherwise profit whenever possible. This also helped to explain widespread desertion—24 per cent in 1966. Putting hungry soldiers among the hamlets was putting foxes among geese: ". . . the peasants learn to dread the coming of government troops worse than the plague."[29]

Ky's Revolutionary Development program presupposed that the South Vietnamese Government wished to establish a genuinely demo-

28. Dwight Owen, private letter in the author's files.
29. Malcolm Browne ("Why South Viet Nam's Army Won't Fight"), *supra*.

cratic government that would benefit South Vietnamese peasants, some 85 per cent of the population. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. The RD program's national training center could fire up thousands of cadres, but, without governmental co-operation, these could do nothing. Major Kriegel noted that, by mid-1967, Be's national training center had oriented about a thousand provincial officials, including twenty-seven province chiefs, into the new program in a series of two-day seminars. He could have held two-year seminars, which also would have been without effect so long as the Saigon government continued to condone excesses noted by observer after observer, for example landlords accompanying ARVN troops to reclaim land and levy unfair rents. Neither was the subsequent political aspect satisfactory, bringing to mind, as it did, brother Nhu's earlier efforts to control the peasant population rather than win it to the government's side (see Chapter 76). William Corson, who was intimately involved in the pacification effort in I Corps area, later wrote:

. . . The 30,000 members of the Armed Combat Youth (ACY) are a bargain-basement mob of thugs who counterterrorize the Vietnamese people while promoting "democracy" GVN style. The ACY units—or as they are being renamed, the Revolutionary Development Peoples' Groups (RDPG) —are organized to promote Nguyen Cao Ky's "strength through joy" approach to individual liberty. Through this borrowed Hitlerian concept Ky is attempting to build up an absolute form of political control that makes Nazi Germany look like Thomas More's "Utopia."

The ACY, or RDPG, organized into armed gangs of twenty-five to fifty hooligans, are used to enforce "support" for the GVN in the village-hamlet environment. Their techniques effectively blended to promote uniformity and obedience. The fear generated by the presence of the ACY in a hamlet is exceeded only by presence of one of the "elite" ARVN units such as the Rangers, Airborne, or Vietnamese Marines.[30]

Nor did the American mission reorganization result in streamlined operations that were needed. Province advisers at all levels found themselves enmeshed in bureaucratic and military corruption that sometimes defied imagination. Some of these advisers were conscientious, hard-working, and brave persons. Others were not. Most did not speak the language and had to rely on interpreters. Most knew little of customs of the people they were trying to help, and their aid estimates frequently lacked practicality or proper priority. Most were also endowed with the desire to do the job themselves. In the same letter quoted above, Dwight Owen wrote:

. . . Our pacification effort is not making significant headway. The first major problem is a lack of realistic appraisal by U.S. officials of what is needed. Plans have been grandiose and have not considered the realities of

30. Corson, op. cit.

the situation—too much and too fast. We have not allowed pacification cadre adequate time in hamlets by assigning them a quota of so many hamlets a year, which allows them about 2–3 months per hamlet. The plans have lacked follow-through. After the cadre leave, the job is considered finished, when, in reality, it is only beginning. . . .

In our estimation of the war we must realize that the Vietnamese populace wants a revolution and a better life. They will not be satisfied with less and are willing to fight for that revolution. We must help GVN win over the peasants and thus win the war. But the Vietnamese must do it. We are foreigners—always will be—and thus can not perform this function with other than a colonial administration, which is unacceptable to the Vietnamese (in spite of what some Americans maintain).

In addition to these deficits, agency infighting frequently ruled an American camp, and agencies often fought with the military, both ARVN and American. A British expert on counterinsurgency, Sir Robert Thompson, later told a seminar audience, ". . . when I added up the intelligence organizations which were operating in Saigon in 1966 against the Vietcong, there were seventeen, both American and South Vietnamese, and none of them were talking to each other!" Thompson continued:

. . . Having no Police Force, and an Army facing in rather the wrong direction, it then became a matter of building up other forces to deal with the insurgency, and there was a complete proliferation of these forces. Every little problem that came up resulted in a force being created. None of them knew what they were doing and none of their operations were co-ordinated. The net result was a tremendous waste of manpower and effort.

Similarly, on the civilian side, there was no emphasis at all on administration. Americans do not understand administration in the sense that we do and, as you know, in a counter-insurgency environment there are many things that require to be done, which can only be done effectively and without causing further problems due to unpopularity or resentment, by a very efficient administration. There was no great effort paid to this. . . .[31]

What should have been, and possibly could have been, a viable pacification program became just another in a long series of flaccid efforts—a development incessantly harped on by NLF-PRP-Hanoi propaganda, which exhorted South Vietnamese peasants to fight against U.S. imperialists and their Saigon lackeys.[32]

Unlike MACV and the Saigon government, the enemy fully realized the importance of the "other war"—to them, the "only war"—and de-

31. RUSI Seminar, op. cit.

32. Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Strategic Role of the Self-Defense Militia Force in the Great Anti-U.S. National Salvation Struggle of Our People." Foreign Broadcast Information Service, April 1967; see also Vo Nguyen Giap, *Big Victory, Great Task* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968).

voted top priority to its prosecution. If Hanoi ever displayed nervousness, it was over the allied pacification effort. In a major speech delivered in January 1967, Vo Nguyen Giap returned to the subject[33] with the reluctant persistence of Raskolnikov returning to his evil deeds in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. And well he might: Pacification was the key to combat in the South, a fact repeatedly proved by history, ancient and modern, a fact never understood by American military planners who refused to fight a complex war of nuance and subtlety in preference to a good old black-and-white shooting match, a fact never understood by Johnson or his hawkish advisers who refused to formulate objectives consonant to fact in preference to wild ambition that demanded an undefinable and thus unrealizable nothing called "victory."

By early 1966, a good many doubts had risen in public and private minds within the United States as to the wisdom of American actions in Vietnam. Taken together, they began to suggest that the Johnson administration had bought a gold brick made the more fraudulent by size and weight.

In February, *Harper's Magazine* published a letter-article from a retired soldier with a fine World War II combat record and a lengthy postwar record of distinguished public and private service. This was General James Gavin, who now challenged the logic of escalation. What became unfairly known as a demand for "enclave strategy" was an intelligent attempt to reassess a complex situation, and fit limited resources to realistic goals.

Gavin's article was published shortly before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, whose chairman was William Fulbright, opened what became the famous Vietnam hearings. These televised sessions left little doubt that the situation was not as black-and-white as the Johnson administration proclaimed. The Administration's position was presented by Dean Rusk and Maxwell Taylor, each of whom reaffirmed the domino theory and aggression-from-the-North-under-Peking-aegis thesis (and each of whom was pretty well worked over in question periods).

As devil's advocates, the Senate called on General Gavin and Ambassador George Kennan. Gavin warned the Foreign Relations Committee and the listening American public of dangers inherent in further expanding the war, particularly since no tactical need existed. As he had already written in *Harper's Magazine:*

. . . Today we have sufficient forces in South Vietnam to hold several enclaves on the coast, where sea and air power can be made fully effective. By enclaves I suggest Camranh Bay, Danang, and similar areas where American bases are being established. However, we are stretching these resources beyond reason in our endeavours to secure the entire country of South Viet-

33. Giap ("Strategic Role"), *supra.*

nam from the Viet Cong penetration. This situation, of course, is caused by the growing Viet Cong strength.

To expand the American presence and the war would create new problems, for example Chinese intervention or a new war in Korea. Instead, the United States should pursue a strategy compatible to the area's importance and to the tactical challenge:

. . . if we should maintain enclaves on the coast, desist in our bombing attacks in North Vietnam, and seek to find a solution through the United Nations or a conference in Geneva, we could very likely do with the forces now available. . . .

Frederick the Great, in speaking of his foray from Silesia against the Austrians, noted that ". . . this plan was simple, proportionate to the possibility of execution, and adapted to circumstances; there was therefore every reason to hope it would succeed." The same could be said of the Gavin plan, but such was the power of the hawks that it became perverted into a strategy of defeat and would not soon have the chance to prove itself. Further, such was the Administration's outcry against the "enclave theory," that few persons paid attention to what possibly was Gavin's most important point. As Mao Tse-tung had suggested some years before, Gavin believed that warfare had radically changed:

. . . Since the advent of the Space Age, there has been a revolution in the nature of war and global conflict. The confrontation in Vietnam is the first test of our understanding of such change, or our lack of it. The measures that we now take in Southeast Asia must stem from sagacity and thoughtfulness, and an awareness of the nature of strategy in this rapidly shrinking world.[34]

Ambassador Kennan already had challenged the wisdom of American commitment to South Vietnam.[35] Once again, he contradicted Administration hawks who proclaimed that South Vietnam was of vital strategic interest to the United States:

. . . if we were not already involved as we are today in Vietnam, I would know of no reason why we should wish to become so involved, and I could think of several reasons why we should wish not to. Vietnam is not a region of major military, industrial importance. It is difficult to believe that any decisive developments of the world situation would be determined in normal circumstances by what happens on that territory.

After expatiating on this statement, which must have shaken thoughtful senators, Kennan suggested that, since we had become militarily in-

34. James M. Gavin, "A Soldier's Doubts," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1966; see also J. William Fulbright (ed.) (*The Viet Nam Hearings*), *supra*.

35. M. G. Raskin and Bernard Fall, op. cit.: See, for example, Ambassador Kennan's testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, May 1965.

volved, we could not hastily abandon our posture. But that was no reason to enlarge the posture. The political situation in the South permitted no easy solution; American military might could not overcome such factors as enemy space and manpower, and an attempt to subdue the North by invasion would probably draw China into the fray. As it was, the war was severely damaging American relations with the U.S.S.R. and Japan. Kennan wanted the American presence liquidated as soon as possible:

> . . . In matters such as this, it is not, in my experience, what you do that is mainly decisive. It is how you do it, and I would submit that there is more respect to be won in the opinion of this world by a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound positions than by the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant or unpromising objectives.

As for the "obligation" maintained by Johnson and his advisers, Kennan, sounding like a diplomatic Socrates, continued:

> . . . I would like to know what that commitment really consists of, and how and when it was incurred.
>
> What seems to be involved here is an obligation on our part not only to defend the frontiers of a certain political entity against outside attack, but to assure the internal security of its government in circumstances where that government is unable to assure that security by its own means.
>
> Now, any such obligation is one that goes obviously considerably further in its implications than the normal obligations of a military alliance. If we did not incur such an obligation in any formal way, then I think we should not be inventing it for ourselves and assuring ourselves that we are bound by it today. But if we did incur it, then I do fail to understand how it was possible to enter into any such commitment otherwise than through the constitutional processes which were meant to come into play when even commitments of lesser import than this were undertaken.

Although Kennan felt the deepest personal sympathy for the South Vietnamese and repugnance toward the Viet Cong, he nonetheless maintained that

> . . . our country should not be asked, and should not ask of itself, to shoulder the main burden of determining the political realities in any other country, and particularly not in one remote from our shores, from our culture, and from the experience of our people. This is not only not our business, but I don't think we can do it successfully.[36]

Three months later, another hard-charging soldier spoke up. This was David Shoup, a retired four-star Marine Corps general, winner of the Medal of Honor at Tarawa, former commandant of the Marine Corps, member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and unofficial military ad-

36. J. William Fulbright (ed.) (*The Viet Nam Hearings*), *supra*.

viser to President Kennedy. Speaking in Los Angeles in May 1966, Shoup denied South Vietnam's strategic importance:

> . . . The Administration, he said, has never realistically assessed whether the United States' own self-interest is at stake in Southeast Asia. The Administration has never presented a timetable proving that there would be "irreparable effects upon this nation at the end of five, ten, fifteen, fifty years" if South Vietnam were overrun by the Communist Vietcong guerrillas.

Pointing to drastic changes in the world Communist order, Shoup declared that Administration reasons for American intervention in South Vietnam ". . . are too shallow and narrow for students, as well as other citizens. Especially so, when you realize that what is happening, no matter how carefully and slowly the military escalation has progressed, may be projecting us toward world catastrophe." In case any one missed the point, General Shoup stated: ". . . I don't think the whole of Southeast Asia, as related to the present and future safety and freedom of the people of this country, is worth the life or limb of a single American."[37]

Although President Johnson publicly treated these and other dissentient voices with insouciance tinged with contempt, members of his own inner circle continued to express certain doubts that could not altogether be ignored. These were occasioned mainly by the increasing expense of the war as fought by Westmoreland and the JCS.

No sooner had President Johnson authorized committing nearly two hundred thousand troops by the end of 1965 than Westmoreland, in July of that year, informed McNamara that these would suffice only to stop the enemy offensive by the end of the year. In order to resume the offensive in priority areas and to continue the pacification program, Westmoreland requested another 112,000 troops for the first half of 1966; he also warned McNamara that he would need even more troops to defeat the enemy by the end of 1967.

McNamara at this point—summer 1965—apparently entertained some doubts as to the wisdom of an attrition strategy, but he nonetheless recommended approval of the new request to the President. But, in November, McNamara, once again in Saigon, received further disturbing information. According to MACV estimates, the enemy had increased in strength from 48,550 combat troops, in July, to 63,550, in November, a figure that included an ominous increase from one to eight North Vietnamese (PAVN) regiments. To offset this development, Westmoreland wanted another 154,000 troops. After more soul-searching, McNamara again agreed: If a bombing pause failed to produce a satisfactory reaction from Hanoi, he recommended a troop increase to seventy-four battalions, or about 400,000 men, by the end of 1966, but warned that at least two hundred thousand additional troops would perhaps be

37. James Deakin, "Big Brass Lambs," *Esquire,* December 1967.

needed in 1967! McNamara concluded his memorandum to the President in somber but ambivalent words that bring to mind the western-front syndrome of World War I:

> . . . We should be aware that deployments of the kind I have recommended will not guarantee success. U.S. killed-in-action can be expected to reach 1000 a month, and the odds are even that we will be faced in early 1967 with a "no-decision" at an even higher level. My over-all evaluation, nevertheless, is that the best chance of achieving our stated objective lies in a [bombing] pause followed, if it fails, by the deployments mentioned above.[38]

McNamara's recommendation for a bombing halt touched off an intra-Administration quarrel that would continue to the end of Johnson's administration. Westmoreland in Saigon, Sharp in Honolulu, the JCS, and numerous presidential advisers in Washington continued to argue that the cumulative effect of American air blows against the North and air and ground blows against PAVN/VC forces in the South would eventually tell.[39]

President Johnson later wrote that he viewed McNamara's proposal to halt the bombing with a "deep skepticism" shared by McGeorge Bundy, Dean Rusk, and Ambassador Lodge, not to mention military chiefs and advisers. Slowly, however, pertinent factors brought some of these persons around. Undoubtedly, McNamara's pessimistic words raised doubts in the presidential mind. In private discussions, McNamara went so far, according to the President, as to question ". . . assurance of military success in Vietnam," stating that ". . . we had to find a diplomatic solution":

> . . . I asked him whether he meant that there was no guarantee of success no matter what we did militarily. "That's right," he answered. "We have been too optimistic. One chance in three, or two in three, is my estimate."[40]

Other factors existed. One was McNamara's argument that if the pause failed to move Hanoi to the conference table, ". . . it would at least [demonstrate] our genuine desire for a peaceful settlement and thereby temper the criticism we were getting at home and abroad."[41] International diplomatic activity, particularly from the U.S.S.R. and Hungary, also seemed to promise negotiations if the bombing halted. In the end, according to the President, McGeorge Bundy and Rusk joined McNamara and George Ball in urging the halt. Against JCS advice, the President stopped the bombings in late December. When Hanoi showed no inclination to come to the conference table—critics of the Administra-

38. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 487–89).
39. Ibid. (pp. 490–91); see also Sharp, op. cit.; Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
40. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
41. Ibid.

tion pointed to Johnson's intractable conference position as one reason —the President ordered bombing resumed at the end of January.

The hawks were now definitely in the ascendancy. In February 1966, The New York *Times Magazine* published an article, "The Case for Escalation," by veteran military analyst Hanson Baldwin.[42] Arguing that the domino theory was valid, Baldwin seemed willing to accept war with China if that was necessary to defeat North Vietnam; meanwhile, he called for declaration of a national emergency and a greatly expanded war.

The next round started with the Buddhist revolts in March 1966, which precipitated a new crisis and forced the Thieu-Ky government to use ARVN units to recapture the cities of Hué and Da Nang.[43] Again the Washington administration split on the issue. Pessimists argued that Ky could never form an effective government, which meant that he could not maintain a viable pacification program; optimists pointed out that he commanded enough loyalty, at least in the army, to settle the issue and that, as a bonus, the government and Buddhists agreed to elections for a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution. Although the crisis occasioned another fierce argument within the Administration (with Under Secretary of State Ball once again calling for disengagement), President Johnson sided with those who favored pursuing the current program, escalating as necessary. With the appointment of Walt Rostow as presidential assistant (replacing McGeorge Bundy as presidential adviser on national security in deed if not in word), the hawks won a major round, and the American commitment continued to increase.

The doubts that had already formed in Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's mind now began to develop dramatically. In August of 1966, the Secretary received an unpleasant, if not entirely unexpected, surprise: a report from forty-seven of the nation's top scientists whom he had secretly mobilized to study the effects of Operation Rolling Thunder and to consider alternate means of stopping enemy infiltration from the North. Their report stated that not only had the twin objectives of Rolling Thunder—to reduce infiltration and to force Hanoi to call off the insurgency—failed (a conclusion previously reached by CIA reports), but that an expanded bombing program would probably fail to accomplish either objective.

Instead, the group recommended building a sophisticated barrier across the southern border of the DMZ and curling on the Laotian panhandle—all together some forty to sixty miles—this to comprise new and secret mines and sensors that would locate infiltrators, who would then be destroyed by patrolling troops and supporting arms. The system

42. Hanson Baldwin, "The Case for Escalation," New York *Times Magazine*, February 27, 1966.

43. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra;* see also Walt, op. cit.

would cost perhaps a billion dollars to build and about $800 million a year to operate.[44]

McNamara was still digesting the morbid contents of the scientists' findings when he received another unpleasant surprise: a new request from General Westmoreland to provide a total 570,000 troops in South Vietnam by end of 1967. A few weeks later, the JCS, which approved Westmoreland's newest request (favorably endorsed by Admiral Sharp), ". . . urged what the Pentagon study calls 'full-blown' mobilization of 688,500 Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine reservists to help provide more troops for Vietnam and also to build up the armed forces around the world."[45]—a move pressed on the American public by Hanson Baldwin in the October *Reader's Digest*.[46]

The Westmoreland-Sharp-JCS-Baldwin thinking was not to McNamara's liking. In October, he again flew to Saigon (where an attempt was made on his life). Upon his return to Washington, he reported in detail to President Johnson:

> . . . In the report of my last trip to Vietnam almost a year ago, I stated that the odds were about even that, even with the then-recommended deployments, we would be faced in early 1967 with a military stand-off at a much higher level of conflict and with "pacification" still stalled. I am a little less pessimistic now in one respect. We have done somewhat better militarily than I anticipated. We have by and large blunted the communist military initiative—any military victory in South Vietnam the Viet Cong may have had in mind 18 months ago has been thwarted by our emergency deployments and actions. And our program of bombing the North has exacted a price.
>
> My concern continues, however, in other respects. This is because I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon. Enemy morale has not broken—he apparently has adjusted to our stopping his drive for military victory and has adopted a strategy of keeping us busy and waiting us out (a strategy of attriting our national will). He knows that we have not been, and he believes we probably will not be, able to translate our military successes into the "end products"—broken enemy morale and political achievements by the GVN.

Although the enemy was probably suffering more than sixty thousand battle deaths a year,

> . . . there is no sign of an impending break in enemy morale and it appears that he can more than replace his losses by infiltration from North Vietnam and recruitment in South Vietnam.

44. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 483–85, 502–9).
45. Ibid. (p. 517).
46. Hanson Baldwin, "To End the War in Vietnam, Mobilize!" *Reader's Digest*, October 1966.

The September elections in South Vietnam were healthy enough, he opined, but the South Vietnamese Government had not come to terms with the real problem:

> . . . Pacification is a bad disappointment . . . [and] has if anything gone backward. As compared with two, or four, years ago, enemy full-time regional forces and part-time guerrilla forces are larger; attacks, terrorism and sabotage have increased in scope and intensity; more railroads are closed and highways cut; the rice crop expected to come to market is smaller; we control little, if any, more of the population; the VC political infrastructure thrives in most of the country, continuing to give the enemy his enormous intelligence advantage; full security exists nowhere (not even behind the U.S. Marines' lines and in Saigon); in the countryside, the enemy almost completely controls the night.[47]

In McNamara's opinion, the United States had to ". . . continue to press the enemy militarily" and also to make "demonstrable" progress in pacification. But

> . . . we must add a new ingredient forced on us by the facts. Specifically, we must improve our position by getting ourselves into a military posture that we credibly would maintain indefinitely—a posture that makes trying to "wait us out" less attractive.

McNamara now called for ". . . a five-pronged course of action": contrary to Westmoreland's, Sharp's and JCS desires, he wished to limit troop increases to seventy thousand which, in the current round, would give a total of 470,000—enough, he believed, to neutralize enemy operations and get on with pacification; to save troops, and thus avoid mobilizing reserves, and to find an effective substitute for expensive and relatively useless bombing of the North, he recommended building an electronic barrier across the DMZ as suggested by the earlier-mentioned scientists' report; he called for stabilizing Operation Rolling Thunder: eighty-four thousand attack sorties had failed to attain stated objectives:

> . . . It is clear that, to bomb the North sufficiently to make a radical impact upon Hanoi's political, economic and social structure, would require an effort which we could make but which would not be stomached either by our own people or by world opinion; and it would involve a serious risk of drawing us into open war with China.

We were then flying twelve thousand attack sorties per month (at an operational cost of $250 million per month), which was sufficient to

47. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 542–51); see also Giap ("Strategic Role"), *supra*.

". . . continue the pressure and would remain available as a bargaining counter to get talks started (or to trade off in talks)." Moreover,

. . . At the proper time . . . I believe we should consider terminating bombing in all of North Vietnam, or at least in the Northeast zones, for an indefinite period in connection with covert moves toward peace. Pursue a vigorous pacification program—if necessary, reorganize. Press for negotiations.

He did not believe that either military action or negotiations offered more than a "mere possibility" of ending the war. As opposed to Westmoreland and the JCS, McNamara believed that

. . . The solution lies in girding, openly, for a longer war and in taking actions immediately which will in 12 to 18 months give clear evidence that the continuing costs and risks to the American people are acceptably limited, that the formula for success has been found, and that the end of the war is merely a matter of time. All of my recommendations will contribute to this strategy, but the one most difficult to implement is perhaps the most important one—enlivening the pacification program. The odds are less than even for this task, if only because we have failed consistently since 1961 to make a dent in the problem. But, because the 1967 trend of pacification will, I believe, be the main talisman of ultimate U.S. success or failure in Vietnam, extraordinary imagination and effort should go into changing the stripes of that problem.

President Thieu and Prime Minister Ky are thinking along similar lines. . . . They expressed agreement with us that the key to success is pacification and that so far pacification has failed. They agree that we need clarification of GVN and U.S. roles and that the bulk of the ARVN should be shifted to pacification. Ky will, between January and July 1967, shift all ARVN infantry divisions to that role. . . . Thieu and Ky see this as part of a two-year (1967–68) schedule, in which offensive operations against enemy main force units are continued, carried on primarily by the U.S. and other Free-World forces. At the end of the two-year period, they believe the enemy may be willing to negotiate or to retreat from his current course of action.

Neither Westmoreland nor the JCS agreed with McNamara's conclusions. The JCS vigorously dissented from stabilizing the air campaign against the North, calling instead for a radical expansion of the effort along with an increase in targets and additional naval action.[48] Other hawks agreed, and President Johnson was inclined to agree with the hawks.[49]

McNamara did persuade Johnson to limit troop increases, but only for a short time. At the Manila conference in late October, Westmoreland agreed to a top of four hundred eighty thousand men by end of

48. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 552–53).
49. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

1967 and five hundred thousand by end of 1968.[50] According to John McNaughton, Westmoreland said ". . . that those forces would be enough 'even if infiltration went on at a high level' but that he wanted a contingency force of roughly two divisions on reserve in the Pacific."[51] McNamara shaved the figure even further and in November, obviously with presidential assent, informed the JCS that Westmoreland could have 469,000 troops at his disposal by mid-1968.[52]

50. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 520–21).
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.

Chapter 85

The war continues • President Johnson's optimism • The February bombing halt • Operation Cedar Falls • Task Force Oregon • Fighting in the highlands • The marine war • New tactical techniques • Khe Sanh defended • Air and naval wars • "The new team": Ambassador Bunker and pacification • South Vietnam's political progress • Allied profits for the year • ". . . Light at the end of a tunnel"

IN HIS STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE in early January 1967, President Johnson once again justified American presence in Vietnam in the strongest possible terms. Once again he spoke of specific "commitments" and the evil that would follow should the United States fail to uphold them. He promised no easy way out of what he called this "limited war":

. . . I wish I could report to you that the conflict is almost over. This I cannot do. We face more cost, more loss, and more agony. For the end is not yet. I cannot promise you that it will come this year—or come next year. Our adversary still believes, I think, tonight, that he can go on fighting longer than we can, and longer than we and our allies will be prepared to stand up and resist.

The answer to that was to continue Westmoreland's attrition strategy:

. . . Our men in that area—there are nearly 500,000 now—have borne well "the burden and the heat of the day." Their efforts have deprived the Com-

munist enemy of the victory that he sought and that he expected a year ago. We have steadily frustrated his main forces. General Westmoreland reports that the enemy can no longer succeed on the battlefield.

So I must say to you that our pressure must be sustained—and will be sustained—until he realizes that the war he started is costing him more than he can ever gain.[1]

Although problems continued to plague the American effort—pacification, for example, was not showing the "desired progress"—that effort already had ". . . created a feeling of confidence and unity among the independent nations of Asia and the Pacific." Even while war continued, the Administration was working on an Asian development plan that the President had outlined in his famous Baltimore speech.

The President's words reflected optimism current among the hawks; as he later wrote in his memoirs:

. . . By early 1967 most of my advisers and I felt confident that the tide of war was moving strongly in favor of the South Vietnamese and their allies, and against the Communists.[2]

His speech made it clear that he was committed to a hawk strategy and did not want to change.

The President continued to place great faith in Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing of the North. He approved none of McNamara's "stabilizing" suggestions made the previous autumn and, indeed, drastically raised the number of authorized B-52 missions, to take effect in late February. Although international pressures caused him to halt bombing the North for a few days in February, he ignored the British prime minister's plea to hold off until the Soviet premier could discuss negotiations with Hanoi. How much this was due to his own belief and how much to the work of hawks is anyone's guess. The President made his attitude clear in two documents, however. In a secret letter of early February to Ho Chi Minh, his moral indignation at Hanoi's transgression is apparent—it is all he can do to swallow it and offer to stop bombing the North if Hanoi would stop infiltration into the South. Ho replied, in effect, that the U.S.A. had no right to bomb the North in the first place and that discussions between the two countries could occur only when bombing and other unjustified acts of war ceased.[3]

Not only was bombing the North morally and legally justified in the President's mind, but, contrary to reports from the nation's top intelligence analysts, he insisted that the bombings were producing very real

1. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1967, Book I), *supra.*
2. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
3. The letters are quoted in *Survival,* June 1967.

effects. President Johnson wrote Senator Henry Jackson, upon resuming bombing of the North in February:

> . . . Our attacks on military targets in North Viet Nam have diverted about half a million men to cope with effects of our attacks. They are repairing the lines of supply and are engaged in anti-aircraft and coastal defense. This figure approximates the total number of men we now have fighting in Southeast Asia. It is not much less than the number of men South Viet Nam has had to mobilize to deal with the guerrilla attack in the South.
>
> At the cost of about 500 gallant American airmen killed, captured, or missing, we are bringing to bear on North Viet Nam a burden roughly equivalent to that which the Communists are imposing through guerrilla warfare in the South—and we are doing it with far fewer civilian casualties in the North.
>
> Finally, the bombing of North Viet Nam has raised the cost of bringing an armed man or a ton of supplies illegally across the border from the North to the South. Substantial casualties are inflicted on infiltrators and substantial tonnages of supplies are destroyed en route. Those who now reach the South arrive after harassment which lowers their effectiveness as reinforcements.[4]

The President was not as confident in deed as in word, for the air campaign, Operation Rolling Thunder, became a subject of grave dispute within top Administration echelons, as we shall discuss in the next chapter—dispute that showed in the on-again off-again half-again orders emanating from the White House throughout the year. Although Johnson emphasized in his memoirs that he did not expect bombing of the North to win the war, the record strongly suggests that he regarded air power as his chief punitive weapon and could not understand why Hanoi did not submit in order to call off the punishment. In any event, the air war, both North and South, escalated to frantic proportions in 1967.

The President did not exercise such active control over the ground war in the South as he did over bombing of the North. He nonetheless vigorously supported Westmoreland. Without acceding to maximum requests levied by Saigon and the JCS, he still authorized substantial increases in American troop commitment and in over-all expenditure. By year's end, South Vietnam's armed forces climbed to over seven hundred thousand (at least on paper); American troop strength approached half a million with 525,000 authorized; Korea supplied forty-five thousand troops; Australia, six thousand; Thailand, twenty-five hundred, with the promise to furnish a division; New Zealand, a few hundred. Direct operational costs for the year zoomed to over $25 billion. By October 1967,

4. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1967, Book I), *supra*.

. . . 40 percent of our combat-ready divisions, half of our tactical airpower, and at least a third of our naval strength . . . were waging full-throated war on the Southeast Asian peninsula.[5]

One analyst aptly called it more of the same.

In January, Operation Cedar Falls—an allied force spearheaded by the American army's 1st Division—began to sweep through a B-52-bomb-plastered Iron Triangle, northwest of Saigon. In this traditional Viet Cong defense complex, troops discovered an "underground city" and seized half a million enemy documents and enough rice to feed ". . . an estimated 13,000 soldiers for one year."[6] More sweeps followed to push the enemy from the Iron Triangle and from Zones C and D and keep him on the defensive while bringing alleged stability to surrounding provinces (see map, p. 1187). An active and tactically profitable year in vital III Corps area: by December, U.S.-ARVN-allied forces claimed 22,500 enemy dead; more important, Viet Cong main-force units had retreated north to Cambodian border areas. Summarizing the war at year's end, *Newsweek* magazine quoted Lieutenant General Frederick Weyand, commanding U.S. forces in III Corps area: ". . . The three enemy divisions that used to ring Saigon are now 80 and 90 miles away from the capital, where their targets are outside the key areas. . . . The enemy can't suck me out of the populated areas now by attacking an outpost. We now have the strength to respond to such attacks and still maintain control of the population."[7]

Farther south, in IV Corps area, U.S.-ARVN forces also reported significant gains and claimed to be destroying one thousand Viet Cong guerrillas per month. Where once enemy units had proved elusive, contacts now were frequent: ". . . The units we fight now will break and run," says one general. "Two years ago you couldn't pry them out."[8] Particularly productive in this corps area were riverine warfare operations conducted by U. S. Navy personnel often in conjunction with American and Vietnamese ground units.

Similarly, large-scale "spoiling" operations in II Corps area, both along the coast and in the central highlands, were said to be keeping the enemy temporarily off balance. These sophisticated operations differed only in quantity and location from ones earlier discussed. Task Force Oregon operations, in the spring of 1967, as described by Robert Shaplen, might have happened in 1966:

. . . we continued north by helicopter to the headquarters of Major General William B. Rosson, in command of Operation Oregon, a large combined

5. Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention* (New York: McKay, 1969).
6. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
7. *Newsweek,* January 1, 1968.
8. Ibid.

action by the 101st, the 25th, and the 196th, co-ordinated with that of the 1st Cavalry to the south. Since Oregon had begun, on April 20th, our officers had claimed seven hundred enemy dead at the cost of fifty-one dead Americans. Oregon consisted of a lowlands and a highlands effort. In the lowlands, where a brigade of the 25th Division was operating, the campaign was designed to root out the Vietcong and to get a major pacification effort started in what had been solid Communist territory for many years. General Rosson described this lowlands region as "a big island of hope." General Westmoreland agreed, but emphasized the difficulties that still lay ahead in bringing permanent peace to the region and persuading the Vietcong to quit—a task that indeed did loom as enormous. The enormity was emphasized when we flew back into the hills, where part [an airborne brigade] of the 101st was trying to root out two regiments of the N.V.A. 3rd Division, breaking them up and pushing them down toward the area of operations of the 1st Cavalry or east into open areas where they could be more readily attacked. The 101st has established the remarkable record in Vietnam of moving twenty-five times in twenty months. With the help of a Special Forces team on the mountains far to the west, among the Montagnard Re tribesmen, the 101st was discovering a number of enemy infiltration routes and, as its briefing officers said, was forcing N.V.A. company- or battalion-size elements to move about in smaller numbers. There were still plenty of enemy soldiers about, though, and one of the battalion officers said, "We feel surrounded out here."[9]

American army operations continued in the two coastal provinces throughout summer and autumn. The correspondent Jonathan Schell found operations virtually unchanged from previous months. American army units continued to sweep hostile areas and to call in air and artillery strikes on suspect villages. Each operation strongly resembled the others; each depended on the quantitative approach that had now become the hallmark of American tactics.[10]

In October, enemy forces again became active in the northwest. To prevent them from seizing the provincial capital of Kontum, Westmoreland broke off coastal operations to fight a number of fierce actions in the vicinity of Dak To. Then, in mid-November, in III Corps area, in the south, two enemy regiments attacked an allied outpost at Loc Ninh, a town only nine miles from the Cambodian border, a fierce action that claimed 926 confirmed North Vietnamese dead, with another two or three thousand wounded. Another attack, against Dak To, was beaten back with five hundred Communist dead claimed; week-long fighting cost 177 American dead and 761 wounded, and 279 ARVN dead.[11] In early December, the enemy again attacked the base camp

9. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra.*

10. Schell, op. cit.

11. Reuters, Saigon, November 16, 1967; see also Shaplen (*Road*), *supra,* for details of these actions.

at Dak To, a vicious five-day battle that again resulted in heavy Communist casualties: 1,599 confirmed dead at a cost of 150 U.S. paratrooper lives and 250 wounded. Another attack, a week later, at Bo Duc was also beaten off.

In the North, in I Corps area, Walt's marines had been kept busy fighting three wars: one against main-force Viet Cong and PAVN units in and around the DMZ, one against VC units south of the DMZ, and finally, the "other war," that which involved protecting hamlets and villages while trying to win peasants to the government's side.

One marine commander aptly defined the war against main-force Viet Cong and PAVN units:

> . . . This is the one against the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] regular—Mr. Charles, because he is a lot more sophisticated than his VC cousin. He operates with all supporting arms except air and naval gunfire. He'll dig in and stay to fight. He'll counterattack and try to fractionalize units as large as a battalion. When he has had enough he'll break contact, drag off his dead and lick his wounds. If he has been hurt badly he'll be returned to North Vietnam and replaced by a fresh unit.[12]

Marines fought this war from a series of strong points designed to prevent infiltration south by PAVN units crossing the DMZ or entering from Laos. The effort involved screening enemy movements and harassing or disrupting them by ground action and/or artillery, air, and naval fire when possible. Although major fire fights continued to exact heavy enemy casualties, the enemy seemed no less strong, and as the year wore on, he began employing ". . . sophisticated Russian howitzers, artillery, mortars and rockets"—the result of increasing Soviet aid.[13] Marines replied by increasing ground, air, and naval action. General Walt, who returned to the United States from Vietnam in spring of 1967, told an audience: ". . . we are looking forward to the arrival of *New Jersey* [a battleship taken out of mothballs] on station so that we can start sending some of those one-ton shells into the enemy's heavily fortified bunker areas. There is nothing to match them for the accurate reduction of deeply dug in positions."[14]

Action flared variously in the area, in general the marines reacting rather than acting. One marine strong point was at Khe Sanh, a scrubby, isolated combat base with airstrip, originally the home of a CIDG—

12. J. W. Hammond, "Combat Journal," *Marine Corps Gazette,* July and August 1968.

13. Robert Shaplen, "Viet-Nam: Crisis of Indecision," *Foreign Affairs,* October 1967. Hereafter cited as Shaplen ("Crisis").

14. L. W. Walt, "The Navy in Vietnam." Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps release, n.d.: Walt was forgetting Marine Corps experience in World War II and Korea, when naval gunfire and aerial bombing "preparation" of enemy targets frequently produced minimum results.

some two hundred Vietnamese irregulars and Special Forces advisers.[15] A few miles from the Laotian border, the base had been occupied by a marine battalion during Operation Prairie, in autumn of 1966, and subsequently was held by a reinforced company. As with other combat bases, Khe Sanh filled a dual role: Patrols constantly issued forth to observe and sometimes interdict enemy movement, and to respond, along with base supporting weapons, to calls from neighboring Combined Action units.

In April 1967, a marine patrol from Khe Sanh had set up an observation post on Hill 861, part of a nearby triangular terrain feature. Unknown to marines, elements of two PAVN regiments had been moving to these hills, presumably in preparation for an attack on Khe Sanh itself. When enemy attacked the marine patrol on Hill 861, a fire fight of major proportions developed, to culminate in a marine counteroffensive: violent assault and capture of Hills 861, 881 North, and 881 South, actions that reminded older marines of World War II operations. The twelve-day battle ended in a marine "victory" in that the PAVN regiments retired, having lost, according to marine figures, nine hundred lives with two or three times that number wounded. Marine casualties numbered 138 dead and 397 wounded.[16]

An even more frustrating war continued against VC units south of the DMZ:

> . . . a gruelling tedious war. It is characterized by long patrols, occasional quick fights with some confirmed kills, and monotony. The enemy employs mortars and is nasty with his propensity for mines and other explosive devices. He uses the terrain and its concealment well—he moves at night, but rarely stays and fights. When he does, it is usually a delaying action to protect something valuable or at least to allow it to be moved.[17]

Although marines fought this war with grim determination, they possessed neither tactics nor strength essential to clear and hold areas that, long since, had been dominated by VC cadres. Every time a quasi-conventional action developed in the DMZ area, the effort to the south suffered. In early spring of 1967, VC units were sufficiently strong to open a general offensive, shelling Hué and Da Nang and even overrunning Quang Tri, while other units struck at pacification teams throughout the provinces.

VC gains led to important reorganization of the area. Marine units, now some seventy-five thousand strong, concentrated in the three northern provinces. South of them, a new army unit moved in, the American Division, whose four brigades were reinforced with a fifth, airmobile

15. L. W. Walt, "Khe Sanh—The Battle That Had to Be Won," *Reader's Digest*, August 1970.

16. U. S. Marine Corps, "The Battle for Hills 861 and 881." n.p., n.d.; see also, Corson, op. cit. who cites 155 dead and 425 wounded.

17. Hammond, op. cit.

brigade. ARVN troops were increased to some thirty thousand, and units began fighting in conjunction with American troops. In June, Lieutenant General Robert Cushman, U. S. Marine Corps, replaced General Walt in command of III MAF, whose operational area had grown to over two thousand square miles in I Corps area (which comprised five provinces and some three million people and was commanded by Lieutenant General Huong Xuan Lam). In addition to troops listed above, the area held a Korean brigade, CIDG units, eighteen thousand American sailors, and seven thousand American airmen, not to mention countless civil and military advisers.

That summer and autumn, fast and furious actions continued to be fought throughout the long coastal area and in the north. In summer, marine and ARVN units began Operation Beau Charger, designed to root out VC forces in and south of the DMZ prior to making it a "free fire zone"—a complicated and costly task that, among other things, meant relocating some thirteen thousand civilians, to add to refugee hordes already crowding Da Nang and Hué.[18] In autumn, as engineers began surveying terrain as the first step in constructing McNamara's "fence" across the southern boundary of the DMZ, marine units fought frequent savage actions in defending strong points such as Cam Lo and Con Thien—"spoiling" operations that bore heavy price tags: In September alone, marine casualties totalled over twenty-two hundred.[19]

A marine battalion commander has given an excellent account of operations at this time in vicious jungle country west of the piedmont:

> . . . The battalion marched for twenty-two of the first twenty-four hours. The going, once inside the heavy canopy, was slow. The lead elements actually had to break trail. The point was relieved frequently and rested. The remainder of the battalion was strung out in company columns. By 1800 on the second day, the battalion had marched 7,000 meters and had penetrated the canopy only 1,000 meters. It bivouacked on a piece of high ground for the second night after marching 22 of the first 24 hours. Despite the commanding feature of the high ground, actual visibility and observation were nil. There was no contact.
>
> Next morning, at first light, the lead company moved out. An attached company from ⅓ [battalion] was sent off to the flank to search for enemy trails and camp sites.

Ensuing progress will perhaps put some readers in mind of the British fighting Thibaw's guerrillas in Burma eighty years earlier (see Chapter 16, Volume I):

> . . . During the next two days movement was slow, in column, and characterized by brief fights at the point. Charlie would delay along a trail, fire at the point hoping to inflict casualties. The VC know the American pro-

18. Corson, op. cit.
19. *Time*, October 6, 1967.

cedure for casualty evacuation. If the VC can fire from concealment, kill, or better still, wound a Marine, it is their hope to immobilize the entire column as it waits for the Medevac helicopter. In this instance at least seven VC paid with their lives for such an assumption. Aggressive counter-fire and pursuit made the difference.

After four days and five nights and some hunger (CH-46 helicopters were grounded and supply interrupted), this battalion destroyed three VC base camps but no VC. At the second camp, marines destroyed four hundred Chinese Communist grenades.

. . . Unfortunately, the enemy himself had evacuated the area after a small rear guard action. Everything which he had which was mobile, including some cattle, accompanied him.

This battalion had scarcely rested from its jungle foray when it received orders to proceed to Con Thien, from where it would conduct patrols and spoiling operations against PAVN units. The author wrote feelingly on effective enemy tactics and on the difficulties of operating in strange terrain and difficult climate. Almost at once, his battalion blundered into a major fight, which, as usual, saw courageous fighting by individual marines but cost heavy casualties: ". . . The toll of the day was counted and 2/4 was down under 500 effectives in the field, including walking wounded." Two hundred enemy dead were claimed for the inconclusive fire fight. Of a good many conclusions drawn by the battalion commander, one read as follows:

. . . Search and destroy is a proper mission against irregulars; it is a poor mission assignment against regulars engaged in conventional warfare. Assigning a large area to be swept vice specific objectives to be attacked is asking for trouble. Better intelligence is mandatory; and moving large units through an area without a specific objective is capricious.[20]

The scope of fighting, not only in I Corps area but throughout South Vietnam, is difficult to comprehend. By August 1967, marine units had mounted over three hundred thousand patrols—over 1,200 a day since early 1967!—set 114,000 ambushes, and fought over two hundred battalion-size or larger actions. Marine fixed-wing aircraft had flown 128,000 missions; marine helicopters registered a total of 859,000 flights. Marines claimed an impressive cumulative confirmed enemy kill—". . . we have buried more than 28,455 [enemy]" read one bulletin—with 2,344 enemy captured, along with 3,952 weapons. At year's end, the claimed kill figure for I Corps area would reach thirty-eight thousand.[21]

Pacification also showed impressive gains. Of 219 villages (with a population exceeding 1.2 million) in the marine area, forty-three (with

20. Hammond, op. cit.
21. *Newsweek,* January 1, 1968.

a population of five hundred thousand) were declared 80 per cent or more pacified by late autumn. ARVN units had been working in the area for over a year, and Combined Action Platoons now numbered seventy and were to expand to 114—all together, a program that would provide ". . . security for an estimated 400,000 Vietnamese people or in percentage figures 15 percent of the entire population of I Corps area."[22] Navy doctors attached to marine units had treated over two million Vietnamese, dentists over a hundred thousand. Marines had distributed over four million pounds of food, had helped build or rebuild a hundred five schools and a hundred other buildings such as churches and dispensaries; they had dug a hundred thirty wells, built forty-nine bridges, and serviced four hundred miles of roads.[23] Pacification techniques were improving, as witness this account of an operation called County Fair:

> . . . A Marine unit in cooperation with Vietnamese units surrounds a hamlet or village usually before dawn and cordons it off to prevent anyone from leaving. After the people are assembled, Vietnamese officials with Marine support begin a series of actions to gain their confidence. A census is taken. A field dispensary is set up and medical attention given to those who need it. Sometimes a dentist accompanies the party. Meals are cooked and served. Lectures and movies are presented. A Marine band may play for an hour or so. Much of this activity takes place under canvas which probably accounts for the name County Fair. A careful house-to-house search is aimed at VC guerrillas and VC political personnel who may be part of the local cadre. . . . The County Fair technique has had excellent results and is now a routine type operation, although each one varies in its specifics.[24]

The marines also improved techniques in an attempt to repair intelligence deficiencies. A long-overdue step involved recruiting scouts from enemy defectors, the Kit Carson Scout Program, variations of which had proved so successful in Malaya and Kenya (see Chapters 61 and 68), indeed in the Philippines at the turn of the century (see Chapter 14, Volume I). Marine intelligence officers recruited these people from Viet Cong and North Vietnamese who had surrendered under the Chieu Hoi program. After training, they were normally assigned in pairs to an infantry battalion deployed in search-and-destroy missions. The former enemy soldiers proved invaluable in detecting ambush sites and booby traps, and also in acting as interpreters when needed. When possible, they were employed in areas where they were familiar with the terrain, people, and their former units. Marines initially

22. David H. Wagner, "A Handful of Marines," *Marine Corps Gazette,* March 1968.

23. U. S. Marine Corps ("III MAF Force . . ."), *supra;* see also Wagner, op. cit.

24. Keith B. McCutcheon, "Air Support for III MAF," *Marine Corps Gazette,* August 1967; see also L. W. Walt (*Strange War, Strange Strategy*), *supra.*

procured fifty per division, later a hundred; the program was so successful that the army adopted it. One marine division commander, Herman Nickerson, later told an audience in the United States:

> . . . I had two scouts killed and several wounded during the performance of their duties with the First Marine Division. . . . The use of these "Kit Carson" scouts pays great dividends. For example, I have had many marines at night on counterguerrilla patrols or ambushes saved by the quick eyes, the knowledge and understanding, the ability of the scouts to recognize the V.C. booby traps in the dark and remove them or avoid same.

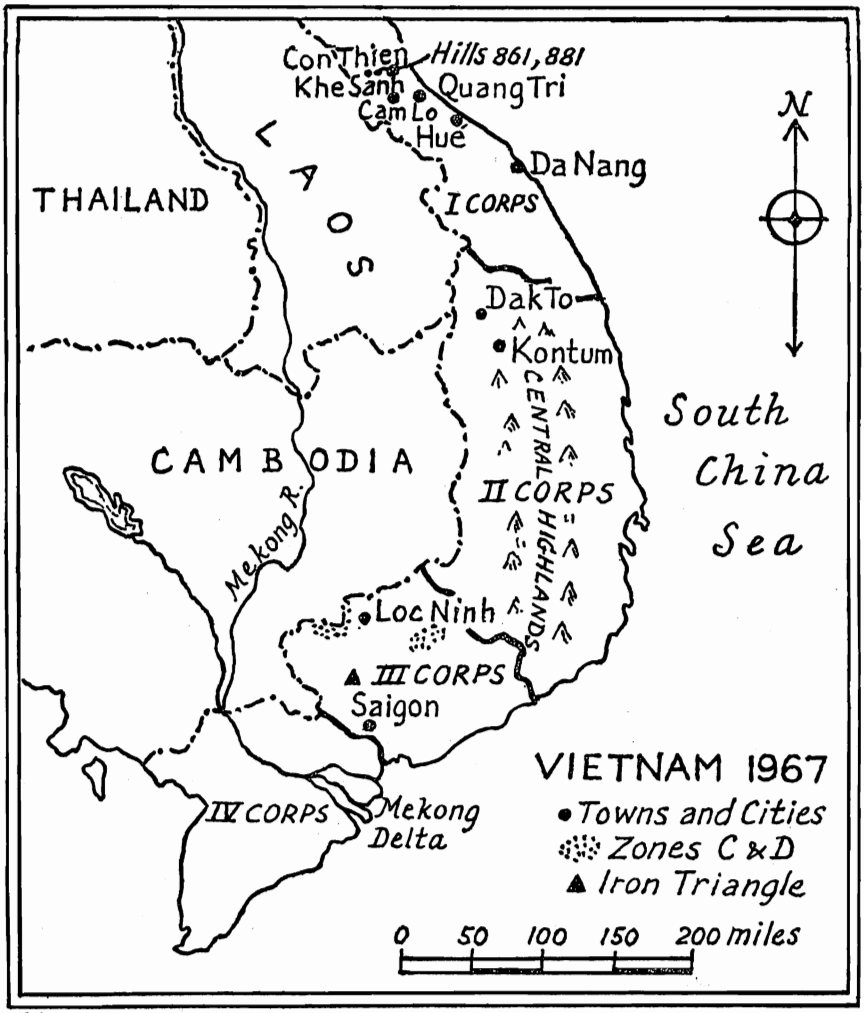
Unit commanders used two Vietnamese and two marine scouts as a point fire team. Nickerson described one incident:

> . . . One night one of the scouts noticed, in the dark now, along an area that he was familiar with—that the little branches were picked off or broken off the bushes along the trail at more and more frequent intervals. He signaled the patrol. They got off the trail, and they discovered that this seemingly meaningless action of taking cover triggered a Viet Cong ambush prematurely. The scout knew the V.C. had an ambush set ahead. It takes a long while, especially in the low visibility of the dark, to train an occidental to recognize those kind of signs! In other words, it takes one to know one! I am a great believer in the Kit Carson scouts. . . .[25]

A complementary solution involved developing a unit's own scouts in the form of small, long-range patrols that came to be known as Sting Ray operations. Such a patrol consisted of a few highly trained men equipped to find the enemy, then call in and adjust friendly air, artillery, or naval gunfire by radio. A patrol infiltrated an area believed to hold enemy forces either on foot or by helicopter. It operated normally for five days, during which it fulfilled one or more missions: One was gathering intelligence that a tactical commander could exploit either in future plans or more immediately by flying in additional forces. The patrol could also employ disruptive tactics, in which case it sought out enemy supply trails and established appropriate ambushes. If a fire fight developed unfavorably, a patrol sought to extricate itself either by guerrilla tactics of fading into the terrain, or by helicopter call-in; one enterprising marine lieutenant, when greatly outnumbered, ordered his men to don gas masks, then saturated the area with tear gas, which held off the enemy until helicopters arrived.

This same officer, who led patrols over a period of several months, obtained a final kill ratio of 226 confirmed VC dead to the loss of a few wounded marines, a figure he believed would have been five times greater had an assault company, controlling its own helicopter trans-

25. Herman Nickerson, "Address." Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps release, n.d.



M.E.P.

port, been instantly available to exploit numerous chances for severely punishing observed enemy units.[26]

Still another tactic involved two-man sniper teams that were especially trained to stake out a position and wait for opportunity. The 1st Marine Division claimed that, in eight months, its ninety snipers recorded over four hundred fifty confirmed kills against four marine dead. Called "13-cent killers," because of the price of a rifle cartridge, the

26. Private information in the author's files; see also Asprey ("Guerrilla Warfare" and "Tactics"), *supra;* West, op. cit.

tactic was carried out by some five hundred army and marine snipers during the year.[27]

Despite improved tactics and techniques, as autumn gave way to early winter, army and marine commanders continued to dance to the enemy's tune. As earlier noted, coastal pacification operations now yielded to meeting new enemy threats around Kontum. In the north, the Khe Sanh area had remained relatively quiet through summer and autumn, but, in October, enemy activity again increased. In November, General Cushman opened Operation Scotland and, by mid-December, had bolstered the small garrison with two reinforced battalions. At year's end, patrols were confirming heavy enemy build-up in western Quang Tri province in general and around Khe Sanh in particular.

Air and naval wars, both in- and out-country, also escalated, with thousands of sorties flown to drop thousands of tons of bombs and napalm and expend thousands of rockets and millions of rounds of ammunition. Naval-marine amphibious groups conducted twenty-three battalion-force landings along the South Vietnamese coast in 1967, which allegedly ". . . kept the enemy off balance, disrupted his logistical support, and denied him profitable coastal areas."[28] From June 1966 to July 1967, the Coastal Surveillance Force ". . . boarded or inspected over 500,000 watercraft" in an attempt to interrupt VC supply lines.[29] In-country naval operations in the Mekong Delta also expanded to involve water-borne search-and-destroy operations in conjunction with American army and ARVN units. Provisional reconnaissance units also appeared in the delta country; these were small groups of former VC guerrillas who had changed sides and were employed mostly as night raiders sent to attack VC camps and strongholds. Where camps could not be attacked, American planes attempted to uncover them and deprive them of food: During 1967, Ranch Hand planes ". . . dumped more than four million gallons of herbicide and defoliation chemicals on South Vietnam . . . four times the annual herbicide productive capacity of *all* American chemical companies."[30]

Simultaneously, the "other war" grew in size and complexity. In spring of 1967, the new American ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, once again reorganized the pacification program, at least from the American standpoint. Called now Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), it was headed by a deputy ambassador, former presidential aide Robert Komer, who administered it under MACV's jurisdiction with large amounts of funds going directly to the South Vietnamese Government. The general idea was to co-

27. *Time,* October 27, 1967.
28. Department of the Navy, "Chinfonote 5721." Washington: U. S. Navy, March 28, 1968.
29. U. S. Navy ("Riverine Warfare"), *supra.*
30. Corson, op. cit.

ordinate military aspects, particularly security, which had always been a weak point, with civil aspects. During 1967, the Revolutionary Development program grew to some fifty-five thousand cadres, including nearly five hundred Revolutionary Development Teams. Their work was measured by Komer's people, using an elaborate computerized system called Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). Data furnished by U.S. advisers, who monthly reported on eighteen criteria, went into computers, which then graded villages anywhere from totally secure ("A") to VC-controlled ("V"). By year's end, Komer claimed that two thirds of the population now lived under government control—". . . only one South Vietnamese in six now lives under VC control."[31]

Administration voices also emphasized substantial political progess in South Vietnam. At Guam, in March, Thieu and Ky had unveiled their new constitution, a document heralded by President Johnson as slightly more important than Magna Carta, particularly since he secretly exacted a pledge from the two Vietnamese not to break up the fragile South Vietnamese Government by reason of personal vendettas. Spring elections followed in about eight hundred villages and four thousand hamlets. An autumn presidential election placed Thieu in power, with Ky as vice-president; voters also elected a sixty-man senate and a 137-man house of representatives.

The Administration's line was clear: By continuing to pursue a winning strategy, the President was going to give the American people a well-deserved victory in South Vietnam. In various speeches around the country, Lieutenant General Walt, returned, in June 1967, from commanding III MAF, assured audiences that we were "winning" (at least in I Corps) and that it would be folly to stop now: ". . . wise or unwise, we have committed ourselves in Vietnam; weakness, vacillation, irresolution here at home are being paid for on the battlefields of Vietnam with the lives and blood of our fighting men."[32] MACV spokesmen in Saigon continued to report positive gains during the summer. In October, General Westmoreland told newsmen that ". . . the enemy is in the worst posture he has been in since the war started." Year-end figures seemed to confirm his optimism: a weekly enemy kill rate of nearly seventeen hundred (241,300 enemy killed since 1961),[33] a drop in infiltration from the North of twelve thousand, a decrease in VC recruitment in the South from seven thousand to thirty-five hundred a month,[34] an enemy desertion figure nudging twenty-five thousand for the year,[35] a half million persons (including a hundred thousand

31. *Newsweek,* January 1, 1968.
32. L. W. Walt, "Our Purpose in Vietnam" and "Are We Winning the War in Vietnam?" Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps release, n.d.
33. UPI, Saigon, December 14, 1967.
34. *Newsweek,* January 1, 1968.
35. *The Economist,* November 18, 1969.

Chinese) repairing bomb damage in the North,[36] northern ports all but closed and supplies to the South drastically reduced as a result of the new aerial "choke-and-destroy" strategy, "victories" one after the other in all corps areas.

Prior to leaving for Washington, in November, General Westmoreland told newsmen that he was ". . . more encouraged than at any time since I arrived here."[37] Ambassador Bunker and Robert Komer, Bunker's pacification chief, reflected Westmoreland's optimism; indeed, according to *Time,* ". . . all three brimmed with confidence." At a White House meeting, Bunker told the President, ". . . It's going to be all right, Mr. President. Just let's keep on, keep on."[38] Also at the White House, Westmoreland told newsmen, ". . . I have never been more encouraged in my four years in Vietnam."[39] After citing various favorable statistics, Westmoreland explained that, having gotten his logistics plant in order, he had succeeded in driving enemy main-force units to border areas, where they would be contained. At President Johnson's request, Westmoreland addressed a joint session of Congress, which learned ". . . that the war was being won militarily. He outlined 'indicators' of progress and stated that a limited withdrawal of American combat forces might be undertaken beginning late in 1968."[40] Robert Komer offered equally good news. According to *Time,*

> . . . The profile of war and pacification was sketched for the President from meticulously gathered statistics, Communist reports, prisoner interrogations, and U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence sources. In almost all the country's provinces, the reports suggest, the Viet Cong is suffering increasingly from lack of food, recruiting difficulties, and the steady movement of the people from Viet Cong held areas to the security of government-controlled territory . . . many Viet Cong troops are sick and tired of the fighting.[41]

The combined report reminded a few observers of the French general Henri Navarre, who, in 1953, had spoken of ". . . light at the end of a tunnel" (see Chapter 62).[42]

General optimism continued to be expressed by Administration officials as the year closed. In mid-December, Admiral Sharp, while visit-

36. Shaplen ("Viet-Nam: Crisis of Indecision"), *supra.*
37. *Time,* November 17, 1967.
38. *Time,* November 24, 1967.
39. Ibid.; see also AP, Washington, November 15, 1967.
40. Henry Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs,* January 1969; see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra:* Westmoreland told the President that his "central purpose" over the next two years was to transfer additional responsibility to the South Vietnamese. Westmoreland, the President wrote, ". . . was convinced that within that time—that is, by the end of 1969—we could safely begin withdrawing American forces. . . ."
41. *Time,* November 24, 1967.
42. UPI, Washington, November 21, 1967; see also Brandon, op. cit.; Hoopes, op. cit.; Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

ing Malaysia, pointed to a 50 per cent increase in Communist casualties in Vietnam for the year: ". . . The enemy can no longer feel safe in much of South Viet Nam," he said, qualifying his words by also pointing out that ". . . Communist forces in South Viet Nam retain a dangerous capability for terrorism and guerrilla warfare."[43] On December 19, President Johnson said, ". . . General Abrams tells me that the ARVN is as good as the Korean Army was in 1954."[44] At the turn of the year, Secretary of State Rusk spoke optimistically of ". . . a clear . . . turn of events on the ground."

Although the President later wrote in his memoirs that the tactical situation was very crucial at this time, and that he had warned of "kamikaze tactics" to come, the record does not show that he disapproved of Westmoreland's strategy or was in any mind to heed warning voices. Shortly before the new year, he stated that the Communists ". . . can't point to one single victory" in Vietnam. His State of the Union address in January 1968 implied satisfactory progress, with more of the same to come. General Westmoreland's annual report, delivered on January 27, included the following paragraph:

> . . . Interdiction of the enemy's logistics train in Laos and NVN [North Vietnam] by our indispensable air efforts has imposed significant difficulties on him. In many areas the enemy has been driven away from the population centers; in others he has been compelled to disperse and evade contact, thus nullifying much of his potential. The year ended with the enemy increasingly resorting to desperation tactics in attempting to achieve military/psychological victory; and he has experienced only failure in these attempts.[45]

43. *Time,* December 15, 1967.
44. Corson, op. cit.
45. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 593).

Chapter 86

More blurs on the canvas • Allied losses • Failure of Operation Rolling Thunder • The numbers game • Increasing American costs (II) • The fallacy of attrition warfare • The "other war" examined • The communications deficiency • Search-and-destroy versus pacification • "Have we killed all the enemy?" • Failure of the Revolutionary Development program • Komer's "indicators" • Government corruption • Failure of land reforms • Electoral restrictions and irregularities • Increasing opposition at home and abroad • Press and TV coverage • The experts dissent • Behind-the-scenes dissent • Westmoreland demands more troops (III) • John McNaughton: ". . . A feeling is widely and strongly held that 'the Establishment' is out of its mind." • McNamara's new policy paper • The President's "middle course" • The Clifford mission • Johnson's San Antonio offer • Westmoreland demands more troops (IV) • McNamara's final effort

AS WESTMORELAND'S OPERATIONAL CANVAS expanded in 1967, the blurs that had appeared in 1966 grew more prominent. One resulted from increasing cost and extensive physical loss. During 1967, nine thousand Americans were killed in Vietnam and over sixty thousand were wounded, to make cumulative totals of about sixteen thousand dead and one hundred thousand wounded since 1961.[1] Other allies lost fifteen hundred killed. South Vietnamese deaths were reported at sixty thousand, of which ten thousand were ARVN deaths. Steadily improving anti-aircraft defenses in the North exacted increasing toll of aircraft. On December 15, the Reuters news agency quoted an official American spokesman who put cumulative U.S. losses at 1,822 planes and 1,416 helicopters.[2]

1. The Institute for Strategic Studies, "The United States Strategic Survey, 1967," *Strategic Survey, 1967* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1968).

2. Reuters, December 15, 1967; see also Hoopes, op. cit.: From February 1965 to December 1967, the United States lost, from all causes, in Vietnam some 3,000 aircraft (including helicopters), at a cost of $2.9 billion.

Yet the air war was proving no more effective than in 1966, despite official claims to the contrary. Testifying before a Senate subcommittee in August 1967, Robert McNamara pointed out that North Vietnam had the capacity to import fourteen thousand tons of supply per day, but was importing only fifty-eight hundred tons. North Vietnam and Viet Cong forces in the South, he told senators, required under one hundred tons of supply per day from the North.[8] American air power was not preventing this small amount from reaching the enemy, nor would it do so.

Townsend Hoopes later wrote that, by October 1967, ". . . the cold, unhypothetical fact remained that the flow of men and supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam had definitely increased in absolute terms."[4]

At the same time, as in 1965 and 1966, the bombing, far from breaking Hanoi's will, was increasing its intransigence. Just as unfortunate, it was drawing increasing criticism, from critics both within and without the United States. And, as in previous years, it continued to frustrate well-intentioned efforts by intermediaries to bring both sides to a conference table. Prime Minister Wilson, of Great Britain, was particularly offended by Johnson's attitude in February during behind-the-scenes negotiations. Wilson ascribed the hard-line attitude to "mentally confused" hawks and later wrote, undoubtedly with Rostow in mind, ". . . The more I saw of certain White House advisers, the more I thought Rasputin was a much maligned man."[5]

Despite official claims that enemy units could not win a major tactical victory in the South and could not maintain main-force units close to cities, the Viet Cong seemed more active than ever, while PAVN forces continued to call the play in the highlands and in the North. Despite severe losses—MACV claimed some eighty thousand enemy dead and three or four times that wounded in 1967—the enemy seemed to have ample ammunition and resources, not to mention open supply lines from both China and the U.S.S.R. and to the South. VC terrorists murdered 3,820 people, double the count for 1966, and kidnaped nearly six thousand as part of a determined effort to display continuing strength in and control of specific areas. If enemy morale suffered, as captured soldiers attested and as MACV claimed while pointing to twenty-five thousand deserters, it did not show in less-determined fighting, whether in defense or attack. Confusion also surrounded MACV figures. Where,

3. Hoopes, op. cit.
4. Ibid.
5. Harold Wilson, "The Night LBJ Wrecked Our Secret Manoeuvres for Peace," *The Sunday Times* (London), May 16, 1971; see also Johnson, in (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*, who offers a different interpretation but with interesting similarities; Hoopes, op. cit., and Brandon, op. cit., who tend to confirm Wilson's version. Personalities aside, one is inclined to accept Wilson's conclusion that ". . . an historic opportunity had been missed."

in 1966, this headquarters had stated that 280,000 enemy were fighting in South Vietnam, in 1967 the figure had risen to 378,000, a dramatic increase scarcely in keeping with official claims and one weakly explained in Saigon, where spokesmen argued ". . . that last year's figures had been deceptive. In November, after months of haggling among intelligence experts, the U.S. drastically revised its method of calculating enemy strength. As a result, meaningful comparisons with previous manpower estimates have now become all but impossible."[6]

Casualty figures aside, the war was also very expensive. Direct war expenditures totaled $24–27 billion in 1967 and billions more in indirect costs. Part of the expense was due to the technology of war as Americans fought it. Airplanes, helicopters, APCs, self-propelled artillery, tanks, vast naval armadas—all cost a great deal of money to maintain and replace if destroyed. Part of the expense also stemmed from the vast logistics effort, which tied up some 80 per cent of the armed forces in supporting about 20 per cent combat troops. Finally, a large part of the expense was due to Westmoreland's quantitative strategy, whereby commanders defended vast ammunition expenditures on grounds of saving lives.

At times, figures approached the fantastic. At Dak To, in November, a *single* B-52 raid dropped one hundred and fifty thousand pounds of bombs.[7] Jonathan Schell summed up a search-and-destroy operation, not a particularly big one, that in two weeks destroyed an estimated 65 per cent of the houses of perhaps seventeen thousand natives. Operation Benton was undertaken by an airborne brigade in the Chu Lai area:

> . . . On August 28th, when Operation Benton came to a close, Task Force Oregon announced that the troops taking part in it had killed, and counted the bodies of, three hundred and ninety-seven of the enemy, and that forty-seven American soldiers had been killed. Into an area of ten by twenty kilometres they had dropped 282 tons of "general-purpose" bombs and 116 tons of napalm; fired 1,005 rockets (not counting rockets fired from helicopters), 132,820 rounds of 20-mm. explosive strafing shells, and 119,350 7.62-mm. rounds of machine-gun fire from Spooky flights; and fired 8,488 artillery rounds. By the end of the operation, the Civil Affairs office had supervised the evacuation of six hundred and forty of the area's seventeen thousand people, to the vicinity of government camps.[8]

During the twelve-day battle for Hills 861 and 881, in the marine area, gunners fired over eighteen thousand artillery rounds,[9] tactical aircraft dropped 1,375 tons of bombs, and B-52 aircraft dropped 1,750 tons of bombs.[10] Small-unit commanders relied on supporting artillery and

6. *Newsweek,* January 1, 1968; see also Shaplen ("Crisis"), *supra.*
7. *Time,* November 17, 1967.
8. Schell, op. cit.
9. U. S. Marine Corps ("The Battle for Hills 861 and 881"), *supra.*
10. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*

aircraft fire as probably no commanders in history. The "mad minute" previously described became standard operating procedure in many units. A marine battalion commander later wrote of a 1967 operation outside Con Thien:

> . . . Tuesday morning, before dawn, artillery was called on likely enemy mortar positions, i.e. positions within 2000 meters of where Mr. Charles [Marine Corps euphemism for sophisticated, PAVN troops, as opposed to Charlie, for less-sophisticated, Viet Cong troops] could have effectively mortared the battalion perimeter. This pre-dawn artillery shoot was continued every morning while 2/4 [battalion] remained around Con Thien. The net effect was that the battalion was never subjected to a surprise early morning mortar attack.[11]

American supporting arms, particularly from warships and B-52 bombers, responded to later Communist attacks of Con Thien with what Westmoreland called the heaviest concentration of firepower ". . . on any single piece of real estate in the history of warfare."[12]

Most accounts of army and marine operations in this period stress use of supporting weapons, which commanders employed to rectify tactical disadvantages caused by inadequate intelligence. Spoiling tactics were scarcely the precise operations implied by MACV, but, rather, for the most part, were "encounter" battles, which the enemy broke off when he wished, as in the case of Hills 861 and 881 or the fighting around Con Thien. Valiant as was the American effort to hold defensive outposts or "capture" prominences, it didn't really solve anything. It proved once again that an enemy was hard put to stand against either a determined defense backed by co-ordinated supporting fires (the major tactical lesson of the 1905 Russo-Japanese war and of World War I) or against a determined offense also backed by co-ordinated supporting fires (the major tactical lesson of World War II)—but in South Vietnam damage inflicted on the enemy was scarcely decisive, particularly when that enemy held ample reserves and reasonably secure lines of communication.

These actions continued to demonstrate the fallacy of American attrition strategy. At times, Westmoreland's highly vaunted "spoiling tactics" led to outright disaster: The ambush in October of a combat patrol of the 1st Infantry Division by the 271st VC Regiment sounds like 1952–54 Red River Delta fighting all over again. So long as American commanders lacked good intelligence, they would have to fight in the most expensive possible way. Trumpeted to the world as American "victories," encounter battles, in view of cost in human lives and suffering and in material versus tactical results did little more than illustrate the truth of an ancient axiom: ". . . from no victory shall the ass's kick

11. Hammond, op. cit.
12. *Time,* October 6, 1967; perhaps the general forgot Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

be missing." Or, as Captain Roeder had put it while watching Napoleon's army invade Russia: ". . . Every victory is a loss to us."

It is doubtful if they even achieved claimed enemy casualties: Marine commanders would have been hard put to explain the discrepancy between a claim of 28,455 "confirmed enemy dead" and 3,952 weapons captured.[13] Assuming, however, that the enemy lost nine hundred men in the fight for Hills 861 and 881 in April, he apparently could stand the loss without too much difficulty. His reserve strength remained sufficient to retain the tactical initiative, and his morale did not seem unduly low if the marine figure of a total 371 Chieu Hoi returnees is considered.[14]

Similarly, American army units may have badly hurt various attacking forces, but their claims were made suspect not alone by various factors discussed in earlier chapters, but by tactical surprises such as that at Bo Duc in early December. The previous month, at Loc Ninh, the American army claimed a unique victory, as reported by *Time* magazine:

> . . . U.S. intelligence estimated that perhaps half that many again [of 926 North Vietnamese dead] had been dragged away for burial by their comrades, and that another 2,000 to 3,000 had been wounded. This high casualty rate (roughly 50%) for the two ill-fated Red regiments, who were ordered to take the town at all costs, made Loc Ninh one of the war's most significant Allied victories.[15]

Major General John Hay, commanding the 1st Infantry Division, ". . . predicted that it would be three to six months before the 9th V. C. Division [to which the two regiments belonged] . . . would be able to fight in force again."[16] Yet, one of the decimated regiments attacked at Bo Duc less than a month later!

Granting that enemy casualties were heavy, the enemy nonetheless initiated the actions that caused the casualties—and for good reason. His attacks in the central highlands caused Westmoreland to divert units from pacification operations in the coastal provinces. His continued presence in and around the DMZ, his attacks at Khe Sanh and Con Thien, his continued probes in the general area—all slowed marine pacification efforts in two ways: by causing General Cushman to commit battalions and resources needed for pacification duties, and by adding to a refugee flow that, in late 1967, numbered some five hundred thousand in I Corps area alone.

13. U. S. Marine Corps ("III MAF Force"), *supra.*
14. Ibid.
15. *Time,* November 17, 1967.
16. *Time,* December 8, 1967.

Thus we return to the "other war." Despite the barrage of statistics fired by MACV and III MAF against all visitors, pacification was not going well anywhere.

The marines in I Corps area erred in several respects. As elsewhere in South Vietnam, search-and-destroy tactics continued to antagonize people who had to be won over. Marines were operating in a vast sea of fear that could easily turn to hatred, and frequent fire fights, no matter how carefully conducted, could not but exacerbate the situation—moving bullets are promiscuous. Marine bands could play, and marines could distribute food and clothing, and doctors could help villagers, but these advantages paled when one, two, or more villagers were killed in a fire fight or by bombs, rockets, naval shells, or napalm.

Marines attempted to prevent this in two ways: either to evacuate villages or to help them to protect themselves. In 1967, nearly three hundred thousand of half a million refugees were living in hastily constructed camps, sometimes in appalling conditions. Far from being rehabilitated and trained for the day when they could return to their hamlets, they were fortunate to survive, considering the rapacious officialdom that surrounded them. Further, since numerous Viet Cong agents had accompanied refugee groups, they presented a bewildering security problem, as did 176 villages that were under 80 per cent pacified.

In attempting to protect villages, marines erred by trying to do the job themselves: Marines could hold "county fairs" until doomsday, but, unless carried to fruition, they were not only meaningless but dangerous, in that they brought forward either friendly or potentially friendly villagers who were subsequently exposed to VC wrath. Nothing was new about the county-fair technique; Lyautey used almost an identical procedure, but Lyautey was smart enough to back it with reasonably honest administration that improved tribal life, at least initially. Moving in government development teams too often subjected villagers to rents and various forms of squeeze that soon neutralized attendant advantages. As far as the psychological approach went, the Viet Cong did it better: Few Vietnamese peasants would prefer to hear a marine band in preference to Vietnamese acting out dramas and operas in their own tongue and their own cultural traditions.

Civil relations, what marines called personal response, were at best difficult and demanded not alone patience and determination, but intelligence—which is why counterinsurgency demands a qualitative approach. Captain Williamson, a marine with extensive civil-affairs experience, later wrote:

> . . . One of the chief factors making warfare so difficult as it exists in Vietnam is the unhealthy climate of mutual suspicion and fear between the civilian and the military. The Marine encounters a Vietnamese civilian where he does not expect him to be and thinks of him first as a Viet Cong. He is considered a friend and ally only after the proper papers are produced

and satisfactory answers received to certain questions. The civilian in return understandably resents this continuous threat of invasions to his privacy and person as well as the subordination of his individual interests to the sacred cow of military necessity. The military never ventures forth without arms, the civilian never has arms with which to venture forth.

The situation would be difficult enough with a common language. Without communications, it at times became impossible. A communications deficiency could be repaired only in part, by extreme common sense. But, too often, nervous and inexperienced marines lacked such:

. . . On one occasion, a Marine patrol dispatched to search for suspects of a mortar attack picked up two local villagers who lacked proper identification papers (an error of omission the VC assiduously avoid). The villagers stated that the local chief could vouch for their identity and innocence, which he did. But they were brought in for interrogation anyway—just to be safe. The village chief, a duly elected official approved by the central government, was less than happy over being rated a liar in public, and cast as a leader without sufficient status or power to save his townsmen from a humiliating experience. How easy military courtesy became the sacrificial lamb of military necessity.

On another occasion,

. . . members of a local village were denied scarce and valuable grazing land for their livestock by the erection of barbed wire. A compromise was worked out which allowed them to establish and operate a marketplace inside the perimeter. This arrangement was cleared through appropriate channels and the market proved quite satisfactory to all concerned. Months later, after numerous personnel changes and reorganization of area responsibilities, it was decided that the market *might* become a dangerous point of infiltration for V.C. The local emporium was promptly and unceremoniously wrecked. However compatible that decision was with military necessity, it did little to enhance free enterprise as a desirable way of life.

More was to come to this village when "military necessity," in this case for defensive positions, dictated bulldozing ancestral burial grounds, which automatically made village inhabitants ". . . unworthy and virtually non-beings." The result was a decided VC gain:

. . . These two incidents created an atmosphere of embarrassing hostility. Reprisals [by villagers] were carried out in the form of cutting barbed wire, harassing work details and scavenging Marine scrap piles.

Captain Williamson did not so state, but the hostile air undoubtedly aided the VC in more ways than one.[17]

17. R. E. Williamson, "A Briefing for Combined Action," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1968.

Although marines made better progress in pacification than either the American army or ARVN, their program left considerable to be desired, and, in view of South Vietnamese civil and military corruption, it is doubtful if it would ever have succeeded. One of the most tragic cameos to come from I Corps area is this, related by a senior marine intelligence officer:

. . . one day [in 1966] the commanding general remarked to me, "We've been doing well lately. Don't you think we are now really eliminating the enemy? Haven't we just about killed them all?" Looking out the window, I thought of the hundreds of thousands of peasants living on that vast rice plain; of the patient and thorough way in which a highly-motivated enemy for decades had been organizing that society at all levels. I answered only, "No, sir. We haven't killed all the enemy."[18]

The pacification effort elsewhere in South Vietnam caused the largest blur to occur on Westmoreland's operational canvas. The reader may remember that one reason for an extensive American build-up was to replace ARVN combat units with American units, so that ARVN could reorganize while undertaking the major task of protecting the pacification program. This program worried the enemy more than any other action, because, where it worked, it seriously challenged his presence. Unfortunately, it did not work in many places. In June 1967, Robert Shaplen noted:

. . . Estimates of how much of the [Mekong Delta] region is under Allied control vary, but even the most optimistic ones don't claim more than a quarter of the total land space, though this includes much of the arable land. The government and the Americans consider ten of the sixteen Delta provinces as priority areas this year; the others—mostly along the Cambodian border and on the Ca Mau Peninsula, in the far south—will have to wait. More than half of the fifty-four hundred hamlets in the Delta are still outside government control, and many of those considered "safe" are subject to constant attack or harassment, especially at night. The target for 1967 is to pacify two hundred and eighty-seven hamlets in all—a modest ten-per-cent improvement and a figure that, perhaps more than anything else, reveals the difficulty of the Delta problem.[19]

Although the Revolutionary Development program had expanded drastically during 1967, under Robert Komer's aegis, the performance of ARVN units assigned to protect the teams proved disappointing, and VC terrorism increased substantially in some areas during the year. Increased South Vietnamese control of funds and materials added to already widespread corruption, which further hindered the program's effectiveness.

18. Private information in the author's files.
19. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra;* see also, Shaplen ("Crisis"), *supra;* Hoopes, op. cit.

Despite widespread failures noted and reported by a host of observers, Komer continued to claim substantial progress based on "indicators" that, like those used by the American military, were not always pertinent to a counterinsurgency situation. A particularly hostile critic of Komer, William Corson, later wrote concerning one of CORDS's projects:

. . . When the General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed AID/CORDS stewardship of the funds for War Relief and Support [about $70–75 million annually], it was not misled by Komer's reports. Under Komer, progress is indicated by the amount of money pushed into the hands of the GVN. However, the GAO noted that in the October 1967 report only one out of ten "scheduled" houses had been rebuilt, one out of eight "New Life" hamlets constructed, one out of nine public-health sanitation facilities erected, and more than half of the refugees had received *no* assistance. Senator Edward Kennedy, in commenting on the GAO report, said that the findings "show that the refugee program and the medical program in South Vietnam are a scandal." . . .[20]

Komer also claimed substantial progress in regaining control of hamlets, his indicator here being the Hamlet Evaluation Estimate program. But William Lederer noted that ". . . the evaluation of the conditions in approximately 13,000 hamlets is made by U. S. Army officers who are advisers to Vietnamese district chiefs. They send in Hamlet Evaluations monthly. I estimate that 99 percent of the U. S. Army advisers have neither language facility nor the knowledge of Vietnamese culture to know what is happening in their own district." Lederer continued:

. . . I have seen samples of the Hamlet Evaluation Estimates sent to headquarters by U. S. Army advisers. These estimates are fraudulent, or, to be charitable, they are distorted with errors. Under the present system they can be no other way. It is not only that the U. S. advisers and their interpreters are intellectually and culturally unable to make accurate estimates, but the taint of dishonesty has swept through the entire United States government reporting system in Vietnam. This pollution sinks down from the top. In Washington, Walt Rostow (who advises President Johnson) suggests—sometimes even insists—that his colleagues de-emphasize unfavorable facts. Occasionally when his assistants refuse to alter facts Rostow goes into tantrums. Once he threw a water pitcher at a colonel who showed that Rostow's figures were biased. Unwillingness to face unwelcome facts has spread throughout the government, and it has of course reached Saigon and down to the Army advisers in remote South Vietnamese districts.[21]

20. Corson, op. cit.: He offers numerous illustrations of gross incompetence, maladministration, and corruption—all bad enough in their own right as damaging American aid programs—but damage *always* compounded by a high percentage of missing items and supplies ending in the enemy's camp.

21. Lederer (*Our Own Worst Enemy*), *supra;* see also Hoopes, op. cit.

A RAND analyst, Konrad Kellen, included the pacification program as one of eleven American fallacies, ". . . perhaps the most deeply ingrained and therefore the most pernicious of all." The basic factor was identification: Whether we liked it or not, the VC identified more completely with the peasants than either Americans or South Vietnamese working to reshape the country in an American image:

> . . . but aside from the fact that Pacification is impossible because our Pacification aims and methods are unacceptable to the people in the Vietnamese countryside, there is another aspect to this which makes Pacification a doubly impossible aim: the choice of Americans entrusted with it. . . . One need only to have met a member of AID and Army representatives to know that all these men, despite their great goodwill, and ample knowledge of local detail, can never do anything but confuse and antagonize any foreign population, and disorganize, if not destroy, its social fabric. And there are no other men to do the job, which cannot be done in the first place.[22]

Unfortunately, the people who should have taken on the pacification task could not accomplish it. As in former years, government inefficiency and pervasive corruption stultified South Vietnam's economy. Horrified senators sitting on a judiciary subcommittee learned that only half of an estimated four million refugees received the fourteen ounces of rice and five cents a day that the South Vietnamese Government was supposed to be providing—at U.S. expense. The same report alleged that numerous refugees never received a $42 resettlement allowance and a six-month rice supply.[23] One American official, John Vann, senior adviser in IV Corps area, ". . . managed to have 75 GVN officials removed for corruption, only to find all of them reinstated within six months in equal or better jobs."[24] William Lederer concluded, from personal investigations, that the black market in South Vietnam involved about $10 *billion* a year, all American goods and moneys, an incredible situation that ". . . could not exist without American collusion." He described a visit to a black-market warehouse in Saigon:

> . . . The place looked like a U. S. Army Ordnance Depot. Everything seemed to be painted brown and to smell of either oil or fresh paint. Ordnance equipment was arranged in orderly lines, and neatly printed price tags hung from everything. Automatic rifles were $250. A 105 mm mortar . . . was priced at $400. . . . There were about a thousand American rifles of different kinds standing neatly in racks. M16s cost $80. On one side of the loft were uniforms of all services. . . .

22. Konrad Kellen, "Fourth Round or Peace in Vietnam?" RAND Corporation, 1968.
23. *Time,* October 20, 1967.
24. Kellen, op. cit.

So much American military transport had been stolen, that ". . . the American military has been renting its own stolen jeeps from black-market operators at $250 a month. The same double indignity and multiple cost applies to U.S. government trucks."

Lederer pointed out that, in three years, South Vietnam's gold reserves increased from $130 to $450 million (all at American expense) and that, according to Swiss and Chinese informants, approximately $18 *billion* ". . . has been sent to foreign banks by private Vietnamese individuals since 1956. Not so long ago, Madame Nhu, through a silent partner, purchased outright the second largest bank in Paris, for cash."[25]

The same blatant corruption pervaded the pacification program. Land reform remained a bad joke. As two congressmen, John Moss and Ogden Reid, informed Secretary of State Rusk in December 1967, ". . . Land distribution in South Vietnam has been at a virtual standstill since 1962."[26] Their letter continued:

> . . . Of 2.47 million acres acquired by the Government of Vietnam only 667,000 acres have been distributed to 128,000 families since 1954, including 51,800 acres to 12,000 families in 1967.
>
> Of 566,000 acres of choice rice land acquired by the government in 1958 from French owners, 240,000 have been rented to small farmers, but no actual distribution was made until October 1966, eight years after the land was expropriated. . . .[27]

Landlords frequently violated rent-control laws. Although limited by law to paying 25 per cent of the principal crop as maximum rent, ". . . four out of five peasants pay a land rent equal to more than fifty per cent of the crop because there is no valid attempt to enforce the provisions of the land-rent law."[28]

Aid programs similarly suffered: Almost without exception, South Vietnamese officials and ARVN officers sold food and material to hamlets and villages, a shocking corruption freely admitted by American personnel in the field and in Saigon.[29] While admitting these and other violations, MACV and embassy spokesmen applauded political progress as demonstrated by elections. But other observers pointed to specific electoral irregularities and suggested that, though satisfying certain American officials, the elections were, in many ways, meaningless.[30] Townsend Hoopes later wrote that official American efforts to produce a South Vietnamese constitution and elections

25. Lederer, op. cit.
26. Corson, op. cit.; Lederer, op. cit.
27. Corson, op. cit.
28. Ibid.
29. Lederer, op. cit.; see also Corson, op. cit.; Hoopes, op. cit.
30. Lederer, op. cit.; see also Tran Van Dinh, op. cit.

. . . were of a piece with the underlying, only half-veiled, determination to press for a military victory, for U.S. endorsement of a constitution that specifically barred all Communists from participation in the GVN could only greatly narrow our military and political options. In the eyes of the world, such an endorsement transferred our commitment from the people as a whole to a particular form of government and a particular group of men. Moreover, the carefully drawn electoral laws and the Thieu-Ky group's full use of its inherent leverage on behalf of its own cause precluded anything but a victory for the existing military government. Some candidates were barred because their advocacy of peace was considered to be evidence of Communist sympathies (one man thus eliminated had been the GVN Finance Minister until 1966). No militant Buddhist could be a candidate, and no run-off elections were permitted, as it was feared that these might produce a "civilian victory." Several oppositionist newspapers in Saigon were closed down during the campaign. As Robert Kennedy later wrote: "it was in these and many similar ways, and not in the crude stuffing of ballot boxes, that the election . . . was such a disappointment."

The result was to legitimize military rule in a way that tended to push civilian nationalist groups, like the Buddhists, toward the only viable opposition, the NLF. . . .[31]

If the Johnson administration expected immediate advantages to occur, it was disappointed. Robert Shaplen warned, in November, ". . . The assumption—primarily an American one—that the Vietnamese elections . . . have had, or are likely to have, any salutary effect on the war or on the internal political situation here [Saigon] is regarded by most Vietnamese as unwarranted and unrealistic."[32] A postelection imbroglio between Thieu and Ky almost immediately lent substance to this and other pessimistic observations. Thieu would thenceforth rule by means of an uneasy executive oligarchy consisting of: Ky; Thieu's hatchet man who headed the secret police, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan; and ranking generals. Elections or no, the government would remain authoritarian in structure; bureaucratic inefficiency would continue, and so would widespread corruption, which, in large part, accounted for the dismal performance of ARVN and the pacification program.

Thus it was that, despite escalation, despite increasing costs in lives and money, despite optimism frequently expressed by Administration spokesmen and by the President, the U.S.A. and South Vietnam were no closer to "winning" the war than ever and, in some respects, were even farther from this ambition. As Robert Shaplen wrote in October 1967: ". . . There are indications that the long and difficult conflict is in a state of irresolution, or what the communists describe as 'indecisive-

31. Hoopes, op. cit.
32. Ibid.

ness.' "[33] An otherwise favorable article in *The Economist* (November 18, 1967), included this realistic, if damaging, appraisal:

> . . . The hardest fact to face is that, whatever level of military security is achieved, the really difficult job of rooting out the Vietcong's local organization depends on the Vietnamese themselves. They have barely started this long task. Military control of the main areas of population may be only a year away, or twice that if things go wrong. But at the present rate of progress it could be at least a decade before the government and people of South Vietnam are strong enough to fend for themselves. . . .

President Johnson's expressed determination to persevere unto "victory" was also in jeopardy. Increasingly influential voices were questioning the conduct of the war, a debate characterized in Prime Minister Harold Wilson's words by ". . . great passion, great feeling, and great emotion." Despite a fiscal-year defense budget of an unprecedented $75 billion, American military forces seemed strangely impotent to cope with the Vietnam challenge. As the Institute for Strategic Studies noted in its *Strategic Survey 1967,*

> . . . What concerned a growing number of Americans . . . was not the cost of military strength but whether that strength was capable of being applied both wisely and effectively. Nowhere did that concern seem more urgent than in Vietnam. Other strategic issues during the year had greater objective importance for United States security, but Vietnam continued to fill a growing area of the national vision.

Looked at objectively, the situation in South Vietnam presented a dismal picture. Although the President and Administration officials continued to emphasize bright colors, an increasing number of Americans were studying manifold blurs. In the minds of an increasing number of American citizens, Lyndon Johnson had lost control of the situation—the praying mantis of earlier portraits had become a preying menace to common sense. *Time* magazine noted in October, ". . . Until recently, most of the opposition has come from intellectuals and the young, from college professors and clerics. But now the ranks have been swelled by apolitical businessmen and uneasy politicians eying the antiwar sentiment in the polls. . . . Congress is in a rebellious mood."[34]

Capable journalists were continuing to report adversely, their copy often reflecting dissident views of American civil and military officials, particularly at lower levels, with official policy. Similarly, TV coverage of battle areas increasingly brought home the agony of war in all forms. What some American officials liked to call distorted camera coverage, in reality emphasized stupidity of search-and-destroy tactics and, at the same time, questioned optimistic claims of military spokesmen. Embar-

33. Shaplen ("Crisis"), *supra.*
34. *Time,* October 6, 1967; see also Brandon, op. cit.

rassed Administration officials continued to blame press and television correspondents for distorting news, an accusation frequently implied by President Johnson and one that scarcely modified the growing antagonism between press and government. Johnson refused to realize that the protesting press was accurately reflecting increasing doubts in many American minds. Although a few correspondents did allow personal emotion to overcome objective reporting, a great many did not, and the Administration erred grievously in attempting to cast doubt on the veracity of many courageous and intelligent observers whose analyses often contained constructive criticism. In early 1967, for example, Walter Lippmann, writing in *Newsweek,* challenged the desire of such Congressional hawks as Mendel Rivers ". . . to flatten Hanoi if necessary and let world opinion go fly a kite." If the United States adopted genocide as a national policy, Lippmann wrote, it would find itself dangerously isolated. It would not only earn the suspicion and hatred of neutrals but even of allies: ". . . We would come to be regarded as the most dangerous nation in the world, and the great powers of the world would align themselves accordingly to contain us." The President, Lippmann went on, found himself confronted

> . . . with the agonizing fact that limited war has not worked because *limited war can be effective only for limited objectives.* The reason why the President is confronted with the demand for unlimited war is that he has escalated his objectives in Vietnam to an unlimited degree.[35]

Interested and experienced observers such as Generals Gavin, Ridgway, and Shoup added to the criticism, as did portions of the business world—thenceforth, the BEM (Business Executives Move for Peace in Vietnam), whose military board included one of the United States' few genuine guerrilla-warfare experts, Brigadier General S. B. Griffith, would become increasingly influential and, through its publication, *Washington Watch,* hostile to Administration policy. Other new voices were heard: In mid-November, General Lauris Norstad, former NATO chief and subsequently a top business executive, told a Los Angeles audience that Washington should seriously consider such moves as an unconditional halt of bombing and unilateral cease-fire in South Vietnam if these would move Hanoi to the conference table.[36]

Writing in the New York *Times,* John Kenneth Galbraith pointed to a shifting tide of feeling within the United States and within Congress:

> . . . For I next assume that public opinion in the United States has turned very strongly against the war—and especially against those who hope to bring it to a military solution. The public opinion polls show it. So do the altered stands of political and other leaders—Senators Frank Lausche, Thruston Morton, Clifford Case, by gradual movement George Romney, numerous

35. *Newsweek,* January 16, 1967.
36. *Time,* November 17, 1967.

Congressmen of both parties, the Republican governors, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, and, conceivably one day soon, since he has never shown any quixotic tendency to stand on principle against the publicly expressed preference of the voters, Richard Nixon. . . .

The Administration's credibility, Galbraith continued, was rapidly approaching ground zero:

. . . The consequence of this ghastly sequence of promise and disappointment is that now nearly everything that is said in defense of the war is suspect. This, in turn, nullifies the natural advantage of the Administration in access to press and television. There isn't much advantage in being able to get your side before the people if they no longer believe what you say or do not listen.

In Galbraith's opinion, the situation could only worsen for the Johnson administration:

. . . Those who must defend the war have a second and potentially even more serious handicap than this conflict between promise and circumstance. Increasingly, as the base of support narrows, the case for the war is made by conservative Republicans, conservative Democrats, or high members of the military services. (Even within the Administration itself support is far from universal.) The defenders have a strong base in the Armed Services Committees of the two houses of Congress, both of which are headed by conservative supporters of the war. So the tactical position is strong; Congressional action can be obtained or blocked as required. But John Stennis, Everett McKinley Dirksen, Mendel Rivers, and the Joint Chiefs do not electrify the country. On the contrary, theirs is a combination that can only repel public support. The Armed Services will themselves one day realize with sorrow that one of the costs of the Vietnam war has been the widespread alienation of public opinion on which they too depend.

Since ". . . it now seems reasonably clear that our involvement in Vietnam was the result of a massive miscalculation—perhaps the worst miscalculation in our history," it was essential, Galbraith argued, for the Administration to change objectives and reverse present policy.[37]

Senator Eugene McCarthy was equally critical: In his best-selling book *The Limits of Power,* the senator from Wisconsin called for a fundamental change in general foreign policy and as swift an exodus as possible from Vietnam.[38] At year's end, Senator Fulbright told constituents that national pride, not national security, is the reason that Americans are fighting in Vietnam. As opposed to the President's statements concerning Communist aggression and danger to U.S. security, the senator

37. John K. Galbraith, *How to Get Out of Vietnam* (New York: Signet, 1967).
38. Eugene McCarthy, *The Limits of Power* (New York: Dell, 1967).

held that here was ". . . a civil war between two factions of Vietnamese. . . ."[39]

Experts added persuasive testimony: Douglas Pike, in his quasi-official work *The Viet Cong,* identified the real enemy; George Tanham, in his quasi-official work *War Without Guns,* pointed to some errors in American aid programs in Vietnam. Foreign experts also contributed: Richard Clutterbuck's *The Long Long War* and Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency* threw considerable, if not always pertinent, light on the Vietnamese challenge as seen by two veterans of the Malayan emergency. The British strategist Alastair Buchan, in the January 1968 issue of *Encounter,* warned that Vietnam was the greatest tragedy that had befallen the U.S.A. since the civil war. By diminishing American influence, it was giving superb diplomatic advantage to its adversaries while destroying the confidence of its own people in their vision of law and order and international justice.[40] In December, a group of scholars and former Administration officials and officers that included General Ridgway and Roger Hilsman produced a short analysis, the "Bermuda Statement," which urged the Administration to de-escalate the war and start giving it back to the South Vietnamese Government. A week later, a larger group of scholars, mostly Asian specialists, published a lengthy statement that defended American armed presence in Vietnam but called for increased restraint in its use:

> . . . They said that U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam under conditions of Communist victory would be "disastrous for free people everywhere," but that an escalation of the war into a regional or global conflict would be "equally ruinous." Their principal advice to the Administration was couched in these words; Vietnam is a "crucial test of whether we can stay the course with a limited war involving extremely important but limited objectives. It is a part of the broader test of whether in this nuclear age we have the wisdom, maturity, and patience to avoid totalistic policies. . . . Nothing would do more to strengthen American support for our basic position than to show a capacity for innovation of a de-escalatory nature, indicating that there is no inevitable progression upwards in the scope of the conflict."[41]

This and other important testimony and criticism influenced increasingly large segments of public opinion against the American effort. People began questioning the war in intelligent terms, and this particularly applied to campuses, to students and teachers, and if emotion sometimes colored the questioning process, it was usually genuine emotion expressed by youngsters who eventually would probably wind up in Vietnam fighting a war for which, more and more, they saw less and less reason.

39. UPI, Washington, December 21, 1967.
40. Reuters, London, December 20, 1967.
41. Hoopes, op. cit.

The situation was not new. Over two centuries earlier, Frederick the Great wrote on the bloody war of the Spanish succession:

> . . . Conflicting events alter the cause of dispute; effects however continue, though the motive has ceased; fortune rapidly flies from side to side, but ambition and the desire of vengeance feed and maintain the flames of war. We seem to view an assembly of gamesters who demand their revenge, and who refuse to quit play till they are totally ruined.

So Johnson and the majority of his advisers either ignored what they regarded as minority voices or, when these spoke too powerfully to be ignored, brushed them aside with considerable petulance that too often questioned the dissenter's loyalty to his country. Communications between government and people continued to break down, and at a crucial time. As Townsend Hoopes later wrote,

> . . . Above all, through riots, protests, and the fateful merging of antiwar and racial dissension, it [the war] was polarizing U.S. politics, dividing the American people from their government, and creating the gravest American political disunity in a century.[42]

Internal dissension within President Johnson's close circle of advisers and officials continued into 1967, the hawks, in general, remaining dominant. McNamara had already touched off a first-class row by suggesting de-escalation. Johnson's resistance to international attempts, in February, to end bombing of the North and get both sides to a conference table had caused further rupture.

Then, in March 1967, the matter of more troops again arose. In less than two months after Westmoreland, the JCS, and McNamara had worked out a troop ceiling, Westmoreland pointed to a sharp rise in enemy strength—in this case, some forty-two thousand during 1966, despite known losses.[43] Among other things, this meant that in the three military regions north of Saigon, ". . . the enemy can attack at any time selected targets . . . in up to division strength." To regain the "tactical initiative," Westmoreland once again requested more troops: a "minimum essential force" of about one hundred thousand; an "optimum force" of about two hundred thousand, which would have meant a total of some 670,000 Americans in South Vietnam—a radical increase from the figure agreed on in November. The JCS passed this request on, with favorable endorsement, to McNamara. According to the Pentagon study, the JCS now proposed

> . . . the mobilization of the reserves, a major new troop commitment in the South, an extension of the war into the VC/NVA sanctuaries (Laos, Cambodia and possibly North Vietnam), the mining of North Vietnamese ports

42. Ibid.
43. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 525).

and a solid commitment in manpower and resources to a military victory. The recommendation not unsurprisingly touched off a searching reappraisal of the course of U.S. strategy in the war.[44]

In late April, Westmoreland returned to the United States and, accompanied by Wheeler, argued his case before the President. According to notes made by John McNaughton, the President was not pleased at future prospects:

> . . . When asked about the influence of increased infiltration upon his operations the general [Westmoreland] replied that as he saw it "this war is action and counteraction. Anytime we take an action we expect a reaction." The President replied: "When we add divisions can't the enemy add divisions? If so, where does it all end?"

Westmoreland explained that VC and DRV strength in South Vietnam now totaled 285,000 men and that, last month, it appeared that, except in the two northern provinces, the enemy is losing more men than he is gaining. On the other hand, he is maintaining eight divisions in South Vietnam but could deploy twelve and undoubtedly would react to a significant American increase. Johnson then asked: ". . . At what point does the enemy ask for volunteers?" Westmoreland allegedly answered, ". . . That is a good question."[45] Westmoreland explained that, with the minimum increase he requested, the war could continue for three years; with the maximum increase, for two years. Wheeler warned that American troops would possibly have to invade Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam; he also pointed out that the air effort had nearly run out of targets and would have to be extended to port areas.

Almost none of the ranking civilian officials agreed with the proposed new and aggressive strategy. Townsend Hoopes, who had been promoted to Under Secretary of the Air Force, argued that, despite American bombing, Hanoi, ". . . in absolute terms," was sending more, not fewer, men and materials to the South. He himself had concluded ". . . that the Administration's Vietnam policy had become a quietly spreading disaster from which vital U.S. interests could be retrieved only if the policy were reversed or drastically altered."[46] William Bundy argued strongly against extending ground operations to North Vietnam, ". . . asserting that the odds were 75 to 25 that it would provoke Chinese Communist intervention."[47] He also warned that an attack on

44. Ibid. (p. 528); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra;* Hoopes, op. cit.

45. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 567–68); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra:* According to Johnson, Westmoreland ". . . pointed out that heavy infiltration and continuing recruitment in the South were making up for battle casualties, but he was hopeful that the 'crossover point'—when losses exceeded the ability to replace those losses—might be reached reasonably soon. . . ."

46. Hoopes, op. cit.

47. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 530–31).

northern ports could bring Soviet counteraction, a position supported by CIA reports. A call-up of reserves, in Bundy's opinion, was to be avoided for domestic political reasons.

Walt Rostow, theretofore as hawkish as the generals, did not agree with mining North Vietnamese harbors or bombing ports; in his opinion, this would make Hanoi more dependent on China and would increase United States tensions with the Soviet Union and China.[48] Instead, he wanted to concentrate the air effort ". . . on the 'bottom of the funnel,' the lines of communication and infiltration routes in southern North Vietnam and through Laos. . . ."[49]

Dr. Alain Enthoven, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis, argued that the troop increases requested by Westmoreland and the JCS would not produce proportionate enemy casualties. Dr. Enthoven wrote in a memorandum of early May:

> . . . On the most optimistic basis, 200,000 more Americans would raise [the enemy's] weekly losses to about 3,700, or about 400 a week more than they could stand. In theory we'd wipe them out in 10 years.[50]

John McNaughton, slated to become Secretary of the Navy, was equally firm. Hoopes described him at this time as

> . . . physically exhausted and deeply disenchanted with the Administration's Vietnam policy . . . [he was] appalled by the catastrophic loss of proportion that had overtaken the U.S. military effort in Vietnam. "We seem to be proceeding," he said to me in barbed tones, after returning from a particular White House session, "on the assumption that the way to eradicate Viet Cong is to destroy all the village structures, defoliate all the jungles, and then cover the entire surface of South Vietnam with asphalt."[51]

McNaughton wanted the air war shifted to lines of communication south of the 20th parallel, a definite cutback, designed primarily to save American pilots and planes. He argued against any significant troop increase as ". . . more of the same," which would not resolve anything. In early May, McNaughton advised McNamara (belatedly)

> . . . that the "philosophy" of the war should be fought out now so everyone will not be proceeding on their own major premises, and getting us in deeper and deeper; at the very least, the President should give General Westmoreland his limit (as President Truman did to General MacArthur). That is, if General Westmoreland is to get 550,000 men, he should be told, "That will be all, and we mean it."

48. Ibid. (p. 533).
49. Ibid. (pp. 573–77); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.
50. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 531).
51. Hoopes, op. cit.

McNaughton, who was to die shortly in an air crash, continued:

. . . A feeling is widely and strongly held that "the Establishment" is out of its mind. The feeling is that we are trying to impose some U.S. image on distant peoples we cannot understand (any more than we can the younger generation here at home), and we are carrying the thing to absurd lengths.

Related to this feeling is the increased polarization that is taking place in the United States with seeds of the worst split in our people in more than a century.[52]

On the basis of these and other arguments, Robert McNamara submitted a major policy paper to President Johnson on May 19.[53] McNamara recommended a scaling down of the air effort and very limited troop increases. Even more important, however, he called for a change in American policy: He recommended that the ambitions enunciated by President Kennedy and carried on by President Johnson in National Security Action Memorandum 288 be changed to reasonable political goals. He attempted first to quiet unreasonable fears by abolishing the domino theory he himself had once embraced:

. . . The fact is that the trends in Asia today are running mostly for, not against, our interests (witness Indonesia and the Chinese confusion); there is no reason to be pessimistic about our ability over the next decade or two to fashion alliances and combinations (involving especially Japan and India) sufficient to keep China from encroaching too far. To the extent that our original intervention and our existing actions in Vietnam were motivated by the perceived need to draw the line against Chinese expansionism in Asia, our objective has already been attained, and COURSE B [a continuation of the present effort] will suffice to consolidate it.[54]

McNamara continued in words made the more intelligent, bold, and courageous in that they reflected his own reversal of thought at a time when the President was embracing force more than fact:

. . . The time has come for us to eliminate the ambiguities from our minimum objectives—our commitments—in Vietnam. Specifically, two principles must be articulated, and policies and actions brought in line with them: (1) Our commitment is only to see that the people of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future. (2) This commitment ceases if the country ceases to help itself.

It follows that no matter how much we might *hope* for some things, our *commitment* is *not:*

—to expel from South Vietnam regroupees [Viet Cong], who are South Vietnamese (though we do not like them),

—to ensure that a particular person or group remains in power, nor that

52. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 534–35).
53. Ibid. (pp. 577–85); Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
54. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 583).

the power runs to every corner of the land (though we prefer certain types and we hope their writ will run throughout South Vietnam),
—to guarantee that the self-chosen government is non-Communist (though we believe and strongly hope it will be), and
—to insist that the independent South Vietnam remain separate from North Vietnam (though in the short-run, we would prefer it that way).
(Nor do we have an obligation to pour in effort out of proportion to the effort contributed by the people of South Vietnam or in the face of coups, corruption, apathy or other indications of Saigon failure to co-operate effectively with us.) We *are* committed to stopping or off setting the effect of North Vietnam's application of force in the South, which denies the people of the South the ability to determine their own future. Even here, however, the line is hard to draw. Propaganda and political advice by Hanoi (or by Washington) is presumably not barred; nor is economic aid or economic advisors. Less clear is the rule to apply to military advisors and war matériel supplied to the contesting factions.

The importance of nailing down and understanding the implications of our limited objectives cannot be overemphasized. It relates intimately to strategy against the North, to troop requirements and missions in the South, to handling of the Saigon government, to settlement terms, and to US domestic and international opinion as to the justification and the success of our efforts on behalf of Vietnam.[55]

McNamara, in effect, was recommending a dramatic shift to viable policy; he was recognizing (after a long hiatus) that South Vietnam was a "strategic convenience" and should be treated as such. If it could be held with a limited effort, fine; but its retention was not worth a world war and was not worth a deepening schism inside the U.S.A. If the South Vietnamese could not come to terms with themselves, the country would be "lost" and could be "lost" without undue damage to American interests in Southeast Asia (which had never "owned" it, to start with).

McNamara recognized that he was asking the President to adopt a difficult course of action, which would be sharply criticized and possibly would cause a government crisis in South Vietnam:

. . . Not least will be the alleged impact on the reputation of the United States and of its President. Nevertheless, the difficulties of this strategy are fewer and smaller than the difficulties of any other approach.[56]

President Johnson did not agree with Secretary McNamara, and this document probably marks the beginning of McNamara's decline and fall from presidential grace. Indeed, the Secretary allegedly offered to resign at this time. His own doubts were reflected the following month, when he commissioned what since has become known as the Pentagon

55. Ibid. (pp. 583–84).
56. Ibid. (p. 585).

report—a highly secret attempt to explain how and why the United States became and remained involved in South Vietnam.

Neither did the President altogether agree with hawks who refuted McNamara's conclusions and recommendations with practiced fervor and ability similar to those of Viet Cong agit-prop agents. Although he refused to alter what he liked to call Administration policy, he did not authorize troop increases requested by Westmoreland, Sharp, and the JCS. Instead, he sent McNamara to Saigon to work out still another compromise with Westmoreland. Early in August, he announced an increase of fifty-five thousand troops, to bring total American commitment to 525,000. He did, however, authorize expanding the air war to include targets in Hanoi and in the China buffer zone.[57]

But now he received further bad news. In late summer, he had sent one of his closest advisers, Clark Clifford, and Maxwell Taylor on a tour of Southeast Asia, an informal attempt to persuade concerned countries to increase troop support of the war. In Saigon, MACV played the visitors its favorite record: ". . . Our briefings in South Viet Nam were extensive and encouraging. There were suggestions that the enemy was being hurt badly and that our bombing and superior firepower were beginning to achieve the expected results."[58] But the dominoes that had played such a major role in shaping the American commitment seemed unusually inert. Thailand, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand showed no interest in increasing minimal contributions (which, in the case of Korea and Thailand, were subsidized by the United States); the Philippines Government asked President Johnson to avoid sending the team to Manila, for political reasons! The experience deeply impressed Clifford: ". . . It was strikingly apparent to me that the other troop-contributing countries no longer shared our degree of concern about the war in South Viet Nam." In his later words:

> . . . I returned home puzzled, troubled, concerned. Was it possible that our assessment of the danger to the stability of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific was exaggerated? Was it possible that those nations which were neighbors of Viet Nam had a clearer perception of the tides of world events in 1967 than we? Was it possible that we were continuing to be guided by judgments that might once have had validity but were now obsolete? In short, although I still counted myself a staunch supporter of our policies, there were nagging, not-to-be-suppressed doubts in my mind.[59]

57. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra:* ". . . I rejected the suggestion that we use air power to close the port of Haiphong and knock out part of the dike system in the Red River delta. I felt that there was too grave a risk of Communist Chinese or even Soviet involvement if those measures were carried out, and I wished to avoid the heavy civilian casualties that would accompany destruction of the dikes. . . ."

58. Clifford, op. cit.

59. Ibid.

What portion of these doubts brushed against President Johnson is problematical, but, in late September, at San Antonio, he did offer to halt bombing in the North if Hanoi wished to negotiate (an offer already made privately to Hanoi by Henry Kissinger, acting as presidential agent). Although Clifford and other advisers found this a step in the right direction, their optimism was brief:

> . . . As I listened to the official discussion in Washington, my feelings turned from disappointment to dismay. I found it was being quietly asserted that, in return for a bombing cessation in the North, the North Vietnamese must stop sending men and matériel into South Viet Nam. On the surface, this might have seemed a fair exchange. To me, it was an unfortunate interpretation that—intentionally or not—rendered the San Antonio formula virtually meaningless. The North Vietnamese had more than 100,000 men in the South. It was totally unrealistic to expect them to abandon their men by not replacing casualties, and by failing to provide them with clothing, food, munitions and other supplies. We could never expect them to accept an offer to negotiate on those conditions.[60]

Thus, bombing continued and so did the ground war. In late September, General Westmoreland asked Washington to speed the arrival of promised troops. Worried by reports of a general enemy build-up, Johnson agreed. Once again, McNamara tried to prevent further escalation. As he had done the previous year, in early November he sent the President a general analysis of the war. Rejecting increased military actions because of the risks they entailed in widening the war, he wrote:

> . . . The alternative possibilities lie in the stabilization of our military operations in the South (possibly with fewer U.S. casualties) and of our air operations in the North, along with a demonstration that our air attacks on the North are not blocking negotiations leading to a peaceful settlement.[61]

He wanted Johnson to halt bombing in the North by end of the year, to stabilize operations in the South with no increase in American troop strength, and to reshape the southern effort in order to give the South Vietnamese a larger share of responsibility in fighting the war.

Once again, the proposal set off an Administration row. Johnson later wrote that, after careful consideration of the views of various advisers, he decided against the proposal, in view of an increasing enemy build-up. Unfortunately for his case, the record contradicts the carefully drawn self-portrait of studied calm presented in his memoirs. If his public utterances are to be believed, he ended the year as firmly convinced of a pending American victory as at year's beginning. In discussing the President's performance at one point, the British Prime Minister evoked the image of the czar's court. That was wrong: In 1967,

60. Ibid.
61. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

Johnson did not sound so much like Czar Nicholas as he did George III, who, during the American revolution, forever demanded "total submission" of American colonists.

But even George III could not match Johnson's ideological motivation. The President spoke and wrote at this time and later as if he were St. George bent on destroying the dragon of communism. Whether writing to Senator Jackson to explain resumption of bombing the North, or addressing the Tennessee legislature and announcing "a new team" for South Vietnam, or in introducing David Lilienthal and Robert Komer to discuss their optimistic appraisal of the situation in South Vietnam, or in lengthy news conferences where star performers such as Robert McNamara or William Westmoreland or Ellsworth Bunker confirmed his expressed optimism, or at Guam or Canberra or Cam Ranh Bay—whenever and wherever possible, in discussing the war, the President sounded like Thwackum and Square discussing Tom Jones's frequent aberrations. And if he identified Ho's intransigence without understanding it, he nonetheless made it clear to any who would listen that the transgressor would be punished—no matter the time, no matter the effort, no matter the cost.

Chapter 87

The Pueblo *fiasco • The Tet offensive • Enemy aims and accomplishments • Defeat or victory? • The Johnson-Westmoreland stand • General Wheeler's report • MACV objectives • Westmoreland demands more troops (V) • Hawks versus doves • Dean Acheson: ". . . With all due respect, Mr. President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff don't know what they're talking about." • The Clifford Group • Action in the North • The other war • Dissension within America • Johnson's compromise • Westmoreland is relieved • Johnson steps down • Paris peace talks • Saigon's intransigence • The war continues • Increasing American costs (III) • Johnson quits*

THE CONFIDENT if not ebullient pose maintained by the Johnson administration was transmitted to Congress and the American people by the President in his annual State of the Union message in mid-January 1968. In this major speech, the President listed what he regarded as major gains in South Vietnam. Although he noted that ". . . the enemy continues to pour men and material across frontiers and into battle, despite his continuous heavy losses," he left little doubt that the situation was under control: ". . . Our patience and our perseverance will match our power. Aggression will never prevail."[1]

The President later wrote, in his memoirs: ". . . Looking back on early 1968, I am convinced I made a mistake by not saying more about Vietnam in my State of the Union report. . . . I did not go into details concerning the build-up of enemy forces or warn of the early major combat I believed was in the offing. . . ."[2]

1. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1968, Book I), *supra.*
2. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra:* Johnson here characteristically attempted to shift blame to the press corps: ". . . I relied instead on the 'background'

This would have been well-advised. The first of a series of military disasters had already struck by the time General Westmoreland's comforting report reached the White House in early 1968 (see Chapter 85). In late January, patrol boats of the North Korean navy attacked and captured an American ship, the USS *Pueblo*. Although the *Pueblo* carried highly sensitive and top-secret electronic gear, with which she was intercepting North Korean communications, she was sailing in international waters, her mission common to both American and Soviet ships. As her captain, Lloyd Bucher, later made clear in his book, neither officers nor crew were fully trained in destruction procedures, and her armament was virtually non-existent; Bucher's messages to higher authorities elicited no response—no planes, nothing.[3]

The Western world was still stunned with this act of piracy and seeming American impotence to contest it, when tragedy reverted sharply to Vietnam.

Despite official optimism, MACV and the marines had been worried about a continuing enemy build-up in the South. Since the turn of the year, the enemy had repeatedly struck positions in III and I Corps areas, attacks beaten off only with fighting described by Westmoreland as ". . . the most intense of the entire war."[4] In the first two weeks of 1968, VC units had shelled forty-nine district and provisional capitals, attacking eight of them and twice occupying two within thirty miles of Saigon—activity suspiciously at odds with General Weyand's comfortable claims of superiority made less than a month before (see Chapter 85). However, during those two weeks, MACV claimed to have killed five thousand enemy; in Saigon, Westmoreland announced that ". . . the Communists seem to have run temporarily out of steam."[5]

Westmoreland nonetheless was carefully watching Khe Sanh, where the enemy was daily building up attacking forces. The importance of Khe Sanh can be gathered from later official statements. General Walt regarded the place ". . . as the crucial anchor of our defenses along the demilitarized zone."[6] General Wheeler would shortly stress its strategic and tactical importance as the Western anchor of the American defensive line. ". . . To lose it," Wheeler said, "would allow a deep

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briefings that my advisers and I, as well as the State and Defense departments, had provided members of the press corps for many weeks. In those briefings we had stressed that heavy action could be expected soon. . . ."

3. Lloyd M. Bucher, *Bucher: My Story* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970); see also Trevor Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability—The True Story of the Pueblo Affair* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970); Daniel V. Gallery, *The Pueblo Incident* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970). Although the North Koreans released the crew eleven months later, they kept the ship and her secrets.

4. *Time*, January 19, 1968.

5. Ibid., January 26, 1968.

6. L. W. Walt, "The Nature of the War in Vietnam." Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps release, n.d.

Communist penetration into South Vietnam."[7] Not all commanders agreed. General Cushman allegedly was not happy about tying up several marine combat battalions in a static defense of a position vulnerable to long-range enemy artillery fire, tactically dominated by heights, some of them enemy-held, and at the fog-shrouded end of a twenty-seven-mile supply line that guerrilla interdiction made dependent solely on air delivery. In any event, Westmoreland expected a major attack against the garrison either before or after the Tet holiday, and, at his instigation, Cushman continued to build up the garrison while other units moved north to bolster defenses in the DMZ area. By month's end, the Khe Sanh garrison comprised four marine infantry battalions, one marine artillery battalion, one ARVN ranger battalion, U. S. Air Force and Seabee detachments. Armament included 105-mm. howitzers, 90-mm.-gun tanks, and 106-mm. recoilless rifles. During the final twelve days of January, the garrison fired thirteen thousand artillery and mortar rounds and was supported by nearly four thousand tactical air missions and 288 B-52 bomber missions.[8] Meanwhile, Westmoreland was said to have moved over half of his combat battalions north.

That was not, however, the tragedy referred to, though it would play a significant part. At the end of January, with allied eyes anxiously watching Khe Sanh, the enemy opened what soon became famous to the world as the Tet offensive—so named because it began during the Tet, or lunar new year, holidays, when a truce had been established and large numbers of South Vietnamese soldiers were on leave.

For some days prior to January 31, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese commando squads had infiltrated areas around allied bases and in principal cities and towns, where they were hidden by VC sympathizers. Simultaneously, battalion-size units had worked into the surrounding countryside. Numbering between fifty and sixty thousand, the attack force consisted predominantly of Viet Cong units reinforced by about six thousand PAVN soldiers. Early in the morning of January 31, the commandos attacked key targets in cities and towns while their fellows attacked from without. In addition to Saigon and Hué, the enemy struck thirty principal towns and seventy district towns. The targets included human beings: Special squads sought out and executed military and police officers, civil officials, and their families. In Saigon, a VC commando (whose ranks included Vietnamese working for the U. S. Government) penetrated American Embassy grounds while other units captured the radio station and attacked Joint General Staff Headquarters (where Westmoreland was), near the airport, and naval headquarters near the Saigon River. Extensive damage included some 125 planes and helicopters fully or partially destroyed.

In most places, heavy fighting lasted a week or two. As perhaps fore-

7. UPI, Washington, February 5, 1968.
8. U. S. Marine Corps, "Khe Sanh Wrap-Up." n.d.

seen by the enemy, ARVN and American counterattacks caused tremendous damage; in Hué, where the enemy held out almost to the end of February, allied counterattacks destroyed perhaps half the city and inevitably added to civilian casualties. About four thousand American and South Vietnamese troops lost their lives, and some twelve thousand were wounded.[9] Thousands of civilians were killed or wounded and thousands more made homeless. Continuing rocket and mortar attacks from surrounding countryside added to general carnage. But the enemy did not escape unscathed; according to government figures, thirty-six thousand Communists were killed by February 18, a figure that probably included large numbers of non-Communists.[10]

We still do not know what prompted the enemy to this particular course of action. Qualified analysts have pointed to a number of reasons, including a major factional dispute between Vo Nguyen Giap and Le Duan, first secretary of the Communist Party.[11] We know also that elements of the NLF and PRP for years had entertained notions of a general uprising; possibly southern and northern commands agreed that the time had come to bring this about; possibly it represented a compromise between north and south and between factions in each camp. Whatever the case, the NLF-PRP-VC seem to have held great expectations:

> . . . On the eve of the attack, a general order of the day was issued to all participants by the headquarters of the National Liberation Front. It began with a special Tet poem written by Ho Chi Minh. Then came a statement that the assault on South Vietnamese and American installations was designed to "restore power to the people, liberate the people of the South, and fulfill our revolutionary task of establishing democracy throughout the country." The order continued, "This will be the greatest battle ever fought in the history of our country. It will bring forth worldwide changes, but will also require many sacrifices." An additional order, which referred to "the confused Americans, who are bogged down and hurting badly" and to "the expected disintegration of the Puppet Army," called on the troops to punish drastically all high-level traitors and all tyrants and to "establish a people's revolutionary government at all levels." All the attacking commando units were told that there would be a popular uprising, and that large elements of the South Vietnamese forces would desert and join them.[12]

If enough troops deserted and if sufficient persons rose in the cities and towns, then the Thieu-Ky government would fall and the NLF/VC would either take over direct control or join a coalition that eventually would lead to Communist control of South Vietnam.

9. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*
10. Ibid.
11. Victor Zorza, "Vietnam–Long or Short War," *The Guardian* (England), February 15, 1968; see also Pike, op. cit., especially Chapter 20, which, written before the Tet offensive, could well provide the most reasonable explanation; Giap (*Big Victory, Great Task*), *supra.*
12. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra.*

If this was the case, the enemy failed to realize his objective (just as Algerian and Cuban guerrillas had failed to bring off urban uprisings). Despite the surprise and ferocity of attacks, most ARVN and militia units fought stubbornly and well, as did the police. Although the VC sought out and murdered or maimed known government supporters, no mass uprising occurred, either in cities and towns or in the countryside, nor did troops desert as anticipated. Communist hierarchies in South Vietnam and Hanoi might well have falsely assessed the situation in an attempt to retain guerrilla morale. Wholesale assassination campaigns probably cost the VC considerable sympathy, as did widespread house-to-house fighting that could not but hurt the average person. Guerrillas also err, and it could be that the VC forgot the dangers inherent to a guerrilla cause in use of mass terror methods.

But most analysts agreed that a general uprising represented the optimum Communist goal, and that a number of secondary goals existed. NLF officials told an Italian correspondent, Alessandro Casella, who was captured during the Tet offensive and later released, that

> . . . Our aim . . . was to establish military and political bases around the towns. This enables us to keep closer to the enemy and therefore facilitates our attacks. However, we do not feel that we can liberate the country in one go, and victory will come only through a succession of offensives. The second aim of the Tet offensive was to liberate the countryside and destroy the pacification program, forcing the Americans to bring all their pacification forces back to the towns.
>
> In Saigon our aim is to encircle the town through the suburbs, not to take the center. Moreover, we are continually waging a double struggle, political and military. Bringing the struggle to the doorsteps of the urban areas is an important weapon in our political campaign. As for the Tet attack on the American Embassy, it is important to understand that to us this is not an ordinary embassy but the headquarters and symbol of the American presence in Vietnam, which is why we attacked it. . . .[13]

From the Hanoi viewpoint, the Tet offensive was probably multipurposed. It represented a positive striking-back against enemy air offensives in the North and ground-air offensives in the central highlands and DMZ. By emphasizing the extent of Communist support in the countryside, where peasants sheltered guerrilla infiltration, and in cities and towns, where Communists or Communist sympathizers supported the surprise effort, the attack substantiated enemy claims being made in Paris. Such support also impressed progovernment urbanites (many of whom were murdered during the attacks) and *attentistes,* or fence-sitters, who would not soon forget that Big Brother was watching. The attacks also threw immense weight on the Saigon government and, not

13. Alessandro Casella, "The Militant Mood," *Far Eastern Review,* May 16, 1968. Quoted in *Survival,* July 1968.

least, brought a general halt to the pacification program—the one effort that Communists north and south seemed always to have feared.

To what extent Hanoi approved the offensive is not known, and estimates differ. A limited commitment—perhaps half of all main-force VC units, or some sixty thousand men, and perhaps six thousand of some sixty thousand PAVN soldiers in South Vietnam—suggested that Hanoi viewed the effort in terms of limited goals, although, had a general uprising resulted, Giap undoubtedly would have hastened to exploit it.

In commenting on Giap's change of strategy from a long war to a general counteroffensive, a French general and military analyst, André Beaufre, was

> . . . inclined to think that the real reason . . . is the massive injection of modern war material by the Russians. . . . I have the impression that what the Tet offensive was really aimed at was what has in fact been achieved: to confer international political significance upon the Vietcong, to ruin the prestige of the Americans and of the South Vietnamese government, and to restore better control over the countryside. In sum, the Tet offensive appears to have been much more of a psychological than a military operation.[14]

Ambassador Bunker, in Saigon, also believed this to be the case. A few days after the offensive had begun, he reported ". . . he thought it likely that the primary purpose of the Tet offensive was psychological, not military. He believed that the campaign might well have been designed to 'put Hanoi and the [National Liberation] Front in a strong position for negotiations by demonstrating the strength of the Viet Cong while shaking the faith of the people in South Vietnam in the ability of their own government and the U.S. to protect them.' President Thieu had expressed a similar view in a talk with Ambassador Bunker that same day. . . ."[15]

Whatever the motivation, the attacks accomplished a number of things. Many readers will remember the force of surprise and shock that hammered America—the futility that one felt upon seeing blood-spattered bodies, friendly and enemy, in the American Embassy compound, or the famous black-and-white photograph of General Loan about to shoot a manacled VC officer through the head, or the statement made by an unwitting American army major to the Australian correspondent Peter Arnett as the two looked over the smoking ruins of Ben Tre: ". . . The city had to be destroyed in order to save it." The sum formed an overdraft on the meager balance of credibility maintained by the Johnson administration, ". . . seriously damaging," as the prestigious Institute of Strategic Studies later noted, "the reputation

14. André Beaufre, "Prospects for the New General," *The Sunday Times* (London), March 24, 1968.

15. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

of those analysts who had concluded that the ability of the enemy to organize military action on a national or regional scale had been eliminated during 1967."[16] In Henry Kissinger's later words,

> . . . On January 17, 1968, President Johnson, in his State of the Union address, emphasized that the pacification program—the extension of the control of Saigon into the country—was progressing satisfactorily. . . . A week later [sic], the Tet offensive overthrew the assumptions of American strategy.[17]

Not only did the Tet attacks emphasize the bane of American military operations in Vietnam—lack of intelligence—but they also brought home to the American people that, despite official optimism, the war was likely to continue *ad nauseam*. And, as surely foreseen by Hanoi, they added a particularly volatile fuel to the already blazing row within top echelons of the Johnson administration. Perhaps the main accomplishment of the Tet offensive, from enemy standpoint, was to finally polarize existent but theretofore divergent opposition to Administration policy in Vietnam.

Johnson, the JCS, Sharp, Westmoreland, and other hawks at once adopted a simplistic stand on the attacks. At a news conference in early February, the President told correspondents:

> . . . We have known for several months, now, that the Communists planned a massive winter-spring offensive. We have detailed information on Ho Chi Minh's order governing that offensive. Part of it is called a general uprising.
>
> We know the object was to overthrow the constitutional government in Saigon and to create a situation in which we and the Vietnamese would be willing to accept the Communist-dominated coalition government.
>
> Another part of that offensive was planned as a massive attack across the frontiers of South Vietnam by North Vietnamese units. We have already seen the general uprising. . . .

After emphasizing maximum enemy and minimum American casualties, the President announced that ". . . the biggest fact is that the stated purposes of the general uprising have failed." However, he warned,

> . . . we may at this very moment be on the eve of a major enemy offensive in the area of Khe Sanh and generally around the Demilitarized Zone.

Further, the enemy's second objective was to attain a psychological victory, and Johnson was taking pains to prevent that from being achieved. In this lengthy conference, he implied that nothing of the situation was surprising and that matters were firmly under control; as for further deployment of U.S. troops: ". . . There is not anything in any

16. The Institute for Strategic Studies, "The United States." In *Strategic Survey, 1968* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1969).
17. Kissinger, op. cit.

of the developments that would justify the press in leaving the impression that any great new overall moves are going to be made that would involve substantial movements in that direction."[18]

The salve of this business-as-usual approach comforted almost no one, and the President probably would have been wiser to share some of his apprehensions with the American people. If his later writings are to be believed, these must have been considerable:

> . . . This is not to imply that Tet was not a shock, in one degree or another, to all of us. We know that a show of strength was coming; it was more massive than we had anticipated. We knew that the Communists were aiming at a number of population centers; we did not expect them to attack as many as they did. We knew that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were trying to achieve better co-ordination of their countrywide moves; we did not believe they would be able to carry out the level of co-ordination they demonstrated. We expected a large force to attack; it was larger than we had estimated. Finally, it was difficult to believe that the Communists would so profane their own people's sacred holiday.[19]

In Saigon, Westmoreland went Johnson one better. The American commander's ebullience reminds one of Lord Cornwallis insisting that the battle of Guilford Courthouse (see Chapter 8, Volume I) was a "victory"—(a victory, perhaps, responded the Annual Register's scribe, but a victory ". . . productive of all the consequences of defeat"). In reviewing dispatches of the time, one would suppose that the American general had himself planned the Tet offensive. On February 2, he told newsmen that there was evidence to suggest that the enemy ". . . is about to run out of steam."[20] Westmoreland interpreted the attacks as designed to drive American troops from Khe Sanh, which was the enemy's real objective: The Communist attacks, he told newsmen, were prelude to a "go-for-broke" attack on Khe Sanh and the two northern provinces.[21] This plan would fail, as had the rest of the enemy plan—by February 6, Westmoreland believed that enemy losses, which he put at 21,330 dead, ". . . may measurably shorten the war."[22] Westmoreland, in short, viewed the attacks as a desperate move of a dying enemy: He went so far as to tell a disbelieving André Beaufre ". . . that he compared this decision [of Giap's] with that of Hitler on the eve of the Ardennes offensive in the autumn of 1944, that is to say a decision of despair by an enemy at his wit's end."[23]

18. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1968, Vol. I), *supra.*
19. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
20. AP, UPI, Saigon, February 2, 1968.
21. UPI, Saigon, February 2, 1968.
22. UPI, Saigon, February 6, 1968.
23. Beaufre, op. cit.

The plot now thickens, and an account can only be hazarded until the time that additional pertinent papers and personal testimony are available for study. Existing accounts—the President's memoirs, the Pentagon study, works such as Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel's *Roots of Involvement* and Townsend Hoopes's *The Limits of Intervention,* and contemporary reportage—differ considerably.[24] The record suggests, however, something like the following.

Apparently, early in the Tet offensive the President asked Westmoreland how he could help him—a reasonable and sympathetic request confirmed in part by a presidential news conference on February 2, when White House correspondents learned that the President was ". . . in close touch with all of our Joint Chiefs of Staff to make sure that every single thing that General Westmoreland believed that he needed at this time was available to him, and that our Joint Chiefs believe that his strategy was sound, his men were sure, and they were amply supplied."[25] According to Kalb and Abel, who quote official communications, General Wheeler pressed Westmoreland to request substantial troop reinforcements at this time. On February 3, Wheeler allegedly cabled Westmoreland: ". . . The President asks me if there is any reinforcement or help that we can give you." On February 8, having received no reply [!] from Westmoreland, Wheeler cabled:

> . . . Query: Do you need reinforcement? Our capabilities are limited. We can provide 82d Airborne Division and about one-half a Marine Corps division, both loaded with Vietnam veterans. However, if you consider reinforcements imperative, you should not be bound by earlier agreements [i.e., a troop limit of 525,000]. United States Government is not prepared to accept defeat in Vietnam. In summary, if you need more troops, ask for them.

According to Kalb and Abel, Westmoreland immediately requested the units named by Wheeler and also asked ". . . that the President authorize an amphibious assault by the marines into North Vietnam as a diversionary move." A day later, he outlined his need for additional troops to contain the enemy's "major campaign" in the north and ". . . to go on the offensive as soon as his attack is spent," to otherwise carry out previous campaign plans, to bolster a weakened ARVN, and ". . . to take advantage of the enemy's weakened posture by taking the offensive against him." Wheeler ambiguously replied: ". . . Please understand that I'm not trying to sell you on the deployment of additional forces which in any event I cannot guarantee. . . . However, my sensing is that the critical phase of the war is upon us, and I do not believe

24. M. L. Kalb and E. Abel, *Roots of Involvement—the U.S. in Asia, 1784–1971* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971). (Hereafter cited as Kalb.)
25. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1968, Vol. I), *supra.*

that you should refrain from asking for what you believe is required under the circumstances."[26]

How much of this background was known to the President has not been disclosed. Johnson later wrote that, on February 12, Westmoreland sent the JCS the following assessment, which the President read:

> . . . Since last October, the enemy has launched a major campaign signaling a change of strategy from one of protracted war to one of quick military/political victory during the American election years. His first phase, designed to secure the border areas, has failed. The second phase, launched on the occasion of Tet and designed to initiate public uprising, to disrupt the machinery of government and command and control of the Vietnamese forces, and to isolate the cities, has also failed [!]. Nevertheless, the enemy's third phase, which is designed to seize Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces has just begun.[27]

Westmoreland expected the enemy to make a "maximum effort" in the northern provinces in the third phase, and also to try to regain initiative elsewhere. According to the President, Westmoreland

> . . . saw the situation as one of heightened risk but of great opportunity as well.
>
> "I do not see how the enemy can long sustain the heavy losses which his new strategy is enabling us to inflict on him," he reported. "Therefore, adequate reinforcements should permit me not only to contain his I Corps offensive but also to capitalize on his losses by seizing the initiative in other areas." He believed that exploiting the opportunity "could materially shorten the war."

Accordingly, he requested early delivery of troops, presumably as proffered by Wheeler; that is, the ". . . 82d Airborne Division and about one-half a Marine Corps division." Although the President remained mute on the subject in his memoirs, this was probably the requirement brought forward at a presidential conference on February 12. According to the Pentagon study, the JCS now pointed out that such a deployment would compromise the strategic reserve and should be deferred—a tactic that allegedly was designed to cause Johnson to call up the reserves, a major step in full-scale mobilization, which the JCS so long had desired. According to Johnson, debate centered on sending Westmoreland six maneuver battalions, or about ten thousand men, and all agreed to do this while holding off on the subject of a reserve call-up.

The JCS also requested presidential authority to bomb closer to the centers of Hanoi and Haiphong—a request opposed by McNamara and by Paul Warnke, who had replaced John McNaughton as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and one finally turned down by the President.

26. Kalb, *supra;* see also *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 594–95).
27. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

Johnson now sent General Wheeler to Saigon ". . . to go over the entire situation with Westmoreland." Toward end of February, Wheeler reported that ". . . the current situation in Vietnam is still developing and fraught with opportunities as well as dangers." In MACV's opinion, the enemy's general offensive was designed to bring a general uprising. To attain this initial objective, he committed eighty-four thousand troops: ". . . He lost 40,000 killed, at least 3,000 captured, and perhaps 5,000 disabled or died of wounds." With a total force of 240,000 in the South, this meant that he had lost a fifth of his strength. He nonetheless possessed the ". . . will and the capability to continue" the fight.

The enemy offensive, Wheeler continued, hurt ARVN more psychologically than physically. Nonetheless, two to three months were needed to recover equipment losses; three to six months to regain pre-Tet strength. The worst damage occurred to the Rural Development Program; in many areas, the VC now openly controlled the countryside.

MACV objectives, Wheeler reported, were:

> . . . First, to counter the enemy offensive and to destroy or eject the NVA invasion force in the north.
>
> Second, to restore security in the cities and towns.
>
> Third, to restore security in the heavily populated areas of the countryside.
>
> Fourth, to regain the initiative through offensive operations.

In addition to the 525,000 troops, now nearly all deployed in South Vietnam, Westmoreland wanted a ". . . 3 division-15 tactical fighter squadron force"—a whopping levy of over two hundred thousand more troops to be deployed by end of 1968.[28]

The President later wrote that the Westmoreland-JCS request came to slightly more than 205,000:

> . . . With forces of that size, Westmoreland believed he could not only resist anything the enemy attempted but could move quickly to the offensive and take advantage of heavy Communist losses suffered during the first weeks of the Tet offensive. He also wanted to be prepared in case a change in our strategy permitted operations against enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos and across the DMZ.[29]

A later study, by John Henry in *Foreign Policy,* alleges that Westmoreland had rather more specific plans at this time:

> . . . General Westmoreland, the report states, saw the Tet offensive as a "golden opportunity," which would enable the United States to change from

28. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 615–21); see also Hoopes, op. cit.; Shaplen (*Road*) *supra:* ". . . American officials estimate that the whole [pacification] program, which was just beginning to make some small headway, has lost three or four months, and maybe more."

29. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

a policy of "creeping escalation" to a more "dynamic strategy." He did not believe he would receive the entire force of 206,000 men, but hoped to obtain half that number.

With these additional troops he felt that he would be able to strike at communist sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia and launch "amphibious-airmobile operations against North Vietnamese bases just north of the demilitarized zone."

Later the article quotes him as saying: "Once I Corps [area] was cleaned up, and the north-east monsoon had dissipated, an amphibious hook, an Inchon-type operation around the DMZ and into North Vietnam, could be staged."[30]

We do not know how much President Johnson was told of these plans. According to his memoirs, he learned from Wheeler that responsible commanders regarded 1968 as "the pivotal year." Wheeler also warned that, without the troop increase, ". . . we might have to give up territory, probably the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. . . ."

Aggressive plans aside, the troop increase requested by Westmoreland and the JCS placed the President in an extremely awkward position. Hawk that he was, he was also politician, and he was naturally upset at the national furor generated by the Tet offensive. In his later words,

> . . . I did not expect the enemy effort to have the impact on American thinking that it achieved. I was not surprised that elements of the press, the academic community, and the Congress reacted as they did. I was surprised and disappointed that the enemy's efforts produced such a dismal effect on various people inside government and others outside whom I had always regarded as staunch and unflappable. Hanoi must have been delighted; it was exactly the reaction they sought.[31]

It was also a reaction justified in large part at higher echelons by specific facts. Hanson Baldwin, parroting the official line, may have concluded in an article in the March *Reader's Digest* that ". . . the enemy can no longer find security in his South Vietnamese sanctuaries,"[32] but the enemy seemed to be doing pretty well without security. Meeting the Westmoreland-JCS request for over two hundred thousand American reinforcements, meant increasing American armed forces by over five hundred thousand men, which, in turn, meant calling up at least two hundred fifty thousand reserves, extending present enlistments by six months, spending an additional $10 billion in fiscal year 1969 and an additional $15 billion in fiscal year 1970.[33] Astute advisers also questioned Westmoreland's and the JCS interpretation of

30. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, August 31, 1971.
31. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
32. Hanson W. Baldwin, "The Foe Is Hurting," *Reader's Digest,* March 1968.
33. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

the attacks as a desperation move on the part of the NLF-PRP-VC and Hanoi. Costly though the attacks proved to the enemy, the NLF still disposed of over sixty thousand hard-core guerrillas, augmented by twice that many active supporters and by some sixty thousand more PAVN troops, with impressive reserves untouched in North Vietnam (not to mention China, which, as James Reston once noted, was down to her last 700 million men). Some advisers, such as Clark Clifford, questioned the magic number of 205,000, where perhaps a half million to a million men would be required. Some advisers, such as Philip Habib, pointed to divided opinions in the Saigon mission as to the wisdom of sending *any* large reinforcement as opposed to insisting on the South Vietnamese doing the job.[34] Subordinate but influential voices added to the general protest. Townsend Hoopes later wrote:

. . . In the Pentagon, the Tet offensive performed the curious service of fully revealing the doubters and dissenters to each other, as in a lightning flash. Nitze suddenly spoke out on "the unsoundness of continuing to reinforce weakness," and wrote a paper that argued that our policy in Vietnam had to be placed in the context of other U.S. commitments in the world. Warnke thought Tet showed that our military strategy was "foolish to the point of insanity." Alain Enthoven . . . confided that, "I fell off the boat when the troop level reached 170,000." In various ways, the Under Secretary of the Army, David McGiffert, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Alfred Fitt, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs (ISA), Richard Steadman, and other influential civilians expressed their strong belief that the Administration's Vietnam policy was at a dead end.

One thing was clear to us all: The Tet offensive was the eloquent counterpoint to the effusive optimism of November. It showed conclusively that the U.S. did not in fact control the situation. . . .[35]

At this point, Johnson was so insulated, by Rostow, from dissident opinions, that it is doubtful if these attitudes reached him. Nonetheless, he remained keenly aware of the national mood, and he was also brought abruptly to heel by a senior adviser, Dean Acheson. Acheson had no love for Johnson and did not eagerly accept his summons to the White House in late February. Townsend Hoopes later described the meeting:

. . . When the President asked him his opinion of the current situation in Vietnam, Acheson replied he wasn't sure he had a useful view because he was finding it impossible, on the basis of occasional official briefings given him, to discover what was really happening. He had lost faith in the objectivity of the briefers: "With all due respect, Mr. President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff don't know what they're talking about." The President said that was a shocking statement. Acheson replied that, if such it was, then perhaps the President ought to be shocked.[36]

34. Ibid.
35. Hoopes, op. cit.
36. Ibid.; see also Brandon, op. cit.

The sum of these factors persuaded the President to two important moves. One, he asked Acheson to make an independent study, drawing on expert testimony at subordinate levels of government. Two, he ordered his new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, to convene his most responsible officials to study the Westmoreland-JCS request, indeed to appraise fully the situation in Vietnam.

Sixty-two years old, Clark Clifford had recently replaced the disillusioned McNamara. A well-known Washington attorney, a close friend of the President and loyal supporter of Johnson's Vietnam policy, he had served for years as a confidential adviser. The previous summer, as we have related, he had undertaken a presidential mission to persuade Asian countries to increase troop support in Vietnam, an unsuccessful effort that caused him to entertain certain doubts concerning the war.

What became known as the Clifford Group included Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Fowler, Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, General Wheeler, CIA director Richard Helms, presidential assistants Walt Rostow and Maxwell Taylor, and numerous other ranking officials. To no one's surprise, subsequent meetings merely accentuated the current rift between hawks and doves. General Maxwell Taylor presented the prevailing JCS view in a memorandum both to the group and directly to President Johnson:

> . . . We should consider changing the objective which we have been pursuing consistently since 1954 [!] only for the most cogent reasons. There is clearly nothing to recommend trying to do more than we are now doing at such great cost. To undertake to do less is to accept needlessly a serious defeat for which we would pay dearly in terms of our worldwide position of leadership, of the political stability of Southeast Asia and of the credibility of our pledges to friends and allies.[37]

Doves did not agree. Prompted by CIA reports, most civilian members of the group apparently argued that any substantial increase of American forces could be easily offset by North Vietnamese troops. Dr. Alain Enthoven typified the realistic pessimism of the doves:

> . . . While we have raised the price to NVN [North Vietnam] of aggression and support of the VC [Viet Cong], it shows no lack of capability or will to match each new U.S. escalation. Our strategy of "attrition" has not worked. Adding 206,000 more U.S. men to a force of 525,000, gaining only 27 additional maneuver battalions and 270 tactical fighters at an added cost to the U.S. of $10-billion per year raises the question of who is making it costly for whom. . . .
>
> We know that despite a massive influx of 500,000 U.S. troops, 1.2 million tons of bombs a year, 400,000 attack sorties per year, 200,000 enemy

37. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 600); see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra;* Hoopes, op. cit.

K.I.A. [killed in action] in three years, 20,000 U.S. K.I.A., etc., our control of the countryside and the defense of the urban areas is now essentially at pre-August 1965 levels. We have achieved stalemate at a high commitment. A new strategy must be sought.[38]

Enthoven and other experts argued that Westmoreland should call off search-and-destroy attrition strategy in favor of protecting population centers while the South Vietnam Government and armed forces developed effective capability—which was more or less what General James Gavin had recommended in 1965.

Nothing illustrates the abject poverty of Administration thinking, and thus of prevailing attitudes of political and military executive instruments, than Clifford's later account of these high-level meetings:

. . . In the colloquial style of those meetings, here are some of the principal issues raised and some of the answers as I understood them:

"Will 200,000 more men do the job?" I found no assurance that they would.

"If not, how many more might be needed—and when?" There was no way of knowing.

"What would be involved in committing 200,000 more men to Viet Nam?" A reserve call-up of approximately 280,000, an increased draft call and an extension of tours of duty of most men then in service.

"Can the enemy respond with a build-up of his own?" He could and he probably would.

"What are the estimated costs of the latest requests?" First calculations were on the order of $2 billion for the remaining four months of that fiscal year, and an increase of $10 to $12 billion for the year beginning July 1, 1968.

"What will be the impact on the economy?" So great that we would face the possibility of credit restrictions, a tax increase and even wage and price controls. The balance of payments would be worsened by at least half a billion dollars a year.

"Can bombing stop the war?" Never by itself. It was inflicting heavy personnel and matériel losses, but bombing by itself would not stop the war.

"Will stepping up the bombing decrease American casualties?" Very little, if at all. Our casualties were due to the intensity of the ground fighting in the South. We had already dropped a heavier tonnage of bombs than in all the theaters of World War II. During 1967, an estimated 90,000 North Vietnamese had infiltrated into South Viet Nam. In the opening weeks of 1968, infiltrators were coming in at three to four times the rate of a year earlier, despite the ferocity and intensity of our campaign of aerial interdiction.

"How long must we keep on sending our men and carrying the main burden of combat?" The South Vietnamese were doing better, but they were

38. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 600–1).

not ready yet to replace our troops and we did not know when they would be.

When Clifford asked for a military plan, he was told that no plan for victory existed ". . . in the historic American sense" due to presidential limitations that prohibited invading North Vietnam, pursuing into Laos and Cambodia, and mining Haiphong Harbor. Clifford now asked:

. . . "Given these circumstances, how can we win?" We would, I was told, continue to evidence our superiority over the enemy; we would continue to attack in the belief that he would reach the stage where he would find it inadvisable to go on with the war. He could not afford the attrition we were inflicting on him. And we were improving our posture all the time.

I then asked, "What is the best estimate as to how long this course of action will take? Six months? One year? Two years?" There was no agreement on an answer. Not only was there no agreement, I could find no one willing to express any confidence in his guesses. . . .

A disturbed man now asked a disturbed question:

. . . "Does anyone see any diminution in the will of the enemy after four years of our having been there, after enormous casualties and after massive destruction from our bombing?"

The answer was that there appeared to be no diminution in the will of the enemy. . . .

The total experience was salutary if dismal. It had reinforced Clifford's earlier doubts:

. . . I was convinced that the military course we were pursuing was not only endless, but hopeless. A further substantial increase in American forces could only increase the devastation and the Americanization of the war, and thus leave us even further from our goal of a peace that would permit the people of South Viet Nam to fashion their own political and economic institutions. Henceforth, I was also convinced, our primary goal should be to level off our involvement, and to work toward gradual disengagement.[39]

The Clifford report attempted to resolve the contretemps by compromise. Although Clifford later wrote that he favored a reversal of strategy, the hawks proved sufficiently strong to prevent this recommendation. The final document did not question present strategy except by indirection, in that it recommended limiting troop reinforcement to a maximum twenty-two thousand. It did not recommend a new peace initiative or a proposed cutback in the bombing of the North.[40]

Clifford's group paid considerable attention to the air question. The JCS submitted three general plans for consideration: an increase in bombing, including expansion of targets around Hanoi and Haiphong

39. Clifford, op. cit.
40. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 601–3); see also, Hoopes, op. cit.

to include railroad equipment in the Chinese buffer zone and the dike system that supported the North's agriculture, and mining Haiphong Harbor; a shift in bombing away from the Hanoi-Haiphong area in favor of striking roads and supply trails in the southern part of North Vietnam, including the Laotian panhandle; an interdiction campaign in the South ". . . designed to substitute tactical airpower for a large portion of the search-and-destroy operations currently conducted by ground forces, thus permitting the ground troops to concentrate on a perimeter defense of the heavily populated areas."[41]

Wheeler, Taylor, and Rostow wanted the first course of action; other principals held for the second and third.

Since the report left matters largely as they were, it pleased no one. It reached the President in one of his optimistic moods, and he accordingly scorned the prevailing pessimism expressed by his advisers, particularly the civilians. The report had changed no one's mind: Ensuing discussions accentuated hawk and dove positions.

It nonetheless performed a valuable interim service: first, by suggesting limited troop reinforcement; second and more subtly, by generating new ideas.

One of the President's objections to the document centered on its negative approach to negotiations. The CIA had reported to the Clifford group that if the United States were to call off bombing of the North, ". . . Hanoi would probably respond to an offer to negotiate, although the intelligence agency warned that the North Vietnamese would not modify their terms for a final settlement or stop fighting in the South."[42] In discussing the possibility of renewed negotiations, Secretary of State Dean Rusk now suggested a bombing halt in the North except ". . . in the area associated with the battle zone. When Johnson expressed interest, Rusk said that '. . . we could stop most of the bombing of the North during the rainy season without too great a military risk.'"[43] This fitted nicely with one segment of Pentagon thinking —the suggestion to shift the aerial interdiction effort to the southern part of North Vietnam—and now Clifford apparently endorsed the notion to confine bombing to south of the 19th parallel. Rusk's suggestion continued the argument already being waged within Administration circles, one that would intensify during the rest of March.

The Clifford report served an even more subtle purpose, by reinforcing with impressive statistics and marshaled thoughts major doubts held by important men including Clifford, who personally, privately, and probably forcefully imposed them on the President, an action that, in Clifford's case, started his relegation to the wilderness but was consonant with later developments.

41. Hoopes, op. cit.
42. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (p. 599).
43. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

The Clifford report kicked off what proved to be an exciting, exasperating, and, finally, crucial month in American affairs. The military situation was by no means as favorable in Vietnam as Westmoreland was reporting. Although enemy attacks had been beaten back, enemy units surrounding towns and cities continued to strike and to interdict road communications while rebuilding bases in the countryside. At Khe Sanh, the marine-ARVN garrison continued to withstand severe buffeting while the greatest aerial bombing effort in history pounded the besiegers. The President later wrote that, on March 9, the enemy had withdrawn about half his attacking troops; that might have been so, but the remainder continued probing efforts and larger attacks throughout the month while artillery and rocket fire continued around the clock. Westmoreland might have been moving toward what he fondly termed "a general offensive," but his preoccupation with Khe Sanh did not lessen the real and devastating importance of the other war. In contrast to claims advanced by MACV and Washington, Robert Shaplen offered an eyewitness account of the scene:

> . . . Since the Tet attack, the Communists have maintained their countrywide harassment of cities, airfields, and various Allied installations, primarily with rocket and mortar fire. They have made occasional fresh ground assaults against about a dozen cities, mostly in the Delta, and particularly on March 3rd and 4th, when it seemed that a second wave of the offensive might be beginning. They have recruited as many as thirty thousand new troops, ranging in age from fifteen to forty. Most of the recruiting has been done in the Delta, where the Communists moved in to fill the vacuum in the countryside following the withdrawal of American and government troops to positions of defense around the cities and the towns. Hanoi has continued to infiltrate troops both to reinforce the North Vietnamese forces now totalling a hundred and twelve thousand men in South Vietnam (five more North Vietnamese divisions are said to be alerted to move south) and to build up the main-force Vietcong units that suffered the heaviest losses during Tet. . . .

The attacks had not only badly hurt ARVN and halted the pacification program, but had further splintered the Saigon government, widening the dangerous rift between Thieu and Ky. Once the emergency had passed, a sense of shock set in. Shaplen noted

> . . . a continuing erosion of morale and a growing sense of foreboding. Vietnamese I have known for many years are as frank as they are sad these days in their prognoses; they sound more and more like men who know they are suffering from an incurable malady.[44]

Pessimism so prevalent in Saigon found ample voice throughout the United States. At the end of February 1968, George Kennan told a

44. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra*.

Newark audience that we ". . . have pushed stubbornly and heedlessly ahead, like men in a dream, seemingly insensitive to outside opinion, seemingly unable to arrive at any realistic assessment of the effects of [our] acts."[45] Large numbers of influential Americans, including leading business executives, agreed. Throughout the country, campus demonstrations, draft-card burnings, and civic protestations were becoming the order of the day. Congress was becoming increasingly rebellious. Toward mid-March, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee opened televised hearings on the Foreign Aid Bill and called Dean Rusk before it. Almost at once, the hearings became a debate on Vietnam. For almost two days, a beleaguered Rusk fielded generally hostile questions with what many persons believed were less than candid answers—altogether a performance that further fueled nationwide fires of dissent.

The pressure was telling on the President. The veteran British correspondent Henry Brandon later wrote:

> . . . Anyone who had the opportunity of seeing President Johnson around March 11, 1968, in person and in private, was taken aback by the near-exhaustion that had overcome him. He was a man in torment as I had never seen one before. His face was ashen, his eyes sunken, his skin flabby, and yet, underneath, his expression was taut.[46]

The President was to find little relief ahead. Almost no one agreed with anyone else. Ambassador Bunker, for example, although a hawk who agreed with the necessity of supplying Westmoreland with a reserve force, wanted it limited to seven battalions, since he felt that more men would dissuade the South Vietnamese from putting their own army right. Rusk and Clifford pointed to a practical difficulty: The United States could not supply an additional half million men with weapons and at the same time furnish modern arms to an expanding ARVN.[47] Civilian dissension was also increasing: Paul Nitze, Clifford's deputy, allegedly asked to be excused from appearing before the Senate committee to defend Administration policy in Vietnam. Then came Eugene McCarthy's near victory in the New Hampshire primary elections—McCarthy was a dove and outspoken critic of Johnson's Vietnam policy. A few days later, the President received another unpleasant surprise, in the form of Dean Acheson, who, as earlier agreed, had been conferring with numerous officials on the Vietnam question. Acheson had shocked Johnson in their discussion in late February with the blunt statement: ". . . With all due respect, Mr. President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff don't know what they're talking about." And now, at a private luncheon,

45. Kellen, op. cit.: Kennan was introducing Senator Eugene McCarthy, February 29, 1968.

46. Brandon, op. cit.; see also Louis Heren, *No Hail, No Farewell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971).

47. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

. . . Acheson told the President he was being led down a garden path by the JCS, that what Westmoreland was attempting in Vietnam was simply not possible—without the application of totally unlimited resources "and maybe five years." He told the President that his recent speeches were quite unrealistic and believed by no one, either at home or abroad. He added the judgment that the country was no longer supporting the war. . . .[48]

The President was still digesting his lunch when a memorandum arrived from UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg; following a line suggested by U Thant in late February, Goldberg now suggested a total bombing halt in the North. The following day, the President's real political nemesis, Robert Kennedy, announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination.

It was all too much for tired old Johnson. After a final show of truculence, he decided to accept facts and act accordingly. On March 22, he announced Westmoreland's imminent relief. He also convened a senior advisory group of prominent civil and military officials, past and present, including Dean Acheson, George Ball, Arthur Dean, Henry Cabot Lodge, McGeorge Bundy, and Matthew Ridgway. Meeting for two days in late March, this group, known as the Wise Men, heard a special briefing delivered by an interdepartmental executive team that included the army's Major General DePuy, the State Department's Philip Habib, and CIA's George Carver. Although opinions differed in detail, only three of fourteen members agreed with Administration policy; seven, including former hawk McGeorge Bundy, argued for a basic change; four expressed grave doubts. Johnson's reaction to this new dissension, particularly on the part of McGeorge Bundy, brings to mind Mrs. Western's furious words to her brother, the squire: ". . . Thou art one of those wise men whose nonsensical principles have undone the nation; by weakening the hands of our Government at home, and by discouraging our friends, and encouraging our enemies abroad." Johnson was allegedly so upset that he insisted on hearing the same briefing, which he later said contained information that he had been receiving all along.[49]

Johnson now decided to send only a token troop reinforcement to South Vietnam, although he did ask Congress for an additional $4-billion defense appropriation. He also announced that the American Government would concentrate on building up ARVN (a task theoretically begun thirteen years earlier!) so that it could relieve American forces of

48. Hoopes, op. cit.

49. Ibid.; see also Matthew B. Ridgway, "Indochina: Disengaging," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1971; Brandon, op. cit.: ". . . To Acheson's surprise, his views were shared by more among those present than he had expected. The one who mattered most, because he too had been a strong supporter of the war, was McGeorge Bundy. He summed up for those supporting Acheson's views and admitted, in self-flagellating mood, that 'for the first time in my life I find myself agreeing on this issue with George Ball.'"

major combat tasks. Finally and more important, he summarily halted bombing of North Vietnam beyond the 20th parallel. At the same time, he asked Hanoi to begin talks that would lead to peace, and he attempted to underline his sincerity by withdrawing from coming presidential elections.[50]

In this dramatic speech, President Johnson offered to meet the enemy "anywhere." When Hanoi responded favorably, American officials rejected one place after another, to settle finally on Paris, where peace talks opened officially on May 13. Meanwhile, however, renewed fighting in Vietnam flared in the background like an ancient omen of evil, and while American and North Vietnamese delegations argued about protocol—who would sit where—many thousands of human beings bled and died.

Once again, ARVN and allied forces pushed from beleaguered cities and towns to try to reclaim the countryside from the VC or at least open communications between cities. Once again, MACV announced "successful" offensives with such improbable code names as "Complete Victory"; once again, MACV stressed enormous enemy losses: fifteen thousand dead at Khe Sanh alone; seventy-one thousand dead since Tet began.

And once again, in early May, the enemy launched another, a second Tet offensive, that undeniably hurt the South, first psychologically, by again demonstrating a strength he wasn't supposed to have, second by causing more casualties and destruction.

The total carnage was ghastly: The two offensives resulted ". . . in 13,000 civilians killed, 27,000 wounded, 170,000 homes destroyed or damaged; and created 1,000,000 refugees with property damage estimated at $173,500,000."[51] American and allied casualties shot upward and would continue at high level.

Despite these figures, Westmoreland, about to leave for the United States, again claimed that the offensives had hurt the enemy worse than he admitted. He pointed to some impressive facts: Nowhere had the enemy succeeded in realizing military objectives. Having failed to take Khe Sanh, in early April he had lifted the siege and stolen away—at a cost of an estimated ten to fifteen thousand dead (an action we shall discuss later). Elsewhere he was neutralized by American "spoiling" tactics, which were effectively keeping him off balance. Although damage done by the Tet offensives was great, the Saigon government and country had survived. Meanwhile, pacification operations slowly revived, as did Operation Phoenix, a long-overdue effort to identify, infiltrate, and destroy Communist political networks in the south.[52] In late March, General Abrams, Westmoreland's deputy, who, for over a year,

50. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1968, Vol. I), *supra.*
51. Personal letter from General Walt to the author.
52. The Institute for Strategic Studies ("The United States"), *supra.*

had been working with ARVN, had reported considerable progress. Asked by the President to compare the South Vietnamese effort with the earlier, Korean effort, Abrams replied, ". . . I would say the Vietnamese are doing as well, if not better, than the Koreans."[53] In Washington in early April, General Westmoreland delivered a more than favorable report to the President, including the comforting news that ". . . militarily, we have never been in a better relative position in South Vietnam."[54]

Westmoreland continued to display the optimism so admired by the President. Shortly before his return to the United States to take up the post of army chief of staff—surely the most extraordinary appointment since King James I knighted a piece of beef—he launched into a vigorous defense of his generalship. Dismissing enclave strategy as "defeatist," and "oil-spot" strategy as impractical in view of a limited number of troops [!], Westmoreland told reporters: ". . . Our strategy in Viet Nam is most definitely not a search-and-destroy strategy, and it is unfortunate that it has been so characterized by some. Search and destroy is merely an abbreviated version of a time-honored infantry mission: 'Find, fix, fight and destroy the enemy.' It is not a strategy or a tactic; it is a mission. . . ." The general repeated what he had told the President:

> . . . The allies are in the strongest relative military position in Viet Nam today that we have yet achieved.[55]

At this point, a good many Americans refused to take Westmoreland or his pronouncements seriously. Not only Westmoreland but Pentagon "spokesmen" had become a supreme embarrassment to the Democratic Party and its leading candidate, Hubert Humphrey. While unable to dissociate himself from Vietnam policy, Humphrey attempted to chart a cunning course that elevated Vietnam tactical issues to world strategic issues, where he could say more without almost automatically being contradicted by unpalatable fact. The leading Republican contender, Richard Nixon, on the other hand, blasted American policy in Vietnam and spoke mysteriously of a "new plan" to end the American involvement and regain American "superiority" in strategic matters.

While political debate claimed the American scene in summer and autumn of 1968, fighting continued sporadically in Vietnam, with Saigon frequently under rocket bombardment. Despite claims of American officialdom to heavy enemy casualties, VC/PAVN troops showed little hesitation in attacking where and when they wished. Although the enemy was hurting and infiltration from the North had slowed, it nonethe-

53. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
54. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1968, Vol. I), *supra.*
55. *Time*, May 10, 1968.

less continued at an estimated ten thousand men per month,[56] a figure that allegedly, on occasion, approached thirty thousand.[57] In addition to firing rockets at random from peripheral countryside, VC terrorist units continued active in Saigon and other cities—counting the Tet offensives, terrorist action claimed approximately five thousand lives in 1968.[58] In the country, some hope appeared in a fundamental tactical change reportedly made by Westmoreland's successor, fifty-three-year-old Creighton Abrams, a West Pointer (1936) and World War II tank commander. As later reported in *Time:*

> . . . Abrams has found that forays by sub-battalion-size units—companies, platoons, even squads—can be mounted more quickly, more often and in more places [than battalion and brigade actions]. Such surprise sweeps also achieve better results. Thus the general's sting-ray tactics, designed to interdict the movement of North Vietnamese units and supplies, involve the same number of men but hundreds and sometimes thousands more of what Abrams prefers to call "initiatives" rather than "offensives." As Abrams explained it . . . ". . . all our operations have been designed to get into the enemy's system. Once you start working in the system that he requires to prepare his offensive operations, you can cause him to postpone his operations or to reduce their intensity or length."[59]

As we shall see, this was a diluted version of sting-ray tactics, which the Marine Corps and also some army units had been using for over two years—a qualitative approach calling for small, highly trained patrols experienced in guerrilla tactics, as opposed to a quantitative approach, yet one that still tied units to artillery protection. Unfortunately, what Abrams ordered and what army and marine unit commanders did were frequently two different things. So wedded were some commanders to search-and-destroy tactics that they sabotaged the new directives in favor of the old.[60] Elsewhere, the tactical environment defeated them. In early July, Abrams abandoned the Khe Sanh position (a sensible move that nonetheless further bewildered an already bewildered American public, who, thanks to Westmoreland and Walt, regarded it as of Verdun-like importance). But other fire bases remained, and so did the problem of keeping open communications: So long as units were tied up in static defenses and line-of-communication guard duties, they were not available for clear-and-hold missions essential to pacification.

Nor did Hanoi appear in any hurry to sit down at the Paris conference table and hammer out the longed-for peace. In retaliation for Hanoi's refusal to admit the Saigon government to the talks, as well as

56. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra.*
57. *Time,* June 21, 1968.
58. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra.*
59. *Time,* June 6, 1969.
60. Brian Jenkins, "The Unchangeable War." RAND Corporation, n.d.

to stop fighting in the South, Johnson continued limited bombing in the North. He later wrote his attitude at this time:

> . . . I said [to Abrams] that we had reached the crucial stage of both military and diplomatic operations. We would never achieve the kind of peace we wanted unless the enemy was kept on the run, unless he realized he could never win on the field of battle. I instructed Abrams to use his resources and manpower in a maximum effort to achieve that goal and to inspire the South Vietnamese army to do the same.[61]

Matters were still at a standstill when the two presidents met in Honolulu in mid-July. Prior to the meeting, Secretary of Defense Clifford flew in from Saigon. The Secretary was

> . . . oppressed by the pervasive Americanization of the war: we were still giving the military instructions, still doing most of the fighting, still providing all the matériel, still paying most of the bills. Worst of all, I concluded that the South Vietnamese leaders seemed content to have it that way.[62]

Johnson seems to have been more impressed with President Thieu, who ". . . was more confident than I had ever seen him"[63] Thieu spoke of the splendid job of reorganizing ARVN and privately told Johnson that the United States would be able to start withdrawing forces in mid-1969, perhaps sooner.

Johnson's honeymoon with Thieu was short-lived. In October, the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris quietly signaled that they would admit Saigon to the talks in return for a bombing halt. Johnson and his advisers, including the JCS, went along with this. But now Saigon refused to send a delegation, and was persuaded to do so only with considerable difficulty and delay—an attitude that reinforced Secretary of Defense Clifford's belief that ". . . the goal of the Saigon government and the goal of the United States were no longer one and the same, if indeed they ever had been. . . ."[64] Although the President was inclined to blame this development on Republican machinations, he nonetheless later wrote, ". . . It was one of those rare occasions, in my years of dealing with them, that I felt Thieu, Ky, and their advisers had let me down. More important, I felt that their action put in peril everything both governments had worked so long and sacrificed so much to achieve. . . ."[65] The President scarcely veiled his annoyance in a major speech at the end of October, when he announced a total bombing halt

61. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
62. Clifford, op. cit.; see also Johnson, in *The Vantage Point, supra,* who did not find Clifford so pessimistic.
63. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*
64. Clifford, op. cit.; see also, Kissinger, op. cit., who questioned the advisability of American insistence on Saigon's participation in the first place.
65. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra.*

of the North and implied that South Vietnam would henceforth take over a larger share of the fighting.[66]

But, as American voters went to the polls to elect Richard Nixon the thirty-seventh President of the nation, American and North Vietnamese officials in Paris continued to argue over the shape of the conference table, a momentous issue still unsettled by year's end.

Whatever the results in Paris, the United States would not rejoice. At the end of 1968, a tally offered by a responsible organization read as follows:

From 1961 to 1967, 16,022 American troops had been killed in action in Vietnam. 14,592 more were killed during 1968. When deaths from accident and disease were added, 35,724 Americans had lost their lives in Vietnam since 1961. Communist casualties were far greater still: the United States claimed over 191,000 of the enemy killed during 1968 alone. In all, the war had caused more than half a million deaths in South Vietnam within eight years. Even the high Communist casualties had cost the United States dearly. Allied forces used conventional munitions in Vietnam during 1968 at a rate of nearly $14 million a day. The value of equipment destroyed was hardly less remarkable. Since 1961, combat action had claimed 919 American aircraft and 10 helicopters over North Vietnam, together with 327 aircraft and 972 helicopters over South Vietnam. 1,247 aircraft and 1,293 helicopters had been destroyed on the ground or in accidents. The cost of this attrition of aircraft alone was at least $4,800 million. Figures for the complete cost of the war to the United States were incalculable, but $27,000 million [i.e. $27 billion] was a reasonable estimate for 1968.[67]

These figures, which are conservative, represented only part of the price paid. The direct result of escalation and attrition strategy, they did not include the cost of a nation torn, with no visible means of immediately repairing the damage, and at a peculiar historical time of particular stress from within and without. The human and material costs, however, emphasized the poverty of a strategy founded on ignorance and executed in arrogance, a strategy we shall examine in the following chapter, a strategy whose failure drove a President from the White House—a defeated man, ". . . unwept, unhonored and unsung."

66. Johnson (*Public Papers*—1968, Vol. I), *supra.*
67. The Institute for Strategic Studies ("The United States"), *supra.*

Chapter 88

The summing up (I): the Bible and the Sword • Not "reason good enough" • Communists and dominoes • Inside South Vietnam • Economics • Government versus press: America—the communications failure

WHY DID LYNDON JOHNSON fail in Vietnam?

He failed for many of the same reasons that John Kennedy failed (see Chapters 77 and 78). As in Kennedy's case, the key to failure lay in substituting ambition for policy. *Stop communism* appealed to Johnson, a man of ". . . little background and much uncertainty in foreign affairs" (in the words of one subordinate),[1] even more than it had appealed to Kennedy. A Texas Baptist, Johnson had been raised in shadows of GOOD and EVIL. He was a great believer in the Bible and the Sword, and while he quoted one, he wielded the other. When neither faith nor force served him well, he was lost.

Johnson's downfall began before he was elected President. Like other worthy but myopic Americans, he accepted the "strong man" thesis that resulted in the American Government's prostrating itself before the pudgy form of Ngo Dinh Diem. As a Democrat, a southern Demo-

1. Hoopes, op. cit.

crat, Johnson wore scars from the Republican excoriation that followed the loss of Nationalist China to Mao's Communists. In spring of 1954, following the Geneva Conference, he said, ". . . American foreign policy has never in all its history suffered such a stunning reversal. . . . We stand in clear danger of being left naked and alone in a hostile world."[2] He did not believe that his party could survive another such loss, and when Diem—whom he had called the Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia—failed him, he turned to force.

The President early displayed his line of thought in a National Security Action Memorandum which he approved shortly after assuming office and which read in part:

> . . . It remains the central objective of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.[3]

Johnson greatly expanded this relatively mild statement in his famous Baltimore speech of April 1965 (see Chapter 81), where he repeated misplaced ambition emphasized by misdirected appeal, neither to change during the next three years. His eloquence not only failed to propel Ho Chi Minh to the conference table, but it prompted a rather negative reaction both in the United States and throughout the world.

This should have warned Johnson and his advisers. In his peroration, he had asked the American people: ". . . Have we, each of us, all done all we can do? Have we done enough?"

The true leader leads by example. Had Johnson asked himself this question, he would have had to reply no. In his crusading zeal, the President was forgetting wise Demades' admonition to the assembly ". . . to have a care lest in guarding heaven they should lose earth." Instead, like an emperor of old, he was crying, "Justice must be done, even if the world should perish."[4] The President should have respected the dissident opinions of those who attempted to warn him of Demades' words. Critics with such credentials as George Kennan, James Gavin, and David Shoup should not have been lightly dismissed. Sufficiently disturbing currents were at work at the beginning of Johnson's administration to call for the most penetrating examination of policy. The President might have asked himself, as for example Edward Lansdale, an expert on Vietnam, later asked *himself*, ". . . What is it exactly, that we seek in Viet Nam? . . . We have to answer the question *fully*. . . . Without a sound answer, the seemingly endless war in Viet Nam be-

2. New York *Times*, May 7, 1954; quoted in Anthony Eden, *Towards Peace in Indo-China* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).
3. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.
4. *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus.*

comes just that—seemingly endless. Alternatively, it may be headed for an end that could be dishonorable, with profound consequences."[5] He could have listened to intelligent and courageous officers such as General Matthew Ridgway, who in 1967 warned:

> . . . A war without goals would be most dangerous of all, and nearly as dangerous would be a war with only some vaguely stated aim, such as "victory" or "freedom from aggression" or "the right of the people to choose their own government." Generalities like these make admirable slogans, but authorities today must be hardheaded and specific in naming exactly what goal we are trying to reach and exactly what price we are willing to pay for reaching it. Otherwise, we may find that, in spite of ourselves, the whole conduct of the war will be left in the hands of men who see only victory as the proper objective and who have never had to define that word in terms plain enough to be understood by all the world's people.

Ridgway continued in words strengthened by simplicity:

> . . . A limited war is not merely a small war that has not yet grown to full size. It is a war in which the objectives are specifically limited in the light of our national interest and our current capabilities. A war that is "open-ended"—that has no clearly delineated geographical, political and military goals beyond "victory"—is a war that may escalate itself indefinitely, as wars will, with one success requiring still another to insure the first one. . . .[6]

Had Johnson pursued this question of specific goals, had he demanded that civil and military advisers answer it fully, had he taken counsel not so much of fears as of unpalatable facts, he would not have weakened his position, as he did, by basing it on arguable premises. To pursue the strategy foisted by his military and civil advisers, demanded "exquisite reason," but, unlike Sir Andrew, the President lacked even "reason good enough." At a time when he and his advisers should have been questioning, they were accepting. Townsend Hoopes, who became Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in January 1965, discerned no ". . . central guiding philosophy" in American foreign policy, but, rather, hit-and-miss efforts motivated by the belief of Johnson and his principal advisers in a monolithic Communist threat, despite both Russia's traditional disinterest in Southeast Asia and her current quarrel with China (indisputably the most significant international development since Tito's defection and Chiang Kai-shek's fall). Dean Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, Walt Rostow, Maxwell Taylor, William Westmoreland, members of the JCS

5. Edward G. Lansdale, "Viet Nam—Still the Search for Goals," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1968. This article demonstrates only a few contradictions that occur when ambition is substituted for policy.

6. Matthew B. Ridgway, *The War in Korea* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1968).

—each spoke frequently and feelingly of "Communist aggression," while never fully defining the term or fitting the facts to the precise situation in Vietnam. Hoopes later wrote that ". . . to the President's men in early 1965, there seemed no logical stopping point between isolationism and globalism." Perhaps even more dangerous, he found these men supremely confident of militarily stopping the North Vietnamese and, with that, all "wars of national liberation."[7]

The President and his advisers grossly erred in trying to make a complex problem so simple. Unduly influenced by American economic and military power, frightened by the bogeyman of international communism, they accepted shibboleths bequeathed by Eisenhower and Kennedy and polished them with perfervid rhetoric made the more specious by crusade-like appeal. With one or two exceptions, they were yesterday's men living in tomorrow's world—like great-power exponents of another century, they tried to stop the clock of history and succeeded only in producing cacophonous chimes. Listen to Lyndon Johnson writing on the September 1964 White House meeting:

> . . . As one gloomy opinion followed another, I suddenly asked whether anyone at the table doubted that Vietnam was "worth all this effort." Ambassador Taylor answered quickly that "we could not afford to let Hanoi win in the interests of our overall position in Asia and in the world." General Wheeler strongly supported the Ambassador's view. It was the unanimous view of the Chiefs of Staff, he said, that if we lost South Vietnam we would lose Southeast Asia—not all at once, and not overnight, but eventually. One country after another on the periphery would give way and look to Communist China as the rising power of the area, he said. John McCone agreed. So did Secretary Rusk, with considerable emphasis.[8]

Johnson failed to add that a great many experts, including top CIA analysts, did not agree with these views.

During the next two years, opposing voices, many of them expressing experience and study of decades, made it clear that the issues at stake were anything but black-and-white. With one or two exceptions, presidential advisers refused to listen. Here is Maxwell Taylor testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1966:

> . . . Our purpose is equally clear and easily defined. In his Baltimore speech . . . President Johnson did so in the following terms: "Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way." This has been our basic objective since 1954. It has been pursued by three successive administrations and remains our basic objective today. . . .

7. Hoopes, op. cit.
8. Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

Taylor echoed the international-Communist-plot theory: ". . . Their leadership has made it quite clear that they regard South Vietnam as the testing ground for the 'war of liberation' and that, after its anticipated success there, it will be used widely about the world. . . ." American ground forces were needed, he explained, to create a favorable ratio: ". . . Since history has shown that the Government forces successfully opposing a guerrilla insurgency in the past have required a much greater preponderance of strength, 10 to 1 or 12 to 1, for example, it was quite clear that the Vietnamese could not raise forces fast enough to keep pace with the growing threat of the Viet Cong in time." Strategic bombing was necessary, not so much because it would stop infiltration but because, ". . . in a very real sense, the objective of our air campaign is to change the will of the enemy leadership." As for Gavin's heresy of "holding strategy":

> . . . I am obliged to conclude that the so-called "holding strategy" is really not an alternative way of reaching our objective of an independent South Vietnam free from attack; . . . it amounts to the modification and erosion of our basic objective and hence appears to me to be unacceptable.[9]

As late as 1967, William Bundy told a meeting of the National Student Association:

> . . . Moreover, the wider implications for our commitments elsewhere appeared no less valid than they had ever been. Vietnam still constituted a major, perhaps even a decisive, test case of whether the Communist strategy of "wars of national liberation," or "people's wars" could be met and countered even in the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of South Vietnam. Then as now, it has been I think rightly judged that a success for Hanoi in South Vietnam could only encourage the use of this technique by Hanoi, and over time by the Communist Chinese, and might well have the effect of drawing the Soviets into competition with Peking and Hanoi away from the otherwise promising trends that have developed in Soviet policy in the past ten years.[10]

Here, in but slight disguise, was the monolithic-Communist thesis that produced the domino theory: If one falls, all fall. Johnson and most of his advisers persisted in this belief despite demonstrable facts: that a good many insurgencies of two decades stood remote from communism; that insurgency in South Vietnam could not have lasted a month without peasant support; that by threatening Hanoi's existence, American arms had nearly brought rapprochement between China and Soviet Russia, they had brought an internal political development inside China whose full effects cannot yet be judged vis-à-vis America's best interests, and they had brought the Soviet presence, probably permanently,

9. J. William Fulbright (ed.) (*The Viet Nam Hearings*), *supra.*
10. William Bundy, op. cit.

into an area in which, historically, Russia had displayed little interest.[11]

None of the above facts are original with the writer. The President and his advisers could have heard them from a score of highly qualified and eminently patriotic observers at home and abroad. C. P. Fitzgerald, for example, a distinguished scholar who lived in China for twenty-five years, demolished the domino theory (as others had done earlier): His article in *The Nation,* June 28, 1965, "The Fallacy of the Dominoes," should have been required Administration reading. Fitzgerald pointed out that since if one falls, all fall, then it follows that if one stands, all stand. But this was patently false at a time when Indonesia was in more danger of being taken over by Communists—their own—than Vietnam. He denied the validity of regional protective pacts, for clearly stated historical reasons; he argued, in short, that here was an immensely complicated political situation with deep historical roots:

> . . . All these ancient claims and quarrels are more important, more real and more urgent to the peoples of South-East Asia than the conflict of communism backed by China and anti-communism backed by the United States. That contest is seen essentially as the quarrel of two great outsiders, to be used for promoting national ambitions or thwarting those of traditional foes, but in itself extraneous to the countries themselves. The Asians may well be wrong to take such an attitude, but the West is also much deluded when it thinks of these states as being without personalities of their own, willing to enlist on one side or the other in a global conflict, obedient to the behests of Washington or Peking.

The real appeal in these countries, evidence suggests, is nationalism, and this is one reason why the presence of Western armed forces, which provide an anti-nationalist target, is so dangerous. The challenge calls for a much more subtle approach and for extremely limited objectives: ". . . it must be remembered that this area is the region adjacent to China, in which its influence through the centuries has always been present, sometimes powerful and active, at other times dormant, but by the mere facts of geography, never extinct."[12]

Not a word do we find of such heretical notions either in official state-

11. Zagoria, op. cit.

12. Quoted in *Survival,* September 1965; see also C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Chinese View of Their Place in the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); Donald S. Zagoria, "Who Fears the Domino Theory?" New York *Times Magazine,* April 21, 1968; Owen Harries, "Should the U.S. Withdraw from Asia?" *Foreign Affairs,* October 1968, offers a dissenting opinion; but see Edwin O. Reischauer, *Beyond Vietnam* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967); Dr. Reischauer is an acknowledged expert on the Far East and Asia, and his telling arguments as to the minimal importance of a Communist "victory" in Vietnam cannot be dismissed out of hand; Soedjatmoko, "South-East Asia and Security," *Survival,* October 1969; Richard Harris, "How the Chinese View South-East Asia," *The Times* (London), September 8, 1970; Harrison Salisbury, "Image and Reality in Indochina," *Foreign Affairs,* April 1971, discusses distorted viewpoints of both sides.

ments of the day or in the Pentagon papers. Were similar opinions reported by American diplomats throughout the area? Were such opinions debated in high councils? Perhaps someday we shall know the answers. Some argument must have existed, though Johnson's memoirs are lacking substance in this respect. Still, in the January 1967 issue of *Foreign Affairs,* for example, we find McGeorge Bundy carefully disclaiming the theretofore sacrosanct domino theory, but, by then, Bundy had left the government[13]; we also find indirect confirmation in later disillusionment expressed by Clark Clifford and Townsend Hoopes. In 1965, however, and for the next two years, any government official daring to question the cornerstone of Administration policy would have been tagged a "nervous Nellie" and relegated to limbo.

The President's personal advisers and top civil and military officials equally could insist on Hanoi's dominant role in the war as proclaimed in the 1965 White Paper.[14] But this did not wash with a good many American and international observers and experts, who were aware of the early minimum role played by Hanoi, particularly in troop and supply categories. If a "constant stream" of trained men and supplies was flowing from North to South, a veritable flood of such had already flowed from West to East.[15]

Similarly, Communist China's participation in the conflict had been minimal, despite menacing growls from Peking. The partnership between Ho and Mao implied by the President did not exist. Writing in 1967, Donald Zagoria pointed out that

> . . . any careful study of Chinese foreign policy during the past fifteen years would have to conclude that although China is a revolutionary power oppos-

13. McGeorge Bundy, "The End of Either/Or," *Foreign Affairs,* June 1967.

14. See, for example, Maxwell Taylor, *Responsibility and Response* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967): ". . . as early as 1961 when I headed a mission to Vietnam at President Kennedy's directions, the mission called attention to the fact that the real source of the guerrilla strength in South Vietnam was not in South Vietnam but in North Vietnam. It was perfectly clear that the direction, the supplies, the reinforcements, and the leadership came from the North. . . ."

15. David Horowitz, *Containment and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967): Hans Morgenthau commented: ". . . Let it be said right away that the (State Department) white paper is a dismal failure. The discrepancy between its assertions and the factual evidence adduced to support them borders on the grotesque"; see also U. S. Department of Defense, "Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Vietnam," Washington: 1968. This study asserts, rather than proves, Hanoi's dominant role from the beginning; George K. Tanham and Dennis J. Duncanson, "Some Dilemmas of Counterinsurgency," *Foreign Affairs,* October 1969: ". . . In reality, the Marxist-Leninists of the East not only take pride in winning power with a minimum contribution from their own side, but have found from experience that this is a more reliable road to victory. Besides concealing the directing hand, it leaves the door open to repudiation of unsuccessful insurgencies . . ."; Lacouture, op. cit., cites Pentagon advice ". . . that the deliveries from the North were . . . on the order of fifteen to twenty percent [of Viet Cong needs]. . . ."

ing the present status quo, it does not aim to bring about change by its own military force.

. . . [It is] one of the key messages in Lin Piao's article [September 3, 1965] and one of the basic principles of "liberation wars"—that Communist revolutionaries throughout the world must make their revolutions on their own. Far from giving any notice of any intention to intervene aggressively in Vietnam or in other "people's wars," Lin Piao was rationalizing Peking's unwillingness to intervene directly and massively in such wars. He was reiterating what is essentially a "do-it-yourself" model of revolution for foreign Communists.[16]

Five years later, an expert on counterinsurgency warfare, in discussing Chinese aid to Thailand guerrillas, noted:

. . . Current Chinese doctrine stresses that the indigenous apparatus must carry out the revolution itself with only limited support from other socialist nations. This policy, which makes a complete turnabout from Mao's 1949 position that outside aid was the critical factor, culminated in Lin Piao's speech in 1965 when the current theory of do-it-yourself was fully expounded.[17]

In 1965, Ho was walking a tightrope between Chinese and Soviet camps, and President Johnson's attempts to stress the Chinese threat while not mentioning the theretofore prominent villain, the Soviet Union, did not impress intelligent auditors.

The President's "national pledge" was equally specious: ". . . We are there because we have a promise to keep." What promise? When? President Eisenhower said that the United States would supply limited aid to South Vietnam, providing Diem carried out essential reforms. Here was a reasonable proposition. Nothing was new about it. It was the beginning of a temporary alliance with attendant advantages to each party. Such alliances crowd the pages of history, and such have been commented on through the ages as, for example, by Spinoza, who, as Leopold Ranke noted,

. . . starts from the principle that states permanently subsist in a state of nature with respect to one another, and does not hesitate to assert that a treaty has force only so long as the causes of it—fear of injury or hope of gain—exist; that no ruler is to be reproached with faithlessness for breaking an alliance he had formerly concluded, as soon as any of the causes which determined him to it should have ceased, since that condition is equal for both parties.

16. Zagoria, op. cit.; this does not deny Chinese expansionist aims—see also H. L. Duncan, "Does China Want War?" *Army Quarterly*, July 1967; Owen Harries, op. cit.

17. George K. Tanham, *Trial in Thailand* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1974).

This is little more than common sense. Yet, in less than a decade, Eisenhower's casual alliance became promoted, mostly by military voices, into a "promise" and now into "a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence." Listen to Maxwell Taylor, writing in 1967:

> . . . If we are convinced, as I am, that the stake is important, that we are honor-bound to obtain for the people in South Vietnam the right to freedom, then every dollar and every man we have committed in my opinion is justified.[18]

By right to freedom, Taylor undoubtedly included rule by Diem and Nhu and Thieu and Ky and whatever other national war lords will appear in the future—neither Taylor nor any of the other ancient citizens who surrounded the President, with the possible exception of Clifford, realized that Administration ambitions for South Vietnam bore almost no resemblance to the relatively simple goal of the Saigon government, which was (and is) to maintain and enlarge its own power structure while yielding minimum freedoms to its peoples. And if the U.S.A. was honor bound to intervene in South Vietnam, then why not in Rhodesia, South Africa, Greece, most of the South American and all the Iron Curtain countries, indeed in any country whose government did not conform to American system or desire?

Attempting to put the record in proper perspective, in 1967 Senator Eugene McCarthy wrote:

> . . . It is argued that we have a legal obligation [in Vietnam] under the SEATO treaty and other commitments. But the SEATO treaty itself has not been brought into operation in the Vietnam War. South Vietnam has never requested action under SEATO, and any joint action, as provided for in that treaty, would be impossible because of the positions of France and Pakistan, and possibly Britain. The argument of legal obligation is one which the Administration sought to bolster by securing the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by the Congress in 1964, although the Secretary of State, in testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee, said that even without the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, commitment in Vietnam was defensible and did not depend on the resolution for its legal basis.
>
> It is said that we fight to ensure the credibility of our commitments, to show the world that we honor our treaty obligations. This is the rationale of our politico-military prestige. Yet we have already demonstrated our reliability in Korea and in the protection of Taiwan as well as in Europe.
>
> It is said that we must carry on the war in Vietnam in order to preserve and defend our national honor. Our national honor is not at stake, and should not so readily be offered. In every other great war of the century, we have had the support of what is generally accepted as the decent opinion of mankind. We do not have that today. We cannot, of course, depend only

18. Maxwell Taylor (*Responsibility and Response*), *supra.*

on this opinion to prove our honor; it may not be sound. But always in the past we have not only had this support, but we have used it as a kind of justification for our action.[19]

As for the unforgivable wrong of abandoning ". . . this small and brave nation to its enemies, and to the terror that must follow," the President again was indulging in fiction. The homogeneous national picture that he implied did not exist. Viet Cong cadres had controlled large areas of South Vietnam since 1954; in 1965, the enemy controlled probably 90 per cent of the countryside. In 1965, as in 1955, Saigon rule was remote in some areas, ruthless in other areas. A large percentage of peasants did not care who ruled so long as they could till crops and get a fair shake in the market place. The peasants' main concern was not democracy but survival with dignity, and the splendid rhetoric that burbled from Washington and Saigon officialdom was virtually meaningless to bent bodies laboring in rice paddies and on rubber plantations. No one had shown peasants that democracy was worth fighting for, because no one had shown them democracy. As Johnson spoke, the gulf between the Saigon government, the sects, and the peasants was as wide as ever, growing wider.[20]

People who would have directly suffered terror of a Communist takeover constituted, for the most part, a rapacious ruling minority whose greed and intransigence were keeping the nation, such as it was, in its turbulent, impotent condition. And here was Johnson, like Kennedy and Eisenhower before him, compounding the damage by unfounded fears and loose rhetoric. Once again, Johnson was saying that the West could not survive without this geographical neutrino, this whirling nothing of a country. So many Americans had insisted that a dubious political entity called South Vietnam was an indispensable ally in the war against communism, that South Vietnamese Catholics, Buddhists, mandarins, generals, landowners, merchants, intellectuals, and students began to believe it—so indispensable, that, on occasion, South Vietnamese Government leaders such as Khanh could indulge the most virulent language and defiant behavior to the country that was keeping them alive. About this time, a Vietnamese political observer told Robert Shaplen: ". . . In a way, after all the pent-up years under the French and under Diem, we are like children letting off steam. Maybe there will have to be yet another half-dozen coups before we settle down—even though we know we can't afford them."[21] He was wrong. South Vietnam could afford them—as long as the United States insisted on bestowing unqualified support on a rump government whose totalitarian characteristics contradicted a heritage held sacred by thoughtful American citizens.

19. McCarthy (*The Limits of Power*), *supra.*
20. Duncanson (*Government and Revolution in Vietnam*), *supra.*
21. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*

In spring of 1965, a firm threat to abandon South Vietnam was perhaps the only action that could have produced the social-political cohesion necessary to make a nation. The Vietnamese politicians may not have admitted it, but they were in a classic "backs-to-the-wall" position. President Johnson's "solution," his Baltimore speech, removed the wall.

His words caused similar psychological damage in other countries that the United States was trying to help. A serious threat to abandon South Vietnam might have produced some interesting soul-searching in these other areas. Instead, the President's words insured the continued flow of golden eggs from the increasingly tired Western goose. Almost to the very end of his administration, the President continued to promise unqualified American support to the Thieu-Ky regime.

No one could fault the President's assertion of great stakes in play in the international power game. But if retreat from Vietnam would not bring an end to conflict, neither would "victory" in Vietnam. The President was trying to produce a black-and-white center-ring act from a multicolored sideshow. Neither Moscow nor Peking particularly wanted the war to escalate: Moscow did not want to upset her détente with Washington; Peking did not want a strong American military presence on the Asian mainland.

However, once the United States made a major commitment in South Vietnam, Moscow and Peking rolled with the punch and moved to exploit the situation. No matter how big, powerful, and rich the U.S.A., no nation could be everywhere at once. While President Johnson was talking to the world, Chinese money and Chinese technicians were on their way to Tanzania to begin construction of a sixteen-hundred-mile railroad into the interior of Africa; Soviet money and Soviet technicians were working in Cairo's defense ministry; satellite money and satellite technicians were scouring underdeveloped parts of the world for investment and prestige purposes. While American priority effort went to a strategically unimportant country, the Soviet Union and China reinforced their presence in Africa and the Middle East—indeed, anywhere they wished—to the detriment of the West and with the knowledge that the U.S.A. could not launch a maximum countereffort.

The President's stated objective of "independence" for South Vietnam also rang hollow. Whether the United States or South Vietnam liked it or not, the tragic rump would remain economically and militarily dependent on the United States, just as had Cuba and the Philippines for so many decades, just as Taiwan and Korea were doing.

The economic factor is of particular importance because a great deal of woolly thinking has surrounded and obfuscated it. In 1968, a Joint Development Group report read:

. . . For several years well over a million men on both sides have been fighting in the country, but physical destruction is minimal and, in spite

of many pressures, the economic wealth of the country in physical facilities has increased.

South Vietnam has a system of modern ports that will not require major renovation and is capable of expansion; an agriculture that is diversifying, that is beginning to benefit from the potentials of new types of rice and that has a basis for absorbing other technological improvements; an industrial structure that has not seriously suffered and that has investment funds available when the risk-reward calculation is favorable; and a labor force that has acquired useful skills.

In economic terms, Vietnam does not have a large debt or debt service burden, and its foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to finance six months of imports even at inflated import levels.

By many measures South Vietnam is in an enviable position in relation to the experience of other countries at the end of a war, including Korea more than a decade ago. There are serious problems in the number of refugees, the dependence on United States aid, and distortions in the economy, but overall, economically the country is fortunate.[22]

This happy conclusion ignores a good many peripheral but pertinent factors.[23] Almost all of its physical plant was financed gratis by American citizens, a contribution that, taken along with the war, was helping to bankrupt "the richest and most powerful nation" in the world. Some of the fine print is also damning. David Lilienthal, who quoted the above report in an article in *Foreign Affairs,* went on to point out that "land reform" still constitutes a major problem, one that must be solved by the South Vietnamese Government (which has to date shown little intention of solving it).

But that is only the beginning.

Transition from war to peace would demand heavy public and private investments beyond South Vietnam's ability to provide: ". . . it seems inevitable that even heroic measures will not provide sufficient domestic resources to fill the need; the gap must be filled by external aid." Lilienthal continues:

. . . After the initial transition period, import requirements should slacken, but there will still be an annual gap of $300 to $400 million in the commodity balance of trade. Even if, as seems indicated, private capital will be attracted to the country, from $250 to $350 million per year will still be required in aid. Some of this might be in the form of soft currencies, but about $200 million annually will be needed in hard currencies. Since annual averages are often deceptive, it is better to say that aid on the order of $2 billion spread over a ten-year period will be needed.

22. David E. Lilienthal, "Postwar Development in Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs,* January 1969.

23. Reischauer, op. cit.; for a brilliant analysis of the Mekong Delta area, see also Robert L. Sansom, *The Economics of Insurgency in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970).

Lilienthal did not mention that official estimates have also often been deceptive and that economic aid would probably amount to at least twice the predicted sum. But no matter,

> . . . This is not a burden which the United States can or, I believe, will shoulder alone. It must be shared among many, not the least being those nations in the Pacific Basin itself. The American pledge to support the development of Southeast Asia needs to be matched by others who have been involved directly or indirectly in the events of the past years—as allies, as economic beneficiaries of the war (notably Japan) and, indeed, as critics. Ally and critic alike have a responsibility to help find a viable and lasting path of development for Viet Nam and for Southeast Asia as a whole.

Unfortunately for Lilienthal's argument, ally and critic alike did not recognize a responsibility proclaimed by the American Government, and did not jump aboard the financial-aid train, no more than local dominoes had jumped aboard the military-aid train.

And with good reason. Lilienthal continued:

> . . . The corollary to the need for external aid in achieving economic independence is the need for South Viet Nam to adopt appropriate policies of growth. Understandably, after 20 years of war, during the last few years of which large numbers of foreigners have been prominent and influential in the country, various forms of xenophobia have appeared, inspired by a sense of nationalism and pride of culture. In the economic field, this has created a preference for import substitution rather than export promotion, for the public sector to assume responsibility over wide areas of economic activity and exercise tight controls over the private sector, and for direct controls rather than competitive market processes. In general, this attitude looks inward and is conservative rather than outward-looking and expansive.
>
> It is clear, even now, that Viet Nam cannot successfully make the transition to a peaceful footing if such autarchic policies are dominant in its economy. Ultimately, they meet neither the need for efficiency in the use of resources nor the requirements of social justice. If carried to an extreme, they would make it difficult if not impossible for Viet Nam to attain or enjoy economic independence. Long-continued economic dependence on foreigners would make a tragic travesty of the sacrifices made in the cause of political independence.[24]

Economic health cannot be divorced from political health. President Johnson's desire ". . . that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way" would have been reasonable enough except that the United States was supporting a minority segment that, by refusing to tolerate political opposition, had increasingly alienated major social groups and significantly reduced the country's determination to give battle to its foes.

24. Lilienthal, op. cit.

Unable to state this fact, yet having to offer reasons for the American action, the President resembled a boy whistling his way past a cemetery on a dark night. The most cursory reader of American newspapers, magazines, and books knew that the President's stated resolution was not shared by an increasingly influential portion of the nation, including legislators who were beginning to hold second thoughts about the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Leaving aside domestic problems that were crying for enormous expenditures of expertise and money, nothing in the American character suggested the qualities of patience that Lyndon Johnson claimed in pursuing his ambitions:

> . . . We will not be defeated.
> We will not grow tired.
> We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement. . . .

Here again the President was dreaming. These statements presupposed a national interest and stamina that did not exist—and for several reasons. The first was a failure in communications that we have already discussed with regard to the Kennedy era. Johnson himself, in spring of 1954, speaking as a congressman, had said: ". . . We will insist upon clear explanations of the policies in which we are asked to cooperate. We will insist that we and the American people be treated as adults, that we have the facts without sugar coating."[25]

When, during the Kennedy administration, the press attempted to give the facts, a good many senior American officials bridled and a minor war developed. As Vice-President, Johnson must have been aware of the dangerous situation, yet, as President, he did not bear Pierre Salinger's warning (see Chapter 78) in mind, and relations between press and officialdom continued to deteriorate. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* in July 1966, veteran correspondent James Reston again warned of a communications breakdown. Far from heeding him, Johnson increasingly scorned the press (which he criticized throughout his memoirs).

As one result, a good many senior officials both in Saigon and Washington continued to dissemble; some reporters continued to distort. So complex was the Vietnamese scene that even highly talented correspondents had their hands full covering it and communicating its complex turbulence to the American public. With a few splendid exceptions, not many, publishers unfortunately did not present the war in depth. A British expert on counterinsurgency, Major General Richard Clutterbuck, after visiting South Vietnam, accused three journalist friends ". . . of reporting only what occurred above 12,000 feet. If you put cloud over the world at 12,000 feet, the only things that stick up are rugged and spectacular, and that is what gets reported. They

25. Deakin, op. cit.

agreed that that was what they did, and said that if they reported anything below 12,000 feet, it would not get into their papers anyway; no one would read it if it did, and they would lose their jobs. We had to leave it at that, and so the real blame falls on the public."[26]

While newspaper publishers, TV-station owners, and public admittedly are culpable, the statement is not altogether true. Reporting in depth (by far the most accurate and intelligent coverage came from Robert Shaplen of *The New Yorker*) was well received by impressive segments of the public, who became aware that the situation scarcely resembled the black-and-white situation described in presidential platitudes.

But, for every informed American citizen and even vaguely informed American citizen, dozens existed who had only the foggiest notion of what was going on in Vietnam. The Administration could not alleviate national ignorance by a well-conceived and well-executed educational program, because it had already decided that the issues were black and white, and that it was a question of imposing American will on Hanoi. Unlike many Americans, the President refused to grow in four years. He refused to abandon pubescent dreams promulgated by persons unable either to understand or accept political realities in a complicated world. Like Count Bestuzhev in dealing with Prussia, he had ". . . changed passion into principle," and was a prisoner of the process, for, unlike Bestuzhev, he could not swallow his hatred to alter an intransigence clearly and frequently repeated. In February 1968, we hear a typical Johnsonianism: ". . . As near as I am able to detect, Hanoi has not changed its course of conduct since the very first response it made. Sometimes they will change 'will' to 'would' and 'shall' to 'should,' or something of the kind. But the answer is all the same." But, as Henry Kissinger later pointed out: ". . . A different kind of analysis might have inquired why Hanoi would open up a channel for a meaningless communication, especially in the light of a record of careful planning which made it extremely unlikely that a change of tense would be inadvertent."[27]

The communications problem, which resulted in continuing national ignorance (thus frustration and resentment), gave rise to an even more serious condition. Johnson had embarked on a crusade that the American public did not understand but at first supported, though by no means eagerly, because it trusted its national leaders and its military and civilian officials and because it shared, at least in part, their arrogance of

26. RUSI Seminar, *supra:* Brigadier Kenneth Hunt of The Institute for Strategic Studies also complained of a press deficiency: ". . . The most dispiriting thing is to go to a Press conference in Saigon. It is not merely because the quality of the briefing is kindergarten, that it comes out in a dead-pan American style. The quality of the questions asked by reporters is also often poor and amateurish. That is reflected in what comes back and is printed."

27. Kissinger, op. cit.

ignorance. But, not very long after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, a tradition began quietly to assert itself. As Bill Moyers, Johnson's press man, later pointed out, the American democratic concept embraces not only a tradition of dissent, but also of consent:

> . . . Our system assumes a sense of participation by the people in the making of critical national decisions. When that sense of involvement is absent, when the public feels excluded from the judgments that are made in its name, a policy is doomed from inception, no matter how theoretically valid it may be.[28]

Translating this to Vietnam, Moyers continued:

> . . . War is clearly one of those questions on which a government—a democratic government—dare not act without evidence of genuine support. In this case, that support was not deliberately withheld—it simply was not sought. And it was not sought because few if any officials anticipated the war would ever reach the proportions that would require a declaration.

Rather than "leveling" with the American people, Johnson and his advisers continued in the hope that they could clean up matters—that they could "win"—before the American public realized quite what had happened. That this hope was doomed by a false military strategy did not at first occur except to a very few advisers, and these Johnson ignored and later banished. When truth began leaking out, when casualties and expenses rose out of all proportion to gained results, the American public, or, anyway, impressive portions of it, rebelled.

Parts of the United States were already rebelling at the time of Johnson's Baltimore speech in the spring of 1965. Although Communist leaders in South and North Vietnam were provincial and often naïve, they sensed currents at work in the United States that suggested France of an earlier day. These leaders had experienced protracted warfare, many had been fighting since 1943 and even earlier (some since 1932), and from 1946 onward, they had witnessed the pressures of protracted guerrilla warfare at work on Western countries. In their minds, protracted warfare had gained one victory. It could now gain another. An American President could proclaim that his nation would not be defeated or would not grow tired—but Communists had only to read American newspapers and magazines to realize that this was proclamation without solid national support. Throughout his later memoirs, the President repeatedly stressed Hanoi's unwillingness to negotiate a peace in these crucial years. Never once, apparently, did it occur to him to ask himself why; never once does he suggest that, being human, he was fallible and his basic precepts could have been fallacious.

28. Bill D. Moyers, "One Thing We Learned," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1968.

Chapter 89

The summing up (II): use of air power • The Douhet theory • Strategic bombing in World War II • The paradox of nuclear stalemate • Lessons of the Korean War • American expectations in North Vietnam • Historical factors • Harrison Salisbury reports from the North • Bombs and international diplomacy

THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION to carry the war to the North undoubtedly came as an unpleasant surprise to Hanoi. But the President's decision could not change the axis of war, which remained in the South. Moreover, his intention to alter enemy will by use of aerial bombardment introduced several factors that seem to have escaped official cognizance.

The use of air power produces both moral and material results, and the tally means one thing to the user, another to the receiver.

On advice of his military chiefs, Johnson was embracing a modified Douhet theory of aerial bombing when he agreed to send American planes over North Vietnam. This theory emerged in 1921, when Giulio Douhet, an Italian air officer, wrote a small book, *The Command of the Air*.[1]

1. Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air* (London: Faber & Faber, 1943). Tr. D. Ferrari. (First edition published in 1921, second edition in 1927.)

Douhet correctly foresaw the importance of the new arm:

. . . By virtue of this new weapon, the repercussions of war are no longer limited to the farthest artillery range of surface guns, but can be directly felt for hundreds and hundreds of miles . . . the battlefield will be limited only by the boundaries of the nations at war, and all of their citizens will become combatants since all of them will be exposed to the aerial offensives of the enemy. There will be no distinction any longer between soldiers and civilians. The defenses on land and sea will no longer serve to protect the country behind them; nor can victory on land or sea protect the people from enemy aerial attacks unless that victory ensures the destruction, by actual occupation of the enemy's territory, of all that gives life to his aerial forces.

All of this must inevitably effect a profound change in the form of future wars. . . .

Air power, Douhet argued, would prove omnipotent:

. . . Thus were born anti-aircraft guns, and reconnaissance and pursuit planes. But subsequent experience demonstrated that all these means of defense were inadequate, despite the fact that aerial offensives in the last war [World War I] were of minor importance, haphazardly planned and executed. Every time an aerial offensive was carried out resolutely, it accomplished its purpose. Venice was bombed repeatedly from beginning to end of the war; Treviso was almost razed under our eyes; and Padua had to be abandoned by the Supreme Command. . . .

Douhet made no claim to selectivity or subtlety:

. . . The complete destruction of the objective has moral and material effects, the repercussions of which may be tremendous. To give us some idea of the extent of these repercussions, we need only envisage what would go on among the civilian population of congested cities once the enemy announced that he would bomb such centers relentlessly, making no distinction between military and non-military objectives.

In Douhet's mind, as in Foch's before him, the moral was as important as the physical:

. . . We should always keep in mind that aerial offensives can be directed not only against objectives of least physical resistance, but against those of least moral resistance as well. For instance, an infantry regiment in a shattered trench may still be capable of some resistance even after losing two-thirds of its effectives; but when the working personnel of a factory sees one of its machine shops destroyed, even with a minimum loss of life, it quickly breaks up and the plant ceases to function.

Professional airmen in the West such as Billy Mitchell in the United States and Hugh Trenchard in England, who were attempting to build air forces and were obstructed at every turn by army and navy tradition-

alists, embraced Douhet's theory as another argument in favor of the new arm. In the late twenties, Mitchell demonstrated that bombs could sink a battleship; as we have seen, the British claimed strategic-tactical successes in Iraq and in northwestern frontier provinces in India, as did U. S. Marines in Nicaragua (see Chapters 29 and 30, Volume I). Goering's Luftwaffe experimented with the theory during the Spanish civil war, at one point eliminating the town of Guernica; at another, testing results of carpet bombing.

Variations appeared early in World War II. Older readers will remember horrendous pictures of Stuka dive bombers preparing cities such as Rotterdam for paratroop invasion and later attacking refugee columns in France in order to cause panic and impede military movement. The Battle of Britain raised the psychological level of the theory, but the Luftwaffe failed to bring England to its knees. When skillful and determined RAF opposition produced heavy German losses in aircraft and pilots, which could not easily be replaced, Hitler terminated the campaign.

The theory did not die with this failure. RAF and American strategic air bombings attempted to destroy Hitler's industrial plant and thereby force Germany from the war. RAF saturation bombings culminating in the destruction of Dresden attempted to break the German people's will; American fire bombings of Tokyo and the final destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs did play a major role in breaking Japanese will to continue war.

Thus the Douhet theory: At its nicest, strategic bombing; at its ugliest, genocide. And this is why the theory is fallacious: first, the more bombs dropped, the lower the morale—but not necessarily a significant lessening of will to resist. This is a challenge situation familiar to psychology. Challenge, discipline, and incentive all play major roles; resistance is never easily analyzed. These factors help to explain why medieval fortresses held out against overwhelming odds, why, in World War I, neither side would yield on the western front, why men in battle, for example American marines on Guadalcanal in those black days of late 1942, tolerated weeks of bombing and shelling by Japanese aircraft and ships without losing their will to fight. Civilians of London, Berlin, Tokyo, and numerous other cities reacted similarly. Aerial bombings subverted civil will to resist only by killing the holders of that will. Conventional strategic bombing did not kill enough holders of that will fast enough; atomic bombing did.

The advent of the atomic bomb seemed to fructify Douhet's theory, but only as long as one side held a monopoly. Even then, moral aspects outweighed the practical: Premeditated genocide is not an acceptable clause in the Western code of civilization, as the Germans discovered. And not only the Germans. At the height of allied bombing in World War II, the American air force general Carl ("Tooey") Spaatz caviled at the RAF's saturation bombing program. The American people's

reaction to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was also disturbed, and if those of us who were training for the invasion of Japan proper were pleased with the war's sudden termination, this did not erase a feeling of guilt, however nebulous, in the national conscience. As General Matthew Ridgway wrote in 1956, when discussing the use of strategic air power:

> . . . Furthermore, to my mind, such mass destruction is repugnant to the ideals of a Christian nation. It is incompatible with the basic aim of the free world in war, which is to win a just and enduring peace.[2]

Once the Soviet Union broke atomic monopoly, the atomic bomb's omnipotence evaporated in an air of retribution. The paradox of nuclear stalemate—of destructive impotence—resulted. Both moral and practical aspects prevented American use of atomic bombs in Korea and in North Vietnam. At the height of the bombing of North Vietnam, in October 1967, Robert McNamara laid the issue on the line in a top-secret memorandum to President Johnson:

> . . . It is clear that, to bomb the North sufficiently to make a radical impact upon Hanoi's political, economic and social structure, would require an effort which we could make but which would not be stomached either by our own people or by world opinion; and it would involve a serious risk of drawing us into open war with China.[3]

Material results of strategic bombing are something else again. Strategic-bombing proponents have frequently overstated their case, which is usual with minority arguments. World War II offered excellent examples of bombing's strength and weaknesses. Any interested reader can find myriad statistics in the postwar *Strategic Bombing Survey,* whose directors included George Ball, John Galbraith, and Paul Nitze.[4] The survey cited impressive accomplishments of allied air forces, giving fliers their due and then some; but it also established that workers did not flee an area when first bombs fell, as Douhet and later strategic-bombing proponents had it, but, rather, that bombing, although interrupting production, rarely halted it, at least until the very end, when allied ground forces already had invaded Germany. Permanent damage was not nearly so great as current estimates had suggested, and in some areas production even increased, while in others reserve stocks and emergency measures provided short-term compensation for havoc wrought. Bombing raids in July and August 1943 on Hamburg killed some sixty to a hundred thousand people and destroyed 55–60 per cent of the city, including three hundred thousand homes. Yet

2. Ridgway (*Memoirs*), *supra.*
3. *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 542–51).
4. U. S. Government, *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey—Over-all Report* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945).

. . . Hamburg as an economic unit was not destroyed. It never fully recovered from the bombing but in five months it had regained 80 per cent of its former productivity, despite the fact that great areas of the city lay, and still lie, in dust and rubble. As in the case of industrial plants where it was found much easier to destroy the buildings than the machines within, so also it is much easier to destroy the physical structures of a city than to wipe out its economic life.

Industrial damage lowered and even halted priority production while massive allied air attacks against Germany's communications system hindered supply from reaching her armies. But her armies did not crumble from lack of supply, the Wehrmacht retaining considerable fighting spirit even at the end, as most allied veterans will attest.

Saturation bombings, what the RAF called "area raids," also provided startling "kill" figures. The Strategic Bombing Survey estimated that bombs eliminated 3.6 million homes, or approximately 20 per cent of Germany's total dwelling space; bombs killed about three hundred thousand people and injured some 780,000. Although ". . . bombing appreciably affected the German will to resist," bombs did not crumble that will:

. . . War production is the critical measuring rod of the effects of lowered morale in the German war effort. Allied bombing widely and seriously depressed German civilian morale, but depressed and discouraged workers were not necessarily unproductive workers. As has been seen, armaments production continued to mount till mid-1944. . . .

The survey asserted that continuous, heavy bombing of a town did not further lower morale:

. . . In the first place, the cities undergoing heavy raids lost a considerable part of their population through evacuation, and these evacuees were in some cases the faint-hearted, the less patriotic; in short, the people with lower morale. In the second place, very severe bombing changed active dissension to apathy about political matters, and to preoccupation with keeping alive. In a police state with totalitarian controls, an apathetic, passive people has better morale from the point of view of the existing regime than an actively disgruntled people. Such passivity facilitates their control and manipulation. Intense bombing, moreover, made it more difficult for undercover oppositional movements to operate, since their limited resources for communication and organization were frequently disrupted.

Strategic bombing also received a setback from a cost-analysis standpoint. It proved very expensive in both lives and cost of bombers and bombs. The establishment required to operate a peak twenty-eight thousand combat planes numbered 1.335 million men. Nearly eighty thousand American and eighty thousand British airmen were lost in action, while eighteen thousand American and twenty-two thousand British

planes were lost or damaged beyond repair. Up to VE-day, the American air effort in Europe alone cost over $43 billion! A final factor emerged after the war: Industrial complexes that had been damaged and destroyed, not to mention surrounding urban areas, had to be rebuilt, with the victors, primarily the U.S.A., picking up the tab.

Strategic-tactical bombing and interdiction also proved chimerical. Lavish claims advanced by proponents of air power were often matched by lavish failures. Few, if any, interested persons disputed tactical advantages derived from command of the air. We have glanced at these in the 1920s and 1930s. But, as Gwynn pointed out in 1934, air power was not a tactical panacea and could not apply in all places at all times. In World War II, tactical air power proved a tremendous boon to allied armies, not only in clearing skies of enemy aircraft but in close air support, a fine art developed particularly by U. S. Marines. But such accomplishments did not obliterate shortcomings: Tactical air power did not "win" ground battles, any more than strategic air power "won" the war. Writing years later, General Matthew Ridgway recalled that limitations of air power ". . . were never better illustrated in World War II, when the Germans were able to maintain some twenty-six divisions south of the Alps in Italy, using a few mountain passes to keep them supplied for two years, regardless of uncontested Allied air supremacy."[5]

The Korean war added to lessons already learned (but either ignored or forgotten by proponents of aerial warfare). As General Mark Clark later wrote:

> . . . The Air Force and the Navy carriers may have kept us from losing the war, but they were denied the opportunity of influencing the outcome decisively in our favor. They gained complete mastery of the skies, gave magnificent support to the infantry, destroyed every worthwhile target in North Korea, and took a costly toll of enemy personnel and supplies.
>
> But as in Italy [in World War II], where we learned the same bitter lesson in the same kind of rugged country, our air power could not keep a steady stream of enemy supplies and reinforcements from reaching the battle line. Air [power] could not "isolate" the front. . . .[6]

Lieutenant General James Gavin was even more critical:

> . . . For the Air Force, Korea had been a disillusioning and frustrating experience. Air Force leaders had assumed that air superiority, air surveillance and air attacks would smash the North Korean drive and demolish the North Korean military establishment. They had trumpeted this point of view both to the public and to the President. When the bombing failed to halt the North Korean war effort they developed the myth of the Yalu sanctuary. If only they could bomb Red Chinese Manchuria, which lay beyond

5. Ridgway (*The War in Korea*), *supra.*
6. Mark Clark, op. cit.

the Yalu River, they said, everything would turn out all right. Thus the Air Force was able to avoid, at least in public, confronting the evidence that in Korea both strategically and tactically air power had failed. Unfortunately from their frustration sprang a readiness to answer any challenge to American power with threats of total nuclear war.[7]

In those momentous months of 1964 and 1965, Johnson and his advisers displayed massive historical ignorance of air power. Johnson himself had fallen victim to a powerful civil-military lobby that preached virtues of air power without mentioning its severe limitations. Ignorant of the true nature of the war in Vietnam, frustrated at lack of progress in "winning" it, and frightened by recent and substantial reverses, Johnson proved particularly prone to panaceas.

Judging from later events, he probably also believed that he could control the action, that he needn't place all military eggs in one basket. In his mind, he could turn air power on and off like a water tap, and if this did not succeed, he could follow with ground and sea power. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and some top civil advisers assured that, if necessary, American military might could "win" the war in Vietnam—it was a matter of application. These were essentially the same voices that had tried to persuade President Kennedy to fight a war in Laos. In 1961, they failed. In 1965, they succeeded.

Their rationale is of interest, first, because as bombing began and failed, it changed; second, because the Nixon administration brought it back to life. Maxwell Taylor early wrote:

> . . . by February, 1965, it had become perfectly apparent that we must strike at this external base [North Vietnam] and do so for three reasons . . . to let the people of South Vietnam feel that for the first time, after eleven years of bitter warfare, they were striking back against the source of all their troubles [!] . . . to utilize our superiority in the air to strike military targets which, if destroyed, would have the effect of restraining or making more difficult the infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam into South Vietnam . . . to remind the leadership in Hanoi, the men who were directing this war in the South, that little by little through the progressive, restrained application of force by bombing, they would pay an ever-increasing price for a continuation of their aggression in the South. In other words, we were following the basic military principle applicable to all wars—that the objective of military action is the will of the enemy—in the conviction that, by the use of our air power, we could operate on that will and eventually create in the minds of the leadership of Hanoi a picture of the inevitability of defeat and the realization of the prohibitive cost of continued aggression. . . .[8]

7. Gavin (*Crisis Now*), *supra.*
8. Maxwell Taylor (*Responsibility and Response*), *supra.*

Some hawks went even further. Admiral Sharp wrote in 1969 that the secret to "winning" the war in Vietnam was relatively simple: ". . . All that we had to do to win was to use our existing air power—properly."[9] Sharp, as well as members of the JCS and other hawks, argued from the beginning for the Pentagon's Option B: ". . . fast full squeeze" with "hot-blood actions" (see Chapters 80 and 81). He and his "colleagues in the field" wanted ". . . to bring the economy of North Vietnam to a halt," naturally by bombing. Parroting Rostow's earlier thesis, Sharp argued that ". . . the primary purpose of the air campaign against North Vietnam should have been to disrupt the enemy's economy and thus destroy his ability to wage war." Sharp wanted ". . . a sustained, maximum-effort attack on all of the enemy's war-supporting industries, transportation facilities, military complexes, petroleum-storage depots . . ."; he wanted Haiphong Harbor mined and the port closed. Although he understood that ". . . the Joint Chiefs of Staff supported my position 100 percent," most of his requests were denied by Secretary of Defense McNamara, who ". . . arbitrarily and consistently discarded the advice of his military advisers."

About all the reader can say is thank God he did, for Sharp goes on:

> . . . It may well be that our civilian leadership believed that to use our military tools properly, to eliminate the enemy's ability to make war would have been to risk a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. Personally, I believe the risk was minimal; in any case, a nation which is not willing to take calculated risks to achieve its objectives should never go to war in the first place. Further, I believe that once a political decision is made to commit American troops to battle, we are morally obliged to use our military power in such a way as to end the fighting as quickly as possible.[10]

If Taylor and other advisers did not go as far as Rostow, Sharp, and the JCS, they nonetheless erred, not only in estimating strategic effects of air power but also in estimating tactical effects of air power in guerrilla warfare. It is a great pity that these influential experts had never studied such recent insurgencies as those in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaya, Cyprus, and French Indochina, where interdiction air raids played about as effective a role in the ground action as Drake's naval raids on the Spanish Main played in England's war against Spain. In the same work quoted above, Taylor pointed to

> . . . the inability of the enemy to maintain and keep in action an indefinite number of men supported only by a clandestine logistic system. Their logistic problem increases if we continue to conduct air attacks against their lines of supply. It grows if, by the use of our mobile offensive capability, our heliborne forces keep attacking the main forces of the Vietcong, requiring them to defend themselves, to consume ammunition and supplies, and to suffer

9. Sharp, op. cit.
10. Ibid.; see also Johnson (*The Vantage Point*), *supra*.

heavy casualties. Under such pressures, they probably cannot maintain much larger forces than they have now.[11]

Taylor was seeing the enemy in Taylor's terms: He failed to realize that PAVN had not attained Western military sophistication and that its logistic demands were not to be compared with American demands. Tactical bombing against conventional armies brings meager rewards—against quasi-guerrilla armies, it brings virtually no rewards. American intelligence estimated that the *entire* Viet Cong needed twelve tons of outside supply per day[12] (versus five hundred tons daily needed to support operations by the 1st Cavalry [Airmobile] Division alone!) to carry on. How are you going to interdict effectively such a meager supply requirement?

President Johnson's decision in 1965, then, ignored two primary lessons concerning air power furnished by the past. The first was that chances were virtually nil of bending Hanoi's will to the extent of bringing a cringing North Vietnam Government to the conference table. Unless, it should be added, atomic bombs were employed—but this was unacceptable from both moral and practical viewpoints, and the President knew this.

The second was that aerial interdiction could impede but not stop passage of men and supplies from North to South. Neither could it noticeably halt production in North Vietnam, because the industrial complex essential to furnishing targets to bombers did not exist. To halt cottage production meant eliminating cottages, a lengthy, repugnant, and expensive task, as we learned in the strategic-bombing effort against Japan in World War II. To stop arms and equipment from entering North Vietnam meant risking war by interdicting Chinese and Soviet supply lines, and since the Administration wished to avoid war with either nation, this meant that supply lines would remain open.

These lessons proved valid.

Almost everything that history either had suggested or confirmed about aerial bombing was demonstrated in North Vietnam and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail by end of 1967.

The first outstanding fact was expense in American lives and machines. Although North Vietnam possessed neither an air force nor early-warning systems nor sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons, in response to early American raids the Soviets and Chinese vied in supplying anti-aircraft guns and missiles. Soviet SAM missile sites soon appeared around priority objectives. As early as 1966, American pilots were reporting that North Vietnam bridges were protected by ". . . an awe-

11. Maxwell Taylor (*Responsibility and Response*), *supra.*

12. Browne, op. cit.; see also McNamara's analysis, *The Pentagon Papers, supra* (pp. 550–51 and 577–85); Hoopes, op. cit.; Weller, op. cit.

some curtain of exploding steel,"[13] words similar to those used by American pilots flying over Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Hundreds of aircraft were shot down; pilots and crews were killed; pilots and crews were to languish in North Vietnamese prison camps.

The second fact was operational cost compared to results obtained. It is difficult even for a student of warfare to comprehend the vastness of the American air effort. By end of 1967, American airplanes—air force, navy, and marine—had dropped more bombs on Vietnam than the allied total expended on Germany in World War II. We must add to this hundreds of thousands of rockets and machine-gun bullets and tons of napalm. Initial operational costs shot upward and continued to rise, not a matter of millions of dollars, but of billions, which does not include more billions of indirect cost.

The third fact was international opprobrium wrought by bombings. In Ramsey Clark's words,

> . . . Few people in Asia, Africa or Latin America can identify sympathetically with well-fed representatives of a rich society journeying ten thousand miles to pilot multimillion dollar B-52s and drop death and destruction on underfed Indochinese in miserable villages or along jungle trails.[14]

In early 1966, George Kennan warned the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that strategic bombing would jeopardize American relationships with Japan and other nations:

> . . . Our motives are widely misinterpreted, and the spectacle . . . of Americans inflicting grievous injury on the lives of a poor and helpless people, and particularly a people of different race and color, no matter how warranted by military necessity or by the excesses of the adversary our operations may seem to us to be or may genuinely be, produces reactions among millions of people throughout the world profoundly detrimental to the image we would like them to hold of this country.[15]

International voices soon confirmed the validity of this warning. In Charles de Gaulle's words, ". . . We find it totally detestable that a small country should be bombed by a very big one." Arthur Schlesinger has concluded that bombings have brought

> . . . the rise of a new form of anti-Americanism, emotional rather than ideological, leading toward a serious estrangement between Europe and America. . . . When we began to bomb the oil deposits, James Reston wrote, "There is now not a single major nation in the world that supports Mr. Johnson's latest adventure in Hanoi and Haiphong. . . ."[16]

13. Harvey, op. cit.
14. Ramsey Clark, "On Violence, Peace and the Rule of Law," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1970.
15. U. S. Senate (*The Vietnam Hearings*), *supra*.
16. Schlesinger (*Bitter*), *supra*.

Other difficulties, unique to Vietnam, also existed. Townsend Hoopes, who was Assistant Secretary of the Air Force in 1967, later listed ". . . four adverse and intractable factors" when it came to bombing effectiveness in the North. One was relatively small supply needs of the North, both for its own purposes and to pursue war in the South. Another was the North's ability to keep going under heavy bombardment. The third was poor weather for most of the year: From late September to early May, ". . . visual bombing attacks were possible on the average of only five days per month, and were frequently precluded for from two to three weeks at a time." This meant not only diminution of attacks, but, the fourth factor, inaccurate bombing: ". . . in bad weather the bombs fell, on the average, between 1,500 and 1,800 feet from the target center." Due to the military policy of "massive retaliation" during the Eisenhower era, ". . . bombing accuracies had improved hardly at all in the period between Korea and Vietnam."[17]

What was the net accomplishment?

Very little, except once again to disprove the Douhet theory and confirm Sir Robert Thompson's later suggestion that ". . . the bombing of the North was probably the greatest of the strategic errors of the war."[18] In fairness to Douhet, and as any number of American air force officers and other hawks have repeatedly stated, the American effort was selective (in theory, anyway) and not a saturation-bombing program. At President Johnson's insistence, planes bombed and strafed "military" targets only. Major targets at first consisted of forward supply depots and installations and of "choke points," for example key bridges or railroad yards or warehouses and oil depots. As these were neutralized or destroyed, air intelligence officers furnished secondary targets, usually smaller depots and railheads. Planes flying "armed reconnaissance" also fired on targets of opportunity, such as convoys and trains, repair parties, occasional troop units; if nothing else, planes dropped bomb loads on roads and rail lines.

As bombs and bullets killed more bridges and culverts and roads, then exploded on factories and refineries, then crept around and into Hanoi and killed and wounded thousands of civilians, and as General Curtis LeMay spoke of bombing the North Vietnamese back to the stone age—the moral and material fallacies were becoming more apparent. Harrison Salisbury, veteran correspondent of the New York *Times,* visited Hanoi in December 1966 and January 1967. He found the city in a state of defense, with thousands of individual concrete shelters ". . . spaced three or four feet apart along every boulevard and street

17. Hoopes, op. cit.
18. RUSI Seminar, *supra.*

in the city, round dark cavities with concrete lids."[19] Rather than shocked and frightened, the people struck him as determined:

> . . . I seldom talked with any North Vietnamese without some reference coming into the conversation of the people's preparedness to fight ten, fifteen, even twenty years in order to achieve victory. . . . I began to realize that this was a national psychology. It might have been inspired by the regime, but it certainly was entirely natural. And, I believed, it suited the North Vietnamese temperament. . . .

The regime had little trouble in exploiting this feeling into strength. Mr. Salisbury was shown what could hardly have been a staged scene: the wreck of the Vandien truck park, on the outskirts of Hanoi,

> . . . listed as one of the major targets of our December 13 [1966] attack. It was not a formidable target when I viewed it from Route Nationale No. 1 —just a half-dozen loading sheds, blasted by American bombs. But in attacking these the bombers had wrecked what was called the Polish Friendship School, probably half a mile distant on the other side of the highway. . . . I could accept the bombing of the school as an accident. But I was not surprised to find that the North Vietnamese thought it was deliberate. . . .

The "major" target, incidentally, contained twelve or fourteen broken-down buses and trucks. As Salisbury rhetorically asked: ". . . For this kind of target was it worth jeopardizing $2-million planes and the precious lives of American pilots?"

The North Vietnamese Government constantly exploited, from the propaganda standpoint, other bombing mistakes, such as destruction of Namdinh village in an attempt to neutralize its rail yards. Even without mistakes, the government would have had little difficulty in exploiting the people's hatred. Fixed installations were few in North Vietnam; they had been built by personal sacrifice, and the people could hardly refrain from hating that which destroyed them. The government went so far as to arm factory workers and some citizens in Hanoi with ordinary rifles, which they fired at attacking planes. David Schoenbrun, the respected CBS correspondent, later confirmed Salisbury's findings:

> . . . Anyone who drives down Mandarin Road, as this correspondent did, learns how cruelly futile American bombing has been, for it has only wrought physical destructions and failed utterly to accomplish any military or psychological purpose.
>
> It has filled people with hatred and redoubled their determination to fight on harder than ever.[20]

19. Harrison E. Salisbury, *Behind the Lines—Hanoi* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); see also David Schoenbrun, "Journey to North Vietnam," *The Saturday Evening Post,* March 1968; see also David Schoenbrun, *Vietnam* (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

20. Quoted in Gavin (*Crisis Now*), *supra.*

A Communist diplomat in Hanoi told Salisbury: ". . . I think something like this happened in England . . . in the days when the German Air Force attacked the British. As a Communist I have been interested to see the ideological propaganda gradually being replaced by national patriotic appeal. Maybe you remember something like this in the Soviet Union during the critical days of the German attack."[21]

Bombings also lent strength to a burgeoning youth cult who already preached hatred of the United States. Salisbury wrote of a hero cult that centered on Nguyen Van Troy, a Saigon teen-ager executed for attempting to assassinate Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1965. In a neighborhood theater in Hanoi, he witnessed

> . . . a kind of variety hall performance, songs, dances and skits. Of the fourteen acts twelve were devoted to epics of bravery. In one a group of ferrymen pulled their craft across a river in the face of fierce attack by United States planes. Several were killed, but they shot down an American aircraft. In a dance number a Red Cross nurse whose husband had been killed tore from her head the traditional Vietnamese white mourning veil and used it to bind up the wounds of an antiaircraft gunner. In another a Vietcong detachment stormed an American strongpoint and captured it despite terrible losses. . . .
>
> The theme of the songs and the ballets was patriotism. The portraits of heroism were simple and humorless. The audience, judging by the intense and serious expressions I saw on the faces around me, took the tableaux with complete literalness. They lived the little sketches of war—their war. These were their heroes. They saw nothing naive or made-up about these schoolboy vignettes. They themselves were mostly schoolboys. North Vietnam was a very young country. This, in large measure, was a teen-age war. I was impressed by the fact that again and again the same theme was repeated—that of fighting back against the American bombers, of shooting down American aircraft. . . .

If the reader thinks this is patriotic schmaltz, he is correct. He should remember, however, that Salisbury's description was not far removed from the American scene created by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor: a scene dominated by emotion, by the song "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," by Colin Kelly allegedly dropping bombs down the smokestack of a Japanese cruiser—by a national reaction that jammed recruiting centers in every state of the union. It is perhaps superfluous to add that the scene described by Salisbury did not discourage recruitment into the North Vietnamese army.

Not only did Hanoi's will survive bombing, but substantial material gains failed to result. As expert and experienced voices soon pointed out, interdiction was not materially influencing the flow of men and supply to the South. A bomb can hit a train or a truck only with difficulty;

21. Salisbury, op. cit.

it can rarely hit a coolie pushing a loaded bicycle along a narrow jungle trail. A bomb can interdict a bridge, which a mass labor force can either repair, replace, or bypass in a night. A bomb can interdict roads and slow traffic. But, as the French learned, mass labor can repair roads quickly; supply will get through and so will small guerrilla forces marching at night or under jungle cover to evade eyes flying overhead.

If air strategists such as Taylor, LeMay, Sharp, and Wheeler had studied Harrison Salisbury's report, they might have had second thoughts. Salisbury personally saw what past experience and present photographic reconnaissance already had demonstrated: that bombs had closed neither roads nor railroads to traffic:

. . . We had certainly destroyed sections of the railroad time and again. I could see bridges that had been blasted beyond repair. I bumped over stretches of highway that had been relaid several times. Yet traffic was moving. It was moving in very large quantities. And this, I quickly learned, was not just because a Christmas truce was on. . . . Never, so far as I could learn, had it been seriously impeded. Difficulties, yes. Barriers, no.

Mr. Salisbury attributed this to ". . . a massive investment of manpower, labor and matériel and a careful utilization of national resources." This was Korea all over again: Bombed roads offered only slight repair problems. Bridges were more difficult, but could be replaced by pontoons:

. . . They were made by lashing together the required number of shallow flat-bottomed wooden canal boats. . . . A surface of cut bamboo poles was laid across them, without even being lashed or nailed in many cases. Or, if available, a surface of bamboo planks. The trucks lumbered over the pontoons with a roar as their wheels hit the loose poles, but the pontoons seemed sturdy enough to bear the heavy traffic. In most cases where a permanent bridge was knocked out, two pontoons were pressed into service—one to handle traffic moving south, the other to accommodate the empty trucks returning north.

Foreigners who had watched the pontoons being put into place said this seldom took more than a couple of hours. The boats and bamboo poles were kept available at every bridge, the expectation being that sooner or later the bridge would be knocked out.

Railroad bridges provided the most difficult repair or replacement problem:

. . . But here, too, native ingenuity was called into play. If the rail line was blocked by destruction of a bridge or trackage, bicycle brigades were called up. Five hundred men and women and their bicycles would be sent to the scene of the break. They would unload the stalled freight train, putting the cargo on the bikes. Each bicycle would handle a sixty-pound load, balanced across the frame with a bar. The bicycles would be wheeled, not

ridden, over a pontoon bridge, and on the other side of the break a second train would be drawn up. The cargo would be reloaded and moved on south.

So much effort went to keeping the railroads functioning that Mr. Salisbury wondered why the North Vietnamese did not abandon it in favor of roads:

. . . The answer was not readily forthcoming. It was obvious that the North Vietnamese took enormous pride in keeping the railroad going. It was a symbol of their ability to overcome the enormous technological advantage of the Americans. . . .

A more practical consideration also came into play: North Vietnam produced its own coal, but gasoline and oil to feed motor vehicles had to be imported.

A further factor also helped to explain the Vietnamese success. The logistic load necessary to keep the war going in the South was nowhere near what Saigon or Washington estimated. American planners, accustomed to logistic "tails" of forty thousand men per seventeen thousand man division, of POL (petroleum-oil-lubricant) requirements measured in thousands of tons did not envisage the simplicity of the enemy's supply system. Once American planes had blown up oil storage tanks around Haiphong and Hanoi, that should have ended the flow of trucks to the South. Instead, the enemy dispersed fifty-five-gallon drums at various supply points. Bombing could not eliminate these depots; they slowed, but they did not stop, traffic. Mr. Salisbury noticed this dispersal technique:

. . . I saw crates and bits of machinery, large weapons cases, huge boxes which contained, I guessed, shells and munitions, hardware of the most diverse sort, simply staked out in fields, let down beside rural roads, cluttering paths that led to rice paddies—indeed, in all the time I rode about the countryside I think I was never more than two or three minutes out of sight of some kind of supplies and equipment which had come to rest in the most unlikely setting.[22]

Even by the time of Mr. Salisbury's visit, the maximum effect of American bombing had been achieved, and it was little enough. It had not stopped Chinese and Soviet supplies from entering Vietnam, and it had slowed, but in no instance stopped, those supplies from going south. Escalation of the air war and a change of emphasis from North to South and then back again—from the Hanoi area to the Laotian border back to Hanoi—resulted in few substantial accomplishments, with almost no effect on the war in the South. The greatest accomplishment of the air war in the North lay in the reconnaissance field: On occasion, infrared radar cameras spotted troop build-ups such as that north of

22. Ibid.

the Demilitarized Zone in the spring of 1967, and resulted in profitable bombing operations. But such isolated instances cannot alter the program's destructive failure.

Like a medicine that failed to cure a disease, bombing of the North resulted in unpleasant side effects. An important one was propaganda value derived by Hanoi. Some of the world detected and did not like the paternalism evident in the President's words: You stop fighting in the South, North Vietnam, or Daddy will spank. When Daddy did spank, some of the world, and a great portion of the underdeveloped world, identified with the child. Unfortunately, selective bombing did not prevent civil casualties, which Hanoi, from the beginning, exploited internationally. North Vietnam had no air force and at first only primitive air defenses to counter American planes, and to some, the United States appeared as an aggressive bully, a posture exploited by Communist propaganda everywhere.

Another side effect concerned Hanoi's relations with Moscow and Peking. In late 1964 and early 1965, the U.S.S.R. cautiously favored another Geneva conference, a notion rejected by Peking, which was posing as friendly protector to Hanoi. In February 1965, Premier Kosygin made an important bid to replace Chinese influence in the North Vietnamese capital. He led a strong delegation to Hanoi, where he found some support for settlement by negotiation—despite American air attacks, which Washington hastily explained were taken in "retaliation" for an NLF attack against Pleiku. The situation was later analyzed by a particularly astute observer, Professor Donald Zagoria:

> . . . It thus appears that as of early 1965, Moscow was anxious to bring about negotiations, Peking was trying to forestall them, and the Hanoi leadership was somewhere in the middle—ready to listen to American proposals, but internally divided on whether to continue applying military pressure on the south or to negotiate.[23]

The March bombings, followed by a massive commitment of American troops, placed Hanoi moderates in an impossible position and thus altered the diplomacy of the U.S.S.R. As Zagoria wrote, ". . . Hanoi's position began to harden and the Russians became increasingly sensitive to Chinese criticism that they were anxious to make a deal with the United States to end the war on terms disadvantageous to Hanoi." The Soviet Union, in other words, had to react to the new set of rules imposed by the American Government, and so did China. Where, formerly, aid to Hanoi was spasmodic and never particularly generous, now it became a token in the Sino-Soviet conflict—to Hanoi's profit. And along with that, Moscow ditched any hope for a negotiated settlement, or, as Zagoria wrote, ". . . the Russians moved to the diplomatic sidelines, letting initiatives pass to North Vietnam and the NLF."

23. Zagoria (*Vietnam Triangle*), *supra*.

But that was only one facet of this complicated situation. By spring of 1965, the rift between Peking and Moscow had grown very wide. Officials in both capitals displayed a loquacious virulence that has few parallels in historical non-shooting situations. American diplomacy had played almost no part in developing this rift. So far as the West was concerned, it came as a bonus from the historical process; it was the greatest boon to the West since Tito's defection, in 1947, and was far more momentous, and it should have been carefully nurtured and exploited by American diplomacy. As we have seen, the Kennedy administration seemed surprisingly unaware of the developing rift. The Johnson administration seemed almost bewildered by it. Far from appreciating its importance, Johnson continued with the one policy that could have led to rapprochement between the two titans. Khrushchev's departure from the Soviet Government, coupled with the March bombings, touched off a political quarrel in Peking, where influential members of the army argued for a common front with the U.S.S.R. to resist American aggression. The quarrel exploded into civil war, which Mao Tse-tung won only with the greatest difficulty. Had he lost—and the issue may not yet be decided—a very grave shift in the present balance of power might well have occurred, with difficult consequences for the West.

All this was bad enough, but, whatever the attitude of the Soviet Union and China, Hanoi could not have remained complacent in response. Whether Ho Chi Minh and his advisers wanted the North to participate more actively in the South is not known. We do know that, at the time (and later), the Hanoi power group contained hawks and doves, just as did the NLF in the South. This was only natural: The war in the South had created definite stresses in the North, and there were those who wished to terminate it and those who wished to escalate it and those who wished to pursue a middle course. By reducing and even eliminating these intraparty stresses, American bombings gave Hanoi hawks virtually a free hand to escalate the action further.

Chapter 90

The summing up (III): the war on the ground • Westmoreland's strategy • Westmoreland, Walt, and the enemy • The helicopter • Khe Sanh • The tactical challenge • Never the twain shall meet • King An Ya: ". . . The peasant despises nothing more than a fool" • The school solution • CAP: Belisarius versus Narses

THE STRATEGY CHOSEN to fight the war in South Vietnam was another major reason for President Johnson's failure. It was not altogether his fault: President Kennedy had yielded to military control in Vietnam, and Johnson also supposed he could trust the knowledge and judgment of such responsible military advisers as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, theater commanders, and special advisers such as Maxwell Taylor.

This was a mistake.

A long time ago, Clausewitz noted that ". . . the most important single judgment a political or military leader can make is to forecast correctly the nature of war upon which the nation is to embark. On this everything else depends." Johnson's military advisers failed to forecast correctly the nature of this war; Johnson held neither knowledge nor experience to question their judgment, and he lacked inclination to consult those who could have helped him. Once he had erred, first by bombing the North, second by committing a large number of conventional American troop units, he compounded error by permitting further escalation. It would have taken a much more intelligent and courageous man

to withstand surrounding pressures and do otherwise. He did otherwise only when a greater pressure—American public opinion—forced him to it.

The United States armed forces were relatively well organized for either nuclear or non-nuclear war when they were committed in strength to Vietnam, in spring of 1965. Unfortunately, they were neither well organized, properly equipped, nor adequately trained to cope with insurgency warfare.

We have already discussed Westmoreland's attrition strategy—a dependence on superior U.S. military manpower, firepower, and mobility to wear down and finally force the enemy from the war. In the July 1968 issue of *Army Quarterly,* a retired American army lieutenant colonel, J. J. Haggerty, undertook to explain this strategy to a British audience. Although grammatically and stylistically deficient, his words are of interest in that they reflect a wide stratum of belief within the army and indeed the American military establishment. Once Westmoreland landed his troops and tidied up logistics, Haggerty explained, he

> . . . planned to use the United States superiority in mobility and firepower to strike the enemy concentrations with a spoiling attack. The latter would keep the enemy off balance and gradually wear him down to the point of exhaustion and desperation.
>
> Upon completion of the build-up, United States ground forces, in conjunction with air and naval strikes, would launch sustained offensives directed against the enemy and enemy bases. War is extremely expensive and luckily the United States is wealthy enough to bear the cost of a large-scale continued pressure against the Viet Cong. The constant harassment by United States and South Vietnamese forces is seriously hurting the North Vietnamese conventional forces and is impairing their logistical system. It is hoped that if such tactics were successful the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong would be forced from the populated fertile areas into the mountains. If this were the case, the enemy would be denied food, intelligence and recruits without which the resistance movement would wither and die. The people are a flexible lot, and once the yoke of Viet Cong terror control is lifted from their necks, and once they believe the Government can protect them, they will quickly sever their connections with the hated assassins.
>
> The ever-present Allied pounding from ground, sea and air, the loss of the support of the civilian population, the guerrillas suffering more and more casualties, and the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong lack of noticeable victories—all will take their toll of the fighting heart. Morale will suffer horribly and will dip markedly and this will open the door to greater defections and surrenders. The pages of military history are strewn with examples of once proud military units crumbling under continual defeats and retreats.[1]

1. J. J. Haggerty, "South Vietnam and the Munich Crossroad," *Army Quarterly,* July 1968.

Westmoreland's conventional strategy, one with which the JCS and Johnson's military advisers concurred, was designed to gain a military decision, and it must be faulted on several counts.

It was a quantitative, as opposed to a qualitative, or selective, strategy: an open-ended strategy in a challenge that called for task-force strategy. If so many men and machines could not "win," its proponents argued, more men and machines could "win." Writing in the *Marine Corps Gazette,* in March 1966, Colonel Norman Stanford, ". . . a Japanese and French linguist who has served ten years in Asia in a variety of military and diplomatic billets," argued that the recent French concept of pacification in Indochina was a sound idea:

> . . . the French effort, a gallant one with some 75,000 French Union troops killed in action (US KIA in Korea were about 29,000), failed not because of a faulty concept but because insufficient personnel and equipment were available to accomplish the combined combat/pacification mission.[2]

This was the Hindenburg-Ludendorff argument of post-World War I. Instead of admitting to errors of judgment, to mistaken political, strategic, and tactical concepts, the German commanders sought to blame military defeat on civil failure: the stab-in-the-back thesis.

This has happened before in history where commanders have erred in judgment, a major failure that generally is explained by ignorance of and resultant contempt for an enemy. Did Westmoreland and the JCS and other hawks really expect Hanoi to sit quietly by and allow American forces to defeat the Viet Cong in the South? If they did, they were as short-sighted as both the Romans and the French in Spain. If they did not, then they wittingly deluded the American people—a form of military blackmail practiced on a lesser scale by Gordon of Khartoum and Lyautey of Morocco.

In 1965, American ground hawks were as arrogant as air hawks. Roswell Gilpatric, for example, noted in May of that year that ". . . U.S. military power is greater, in a higher state of readiness, and better disposed than it ever has been on the eve of a possible major conflict."[3] Considering size and weight of the American military machine, commanders probably felt much as Roman commanders had felt when setting out to subdue recalcitrant Iberian tribes, or as French commanders felt two thousand years later when leading armies into Spain. Our command confidence was as misplaced. It is a great pity that our officers and officials had not analyzed these and other irregular campaigns, that they had not heeded warnings such as that delivered by Jomini:

> . . . All the gold of Mexico could not have procured reliable information for the French [in Spain]; what was given was but a lure to make them fall more readily into snares.

2. Stanford, op. cit.
3. Gilpatric, op. cit.

No army, however disciplined, can contend successfully against such a system applied to a great nation, unless it be strong enough to hold all the essential points of the country, cover its communications, and at the same time furnish an active force sufficient to beat the enemy wherever he may present himself. If this enemy has a regular army of respectable size to be a nucleus around which to rally the people, what force will be sufficient to be superior everywhere, and to assure the safety of the long lines of communication against numerous bodies?

The Peninsular War should be carefully studied, to learn all the obstacles which a general and his brave troops may encounter in the occupation or conquest of a country whose people are all in arms. . . .[4]

American command ignorance was not justified in Vietnam. The Viet Cong repeatedly had demonstrated that they could fight and fight well. They had also shown tactical flexibility. When American armored personnel carriers and helicopters gained the upper hand in spring and summer of 1962, the enemy folded fighting wings until they adjusted to new instruments of war. In 1963, the Viet Cong began gaining tactical ascendancy to the extent that, in 1964, Hanoi intervened more openly and the third stage of the insurgency commenced.

Hanoi's failure to panic when American bombs started dropping in the North was surely significant, as was Vo Nguyen Giap's statement, in June 1965, that the Viet Cong would fight ". . . only to the point that the enemy could be brought to the conference table and there defeated"—which was the position of the Viet Minh vis-à-vis France in 1954.[5] The Viet Cong offensive in summer of 1965 added weight to Giap's words, as did the first appearance in strength of North Vietnamese (PAVN) regiments. When the American build-up blunted the enemy effort—essentially a VC effort—still another cautionary voice sounded from the enemy camp. This was Mao's top general, Lin Piao, who, in September 1965, wrote a lengthy and somewhat ambiguous article on liberation wars. If some persons interpreted his words as warning to Hanoi not to expect active Chinese involvement in Vietnam, he nonetheless made it clear that Hanoi held the option of changing strategy and fighting a protracted war.[6]

Such was the initial success of American arms in the South that this thought seemingly did not intrude itself into American strategic thinking. The military bias of American strategy effectively shielded the political bias of enemy strategy. Westmoreland and other military leaders, and civilians as well, could not but see the war in conventional terms despite its guerrilla trappings. They consistently underestimated the enemy's military potential. Westmoreland believed that the enemy was unimaginative and inflexible. In November 1966, he was asked: "What are the

4. Jomini, op. cit.
5. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*
6. Zagoria (*The Viet Nam Triangle*), *supra.*

chances of the Viet Cong main-force units reverting to strictly guerrilla warfare?" He made this incredible reply:

. . . Of course, if the enemy did this, he would be going contrary to his doctrine. He has rigidly followed Mao Tse-tung's three-phase doctrine for Communist insurgency warfare. Under this doctrine, phase one provides the political structure, phase two the guerrilla force, and phase three large, conventional-type formations that can fight open warfare. If he moved back to phase two, it would be admitting defeat. And I think this would be hard on the morale of the leadership and the troops.[7]

Westmoreland's words suggest that he had never studied either Mao Tse-tung's writings (see Chapter 27, Volume I) or Giap's campaigns against the French (see Chapters 52–56 and 62–63). His confusion was matched only by the first marine commander in Vietnam, Lieutenant General Lewis Walt, who, according to the New York *Times,* told newsmen in Washington, in November 1970,

. . . that when we went to Vietnam in the summer of 1965, he did not understand that this was primarily a guerrilla war. Like many officers who were over-optimistic in the early years of the war, he thought in terms of World War II and the Korean War, when the enemy was easy to identify.

To illustrate what he termed his naiveté, he said he had once interviewed a man in a Vietnamese village who claimed to be the village chief and who gave him an optimistic report. Later he felt a tug at his pocket and found that a village woman had slipped a note into his pocket warning him that he had been talking to the regional chief of the Vietcong.[8]

Walt further expressed his confusion in his book *Strange War, Strange Strategy,* and explained it in these extraordinary words:

. . . Before our involvement in Vietnam we knew practically nothing of its people. As late as 1958 there was no history of them printed in the English language. There are only two or three today, none widely read.[9]

If the reader will turn to my bibliography (Volume I), which does not include extensive intelligence studies of Indochina available to the author in the early 1950s (and surely to General Walt), he will note that the general errs. As for Walt's stigmatization of Giap as an inept commander (in the same book), this is a matter of criteria. One thinks of Foch walking in his garden at critical times in World War I and asking himself, "De quoi s'agit-il?"—What is the problem? One suggests that Giap held a rather more fundamental grasp of the problem than either Walt, Westmoreland—or the JCS.

Having committed the military crime of underrating the opponent,

7. *U. S. News and World Report,* November 28, 1966.
8. New York *Times,* Washington, November 18, 1970.
9. Walt (*Strange War, Strange Strategy*), *supra.*

our military leaders fell victim to tactical panaceas occasioned by technology. Early ground actions caused a good many commanders, not all, to believe that they had found the key to fighting insurgency warfare. The key was the helicopter, which furnished mobility essential to locating the enemy and bringing superior firepower to bear on him. So impressed was Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara with early operations of the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division, that he said the helicopter marked ". . . the beginning of a new era in land warfare."

But dissident voices also spoke. As early as February 1966, Sir Robert Thompson, a veteran counterinsurgency campaigner, complained of American misuse of helicopters in general, pointing out that they should primarily support clear-and-hold operations rather than chase ". . . Viet Cong guerrilla units around the jungle." Thompson astutely observed that extensive availability of helicopters ". . . has exaggerated two great weaknesses of the American character in counter-insurgency—impatience and aggressiveness."[10] The Australian army's manual on counter-revolutionary warfare warned: ". . . Any tendency to do something rather than nothing must be avoided if the something involves precipitate military action."[11]

What American commanders failed to realize was what the British learned in Borneo: that the helicopter is another form of transport and cannot replace tactical necessities including need for intelligence. As General Sir Walter Walker later explained:

> . . . Our intelligence was such that we always knew when the Indonesians were about to attack across the frontier. The problem was to get troops to positions to ambush them, or to attack them before they got back to their side of the frontier. The only way in which we could get troops there in time was by helicopter. If we had used the helicopters as cavalry we would never have succeeded in intercepting them, because we would have lost surprise. So we used helicopters in the same way as we would use other means of mobility to close the gap between us and the enemy, and to land troops quietly so that no one knew where they were. Having done so, the troops got out and searched for and trapped the enemy. When they found them they ambushed them or attacked them. So they were used as a method of preventing the enemy from escaping to their safe sanctuary across the frontier. . . . We did not use our helicopters to get our troops on to the objective, but to close the distance between us and the enemy.[12]

Other shortcomings in American tactics soon appeared. Increased mobility proved expensive. The army's airmobile concept, while sacrificing armor, armored personnel carriers, and firepower heavier than the

10. Robert Thompson, "Feet on the Ground," *Statist*, February 4, 1966.
11. W. S. Tee, "Solutions in Counter-Insurgency Operations," *Army Quarterly*, October 1967.
12. RUSI Seminar, *supra;* see also Walter Walker, "How Borneo Was Born," *The Round Table*, January 1969.

105-mm. howitzer, nevertheless demanded hefty logistic support—". . . as much as 500 tons per day if the entire division is in combat" —and could be met by air transport delivery only at virtually prohibitive cost.[13] Thus land communications, in this case from the coast to An Khe, had to be kept open—a supporting operation that neither broke up guerrilla units nor brought relief to peasants, yet furnished targets to guerrillas. The security requirement of the base camp, a huge area essential to house and feed the helicopters, also proved onerous, as did security requirements of outlying bases, permanent or temporary. If a hundred thousand troops were needed to maintain twenty thousand combat troops, then fifteen thousand combat troops were needed to produce five thousand troops actively pursuing the enemy.

Further, the initial impact of the helicopter did not last long. Guerrillas heard and recognized helicopters, which meant that the user often forfeited tactical surprise. Donald Duncan, a Special Forces soldier, later wrote of this period:

> . . . American pilots, having never worked with our [Special Forces] teams, had no concept of what it was like to be on the ground. They had a propensity for arguing when our directions conflicted with the book. Working close in, they like to use gun ship escorts—fine for them but lousy for us. The VC know the pattern of U.S. choppers: a "slick ship" escorted by gun ships means a landing, so they immediately take position on likely LZs [landing zones]. . . .[14]

Although commanders, on occasion, used decoy techniques and low-level approaches, the deception nonetheless alerted the enemy that something was up. More often than not, helicopter operations left tactical initiative to the enemy: He slipped away before the machines landed, or he fired on machines and then slipped away, or he engaged landing parties and then slipped away. Sometimes American soldiers and marines killed, wounded, or captured him, but he also shot down a great many helicopters, ambushed a great number of ground units, and killed a great many soldiers and marines.

The increase in command communications offered by the helicopter also proved a mixed blessing. Properly exploited, it helped bring a new cohesion to the battlefield. But, as one disgruntled colonel told me, ". . . In a tactical environment where the company and battalion commanders should rule, the command helicopter often brought the brigade or division commander to the small unit tactical scene before either the company or battalion commander could arrive—the net result was to dissipate further the lower level commander's already tenuous operational control."

At the same time, American units wasted time, effort, and money

13. Weller, op. cit.
14. Donald Duncan, op. cit.

in blindly pursuing the enemy. Noise limitation combined with excellent enemy intelligence caused a veteran if disillusioned marine combat officer to claim that ". . . less than two percent of all U.S. offensive operations produce any contact whatsoever with the Viet-Cong."[15]

While this figure has been criticized as pessimistic and was raised in 1968, the contact percentage undeniably remained low. Time after time, giant sweeps, either by helicopter or ground operations or both, produced minimum dead or captured Viet Cong. Unfortunately, in a good many instances the operations resulted in civil deaths, which unduly influenced reported "body counts," and in village destruction, which continued to swell casualty and refugee lists.

Neither did blocking operations prosper. Units along Cambodian and Laotian borders expended great effort in blocking Viet Cong lines of communication only to find, as commanders had discovered throughout history, that they expended the bulk of their strength in static defense duties while the enemy made end runs around them. The United States could not furnish enough troops to seal off borders, and strength in one area meant weakness in another. If defense concentrated on a particular zone, the Viet Cong, unburdened by maintenance of large barrack areas and supply depots, ceased operations in favor of striking elsewhere.

Blocking actions in the north, in I Corps area (see map, p. 1187), proved no more decisive. Lacking intelligence, marines blundered into costly fire fights in and south of the DMZ, where they defended strong points such as Khe Sanh only at considerable effort and cost. The Khe Sanh defense, headlined for so long in American newspapers, has been hotly debated. General Westmoreland and Lieutenant General Lewis Walt, commanding III MAF, originally chose to defend Khe Sanh in autumn of 1966, during Operation Prairie, which utilized the airstrip in this inhospitable terrain. What Walt later called ". . . the crucial anchor of our defenses along the demilitarized zone,"[16] played an extremely minor tactical role—a reinforced company formed its defense—until spring of 1967, when it became the focus of battles for Hills 861 and 881, inconclusive actions broken off by the enemy. Quiet again reigned until late autumn of 1967, when garrison reinforcement began under Operation Scotland. Khe Sanh, from that time, was rarely out of the news until overshadowed by the Tet offensive; it then briefly reclaimed the spotlight until the enemy broke off "siege" operations, at end of March 1968.

General Walt subsequently called the siege of Khe Sanh the most important battle in the war.[17] As he explained to a *Reader's Digest* audience, but for the "holding" action at Khe Sanh, two North Vietnamese divisions would have been able to attack Hué during the Tet offensive.

15. Corson, op. cit.
16. Walt ("The Nature of the War in Vietnam"), *supra.*
17. Walt ("Khe Sanh—The Battle That Had to Be Won"), *supra.*

Walt's claim seems meaningless to this writer. At the time of the Khe Sanh build-up, no one in the American or South Vietnamese camp, with the possible exception of some newspaper correspondents, dreamed of a massive Tet offensive against cities and towns. This offensive did not depend on PAVN troops, whether in the Khe Sanh area or elsewhere: The enemy used only a few thousand of an available sixty thousand PAVN troops *already in* South Vietnam. What neither Walt nor Westmoreland nor their planners nor other hawks seemed to appreciate was Giap's momentum tactics: If a battle prospered, pursue it no matter the cost; if a battle did not prosper, take your losses and get out. (Giap had learned this the hard way while fighting the French.) Had the Tet offensive succeeded (assuming that Giap was calling the signals), had the South Vietnamese people risen, Giap had no less than four divisions immediately north of the DMZ that he could, and probably would have committed, along with a substantial troop reserve in South Vietnam. During the fighting at Khe Sanh, marines discovered a secret road *south* of Khe Sanh, which the enemy was using to infiltrate men from Laos. Giap could have contained the Khe Sanh garrison with far fewer troops than he used—according to President Johnson, he had withdrawn half of his force by March 9!

Khe Sanh was one more American effort in a chimerical series to create a battle of Dien Bien Phu, one that American firepower would "win." It was a confession of inadequate intelligence, but, worse, it bespoke a low estimate of Giap's tactical judgment. Despite Giap's having repeatedly adjusted to new tactical challenges since 1946 and repeatedly regained the initiative (which he generally lost only locally), we know that Walt and Westmoreland thought little of his ability.[18]

Did American military leaders really expect Giap to make an all-out assault on Khe Sanh in view of the limited gains of Tet and of overwhelming American supporting arms—a situation totally different from that at Dien Bien Phu? What was in it for Giap? Very little: If he overran the garrison, he stood a good chance of reversing the strong anti-war movement in the United States; in attempting to do so, he undoubtedly would have encountered tactical atomic bombs, which would have introduced a new and dangerous dimension to the war—as it was, American planes dropped over 100,000 tons of bombs around Khe Sanh, more ". . . than had been dropped on any other single target in the history of warfare, including the atomic drop on Hiroshima."[19]

American leaders could term Khe Sanh's defense a "victory," but the word was corrupt. One day, perhaps, we shall learn exactly what Giap had in mind. Evidence suggests that he was using Khe Sanh as a tactical convenience. In the best Sun Tzu and Mao Tse-tung tradition, he was

18. Walt (*Strange War, Strange Strategy*), *supra;* see also Giap (*Big Victory, Great Task*), *supra.* (In this work, General Giap discusses American tactics in detail.)

19. Hoopes, op. cit.

fighting indirect warfare: ". . . Cause an uproar in the east, strike in the west," as Mao had written, echoing Sun Tzu. Giap's encirclement of Khe Sanh not only drew marine units from screening northern cities, but it diverted allied attention during the Viet Cong build-up for the Tet offensive.

American claims of Khe Sanh's great strategic value are founded solely on wishful thinking. Khe Sanh was neither "blocking" nor "holding." It was a tactical excrescence and was recognized as such three months after the American "victory"; in July, marines evacuated the place, which, according to a marine division commander, Major General Ray Davis, was ". . . a yoke around my neck."[20] Despite heavy enemy casualties, Giap continued to hold the initiative in and around the DMZ and tie down thousands of marines and ARVN troops needed for counterinsurgency operations.[21]

Westmoreland's "spoiling" and "blocking" tactics may have unbalanced the enemy on occasion, but they did not gain the Americans the initiative. Moreover, as quantitative tactics, they contained the seeds of their own destruction. They called for combat troops that Westmoreland did not have and could not have so long as the American military machine yielded one combat soldier per ten soldiers.[22] They produced maximum casualties for results obtained. They proved incredibly expensive in supporting arms, and, in the end, they proved unacceptable to the American people, whose support was necessary if the war was to continue to escalate.

Why did Westmoreland use "spoiling" tactics, and why did the JCS condone them?

The first reason was ignorance both of irregular and counterinsurgency warfare. Attrition strategy and search-and-destroy tactics defied historical precedent. One has to search no farther than Marshal Lyautey's *tache d'huile* concept, which employed clear-and-hold tactics. Whether moving against an active or a potential enemy, the commander's strength limited his ambition. He had to move slowly, forcing him-

20. UPI, Saigon, July 5, 1968.

21. Neither did McNamara's fence solve anything. Fences, walls—barriers of all kinds—had been tried from the dawn of history, and most had been found wanting even in favorable terrain. The difficult terrain of the DMZ, ground hotly contested and often controlled by VC and PAVN units, ground interdicted by long-range artillery, made such a project initially impractical. Neither was sensor technology so advanced as scientists claimed. Finally, the enemy had never infiltrated through the DMZ to the extent reported, but, rather, through Laos by the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which it continued to use: See Edgar O'Ballance, "The Ho Chi Minh Trail," *Army Quarterly,* April 1967. In the event, McNamara's project was quietly dropped—after an expenditure of several million dollars.

22. *Newsweek,* July 5, 1971: An American army officer and veteran of the Vietnam War, Colonel Hackworth, pointed out that, although the American military force in Vietnam numbered 546,000, ". . . you never had more than 43,000 out in the boonies [boondocks] at one time."

self to build a "show-piece" community of such dimensions as to attract loyalty and support of people on the spot and the attention of peoples yet to be pacified. Successful application of the concept called for a slow and methodical approach—the will to resist encroachment into "asleep" areas until means became available to clear and hold them.

Contemporary insurgencies, which we have examined previously, emphasized the validity of Lyautey's pacification concept. American command failure to respect these historically proven lessons displayed itself in Indochina from 1954 onward. In the words of Colonel David Hackworth, an American army ". . . combat veteran of five years in Vietnam and the most decorated U.S. officer of the Indochinese war,

> . . . Westmoreland's over-all strategy was one of search and destroy. He didn't understand guerrilla warfare, in which the main tenet is protracted war. When the enemy sees an overwhelming force drop in on his battlefield, he's going to run away to fight another day. We were just a blind, clumsy, superstrong giant fighting a swift little midget that was nickel and diming us to death."[23]

Most of Westmoreland's contemporaries would probably have so erred—the inevitable result of "molding" American officers to staff and command norms as if they were some kind of human dough. It was an attempt to solve an unconventional tactical situation with conventional weapons and tactics, an attempt to make ordinary war out of extraordinary war. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Westmoreland, and various planning staffs did not and possibly could not understand that this was a war to be fought for the people rather than against a physical enemy. No matter that information was available to prove this a thousand times over—one had only to read Douglas Pike's *Viet Cong*—our people would not accept it. In contrast, in 1968 a senior North Vietnamese leader, Hoang Quoc Viet, was asked for the secret of revolutionary success in the South. A British observer, P. J. Honey, later quoted his answer in part:

> . . . In the first place, in order to conduct a successful revolution, you have got to involve the entire people. It is no use trying to run a revolution with the Communist Party alone. In order to involve the entire people you must devise a revolutionary program embodying objectives which will appeal to the entire people. This necessitates the division of the population into classes, the study of the interests of each class, and the building of a program from those which are common to all classes.
>
> The resulting program contains little if any Marxism/Leninism and you may not like this as a revolutionary communist, but you have to do it if you are to have any hope of success. This will be known as the "Minimum Program."

23. Ibid.

During the French domination of Vietnam the construction of a program was not difficult. Our "Minimum Program" called for the ending of French rule and the establishment of national independence, which appealed to everybody.

Honey went on to explain: ". . . The 'Minimum Program' wins mass support and the revolution may then begin, under the clandestine direction and control of the Communist Party but ostensibly a spontaneous national uprising. When the revolution has progressed to a certain stage, then, according to Hoang Quoc Viet, it is essential for the Communist Party to assume overt control of the movement. It does so by moving from this 'Minimum Program' to the 'Maximum Program' which simply means adding the unmistakably Communist goals to the original 'Minimum Program.' "[24]

Little was new about the situation, either politically or tactically. Throughout history, aggressors and defenders have been faced with extraordinary political and military challenges. Those who responded wisely, those who adapted to meet the task at hand are the great captains; the others rest in Valhalla, or, hopefully, in Limbo, where they bore only their fellows with tales of battles almost but not quite won.

Having gotten priorities wrong, Westmoreland and his fellows in the Pentagon failed to realize that a quantitative effort in the highlands and the North was counterproductive. Despite manifold lessons of history, American commanders (always with some splendid exceptions) failed to realize that conventional firepower possessed little validity or effectiveness in an insurgency situation. Conventional weapons "killed" without question—but they killed quantitatively. "Free fire zones" were but an admission of tactical poverty. The tactical problem was one of identifying and neutralizing enemy and reversing the political orientation of a peasantry motivated by terror, if not conviction, to anti-Western attitudes. When weapons killed the innocent, they contributed positively to the insurgent cause. And when weapons were used in such abundance as they were used in Vietnam in 1965–68, they killed many innocents. Sixteen-inch naval shells, 500-pound B-52 bombs, 105-mm. howitzer shells, heavy mortar shells, napalm, aerial strafing, bombs, rockets, bullets—if they hit specific targets, they still could not discriminate what political and ideological motivations were there.

The problem of enemy identification constantly plagued American commanders. Lacking an enemy actually firing a weapon or attempting to hide same, the American soldier was forced to identify on the basis of observation (a patrol, for example, sighting an enemy unit) and interrogation. His best intelligence source remained the peasant, but, in addition to usual hazards of obtaining military intelligence from civilians and of obtaining exact information from Orientals, the linguistic block

24. RUSI Seminar, *supra*.

asserted itself in nearly all cases, as did fear, distrust, and general xenophobia.

The collection process is difficult enough under the most favorable circumstances, but, in South Vietnam, the American soldier's distrust of the native complicated it. His superiors could speak loud and long about "hearts and minds," and President Johnson could continue to praise those true democrats, Thieu and Ky, but the words didn't mean very much. Excepting a few isolated instances, Americans did not readily identify with South Vietnamese, an attitude well illustrated when, during the Tet offensive, two marine generals trooped about the U.S.A. making speeches in defense of Administration policy. On February 1, 1968, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak rhetorically asked a California audience:

> . . . How is it, after several years of war, where we are ostensibly making progress, that the enemy can get away with suicide raids in major cities such as Saigon?

Krulak ingeniously answered:

> . . . The answer is simple. The raids, and the enemy's ability to launch them, are a product of the strange war we are fighting. There are 16 million people in South Vietnam, and they all look alike. There is no great trick to transporting arms and ammunition in a heavily populated urban area. A bundle of rice conceals a mortar. A push-cart load of vegetables hides a submachine gun. A basket of charcoal covers a dozen grenades. And there is no certain way to ensure against it. It is a frustrating reality that we must face. . . .[25]

General Leonard Chapman, commandant of the Marine Corps, enlarged this theme in a speech to a Texas audience in May. Prior to the Tet offensive, he told the good citizens of Harlingen,

> . . . the security precautions taken by the enemy were absolutely amazing —until you remember that there are 16,000,000 people in South Vietnam; and they all look alike—they all talk alike—even though some of them may be guerrilla soldiers; and some of them may be North Vietnamese.[26]

These statements are as incredible as those made by Westmoreland and Walt cited above. Chapman and Krulak are personal friends of the author (as is Walt)—they are bright, intelligent, and courageous men. Why they would speak such palpable nonsense remains a disturbing question. Their statements sound like southern plantation owners talking about niggers or British officers talking about wogs. Sixteen million South Vietnamese do not "all look alike"—to start with, approximately half are men and half women. Nor do they talk alike, no more than a

25. V. H. Krulak, "Address to Western Newspaper Industrial Relations Bureau. . . ." U. S. Marine Corps release, n.d.
26. Leonard Chapman, "Remarks." U. S. Marine Corps release, n.d.

New Englander and a Texan. They represent a number of religious and political creeds, their aspirations are as genuine and probably more basic than most, and had the Saigon government and American officialdom attempted to respect, much less realize, these aspirations, the Tet offensive would never have occurred. Krulak aside, it is very difficult to smuggle arms anywhere *if the general population is opposed to the smuggling*. Krulak and Chapman were voicing basically a "gook philosophy."

Nor were they alone. Not one in a thousand soldiers or marines or sailors or airmen or civilians would have disagreed. At best, such a philosophy was reflected in daily contempt, sometimes genial, sometimes not, displayed toward South Vietnamese officials, officers, and servants. At worst, it was reflected in such tactical savagery as that occurring at My Lai.

The young soldier could not be blamed for this attitude. It was more an exuberance of confidence than of innate arrogance, more a blind belief in the American way of life and a rejection of another way of life. These were the sons of an affluent generation, and it probably had not occurred to them that over five eighths of the world's population are hungry. The monthly pay of an American private exceeded that of senior South Vietnamese officials and army officers. The young American raised in a technological society could not be expected to respect Vietnamese peasants, the more so since he could not even communicate with them. The bulk of American servicemen regarded peasants as gooks or slopeheads; they were human beings, yes, they should be fed and protected where possible, yes—but they were an inferior race.

This produced two important results: It often led to arrogant behavior on the part of officers and men. General Chae Myung-shin, who commanded forty-five thousand South Korean troops in Vietnam, commented on this in an interview published in *U. S. News and World Report*.[27] After stressing the importance of separating the Viet Cong from the rest of the people, the general described the Korean attitude:

> . . . We don't discriminate. We have many neutral social activities. My soldiers have an easier time of it [than Americans] becoming friends with the Vietnamese. And we exploit our similarities to the maximum.
>
> We are Oriental. Our political circumstances and those of Vietnam are the same. My soldiers sincerely sympathize with the Vietnamese, as if they were their own people.

Asked how to make friends in Vietnam, the general spoke of various civic-military programs and added:

> . . . Our soldiers always try to mix with the people, play with the children, chat with the older people, give haircuts. The most important thing is to be sincere and peaceful. We must respect the people. That's a fundamental.

27. *U. S. News and World Report*, May 15, 1967.

The general liked Americans but was aware of some serious errors, such as giving children cigarettes:

> . . . we scold them if they ask for cigarettes. The children are very impressed by this. But that's an Oriental custom. Americans don't understand that.

American generosity was a splendid thing, ". . . but they must not throw things off trucks, as if they're being generous to beggars."

Such American behavior probably did not surprise the peasant. He had suffered decades of it from the French and from his own people: the ruling mandarins and the army. It added, however, to a fundamental xenophobia that further widened the gulf, helping the enemy.

The other result was related. Not respecting the peasant and finding communication with him an onerous task, the American often failed to exploit him for information. Corson tells a story that was repeated a thousand times in battle areas. During the fighting for Hill 861, in the spring of 1967, a Vietnamese civilian approached a marine major to suggest that he use a tunnel that ran through the mountain to attack the enemy defenders from the rear.

> . . . The major learned the location of the tunnel but by this time Hill 861 was taken. He snarled at the Vietnamese, "Why didn't you tell us about the tunnel before?" The Vietnamese answered, "Because you never asked me, Major," turned on his heel and walked away.
>
> What the major did not know at the time was that the Vietnamese in question was a man named An Ya, who happens to be the hereditary king of the Bru, a tribal group with some 50,000 subjects. . . . He said, "Colonel, I have tried to reach you for five days, your sergeants in the CAPs (Combined Action Platoons) have also tried, but the battle was too important. My people—the children and the women are starving, we have no food. The hamlet chief left a week ago. The food your government has given the GVN [South Vietnam Government] to sell us is locked in a warehouse and the guards won't release it, even at a price double what you and your men have told me is the legal price. It was my belief that if you were dumb enough to trust the GVN to worry about what happened to the poor Bru people, then, why should I bother to tell your people anything?"

Corson liberated the rice and received a warning as payment: ". . . Colonel, try as hard as you can to teach your people that with us you will defeat the VC very quickly, but without us you will never win —remember we are not easily deceived and never ever forget: The peasant despises nothing more than a fool."[28]

Here was a truism that most American commanders failed to respect, and the intelligence-collection process suffered, and with that so did the troops. The less intelligence available to the commander, the less tactical success he enjoyed and the more he was forced to stab in the dark. This

28. Corson, op. cit.

meant that troops, fighting in strange and uncomfortable circumstances a long way from home for reasons that, though explained by officers, were less than convincing, were tiring themselves, often with no visible results, or were taking heavy casualties, often with minimum or inconclusive results.

In time, and not a very long time, the young soldier began to feel that anyone not in American uniform was against him. As jungle environment told, as fevers appeared, as sores opened and festered, as men fell victim to mines and booby traps, as units walked into ambush, tired and nervous men grew more tired and more nervous and, if fired upon, sometimes did not hesitate to invoke the available total wrath of the American equivalent of Zeus. Commanders who were enjoined to kill as many enemy as possible at cost of the fewest American lives, too often failed to delimit the target before committing the vast armory at their disposal. When such fury failed to evoke expected results, tempers flared further and sometimes innocent people suffered as a result. Early denunciations of ARVN cruelty to villagers horrified many Americans.[29] Yet, as the war continued, American forces sometimes indulged in the fatal error of promiscuous brutality. One disillusioned marine combat officer, Lieutenant Colonel Corson, charged that ". . . search-and-destroy tactics against VC-controlled areas have degenerated into savagery. The terrorism of the enemy has been equally matched by our own."[30] Corson's indignant cry was dismissed by hawks as that of a malcontent. Unfortunately, his words soon gained currency when My Lai became a part both of the American vocabulary and American shame.[31]

As the war continued, the collection process suffered. Where military action terrified the peasant, or where his home was destroyed and his loved ones killed by American firepower, or where American troop behavior otherwise put him off, he was apt to furnish either erroneous information or no information. Finally, and very important, where the Americans or his own government failed to protect him from the Viet Cong—from the man with the knife—he was too frightened or too wise to offer information, no matter his sympathies.

The reader may well ask: Was there a way around this difficulty, a solution? The answer is yes, and it is not an answer of hindsight, since, in part, it was demonstrated with favorable results.

The first solution would have been to choose civil and military commanders who understood insurgency warfare and were mentally and morally equipped to report realities, not dreams, to Washington. This would have dictated two complete turn-arounds in American policy: It would have resulted in a supreme commander, a single director of

29. See, for example, Donald Duncan, op. cit.
30. Corson, op. cit.
31. Seymour M. Hersh, "My Lai 4," *Harper's Magazine*, May 1970.

civil and military operations—a temporary dictator, if you will, but a qualified one. It would also have resulted in a clear-and-hold pacification strategy, a qualitative approach demanding more time and less physical and financial investment as onus was transferred to local, indigenous authority.

Search-and-destroy tactics can never win an insurgency, because they hurt and eliminate people on whom governmental authority depend for intelligence, the peasants. General Walker, who commanded the small but successful Borneo campaign, told a seminar audience in 1969:

> . . . My aim in Borneo was to prevent the conflict from escalating into open war, similar to that in Vietnam today. That was my primary aim.
>
> To do this it was vital to win not only the opening rounds of the jungle battle, but also at the same time, the psychological battle in the Kampongs and villages of the up-country tribal people. Therefore, the first and foremost principle was—and I believe always will be—to win the battle for hearts and minds. . . .
>
> It was indelibly inscribed on our minds that one civilian killed by us would do more harm than ten killed by the enemy, and if the price a village had to pay for its liberation from the enemy was to be its own destruction then the campaign for hearts and minds would never have been won. It was because we won and kept the affection, and nothing less than the affection, of the local peoples that we were able to hold one thousand miles of jungle frontier against guerrilla forces always superior in number without once dropping a bomb or firing a rocket.[32]

On the tactical level, a primary solution would have been to utilize native talent. Robert Shaplen has pointed out to the writer that, whereas Americans find the Vietnamese language difficult to learn, the Vietnamese learn English fairly well and quickly, if properly taught.[33] Unfortunately, a viable teaching program did not develop, and as one result, most ARVN soldiers did not speak English, which made it even more difficult to integrate them into American units. Moreover, thanks to early American army influence, most ARVN units were not as guerrilla-oriented as American combat soldiers. Finally, the South Vietnamese soldier did not respect the peasant and often failed to identify with him.

One answer was the Kit Carson scout program, which, in general, worked very well. The surprising fact, in view of the historical precedent of such programs, is that it took so long to initiate and remained so limited.

The army and marines were also on the right track with long-range reconnaissance patrols, probably the most successful tactic employed by either service in Vietnam. It remained to go a step farther and cut the umbilical cord to artillery and air support—in other words, to fight

32. RUSI Seminar, *supra;* see also Walker, op. cit.
33. Private letter to the author.

guerrillas with guerrillas, as Roger Hilsman, among others, had recommended years earlier. The potential existed, and in some ways the CIDG program realized it. But as Donald Duncan, a Special Forces noncommissioned officer, pointed out:

. . . Special Forces enlarged the CIDG program, which means that the people they trained were essentially minority ethnic groups within the country, such as the Montagnards. These so-called Strike Forces did not live off the land; their food was supplied. They lived not in villages but in camps surrounded by barbed wire and land mines—and since they lived in camps that had to be protected, they lacked the mobility of guerrillas and could never stray far. Their weapons were not captured but given to them, and the camps and the Strikers were actually an additional source of weaponry for the enemy. Their pay and allowances usually exceeded the regular forces', and because they were mercenaries—seldom recruited by ideological appeals, and exempt from army conscription—their loyalty to Saigon was doubtful. They were trained and deployed as conventional small units, not as guerrillas, and their training usually lasted only six to eight weeks before they went on a "live" action. . . .[34]

To fight guerrillas with guerrillas would have dictated an entirely different tactical approach—that adopted, for example, by Carlson's long-range Raider patrol on Guadalcanal (see Chapter 39, Volume I) or by the French Commandos de Chasse in Algeria (see Chapter 71)—one that called first for decentralized operations (but directed toward specific goals), second for a sound political base. General Walker later hit on this in discussing his successful handling of the Borneo insurgency. After stressing the "cardinal principle" of gaining reliable intelligence, he went on:

. . . The next principle is domination of the jungle. We in Borneo would never have achieved the results we did had we merely attacked the enemy, and then returned to base, as the Americans have done. Our objective was to dominate and own the jungle week in and week out, day and night. In other words, clear and hold, and not search and destroy.

We played the guerrilla at his own game and we learnt to live as close to the animal as it is humanly possible to do. We insisted on rigid security of all our operations and plans. Therefore, our forward troops were never allowed in any shop, café or bar. When they rested they did so in their firm bases, where there were no bright lights. By our relentless patrolling and ambushing by day and night we were able to seize the initiative, and unit and sub-unit commanders and platoon commanders conducted what I called a person to person war against the particular enemy leader concerned, and it became a blood feud.

The last principle is security of our bases. Wherever they may be, in front or so-called rear areas, whether patrol base, or air field or a logistic installa-

34. Donald Duncan, op. cit.

tion, or whatever. In jungle warfare there can be no front in the accepted sense. Therefore, everyone had to be responsible for his own protection, and every man in uniform must be a potential front-line infantry soldier, wherever he happens to be. The same applies to the civilians. Every man has to be his own vigilante, as we called them in Borneo. Only in this way can you conduct a successful offensive defense, and avoid tying up your soldiers in static defense. You must have more teeth in the mouth and less length in the tail.[35]

Unfortunately, American military doctrine does not accept decentralized tactical control. Reluctance of senior commanders, from Pentagon to battalion level, to turn this war over to small-unit commanders was a major tactical deficiency that neither time nor experience repaired. Young soldiers, both officers and non-coms, often resented the doctrinaire approach, especially in such a variegated combat environment. Young, active, confident, and often imaginative, they respected without fearing the enemy. My friend Lieutenant X, cited in a previous chapter, like dozens of others, proved time and again that he and his men were as capable of sneaking through and fighting in the boondocks as the Viet Cong—just as marines in World War II proved that they were as capable of fighting in jungle as the Japanese. Had such men been encouraged to perfect appropriate tactics, the war could have been fought with minimum expenditure to gain maximum results.

They were not encouraged. Higher echelons of the American military, particularly the army, had no intention of departing from traditional command and staff doctrines. They not only ignored lessons of general history, but they refused to heed those derived from contemporary insurgencies. Each insurgency may be different and may post different problems, but, as we have attempted to point out, universals do exist. French and British experiences in the 1950s were germane in part to Vietnam of the 1960s. The Borneo campaign of 1965, though minute when compared to the Vietnam struggle, contained interesting parallels, yet the British commander of this successful campaign, General Walker, was not allowed to enter South Vietnam, much less advise MACV. At a later seminar on Vietnam, Walker made an excellent point:

. . . Where the Americans have made a big mistake, is in sending the wrong seniority of officer to our jungle warfare school in Malaya to be trained. They sent their most junior officers, whereas we send first our senior officers and NCO's followed by our junior officers. No British Brigadier took command of a brigade unit until he had been through the jungle warfare school, no commanding officer until he had done the course; so each knew what he was asking his men to do; the teaching, therefore, came from the top. Who did the Americans send? Their second lieutenants. When they got back

35. RUSI Seminar, *supra;* compare with Field Marshal Slim's teachings (see Chapters 47, 48, and 49, Volume I).

to Vietnam and tried to spread the gospel, the CO said: "You can forget all that and do it my way." This was their big mistake: had they sent their senior officers this would not have happened, for they would have been properly indoctrinated from the outset.[36]

The inevitable result was reliance on what the military calls "the school solution." Secondary operations such as Sting Ray patrols were tolerated but not particularly encouraged. The writer attempted to discuss the success of small, long-range patrols with a senior marine officer only to be told, ". . . Oh, we have dozens such patrols—one's the same as the other." Had other patrols scored the tactical success of the ones the writer was attempting to discuss, half of General Walt's tactical problems would have been solved. But as Frederick the Great sagely pointed out, ". . . The jackass who experienced twenty of [Prince] Eugene's campaigns was none the better tactician for it."

But small-unit tactics, no matter how well conducted, would have been wasted without the other essential: a strong political base from which they could be launched and which could be expanded as they succeeded—in effect, Lyautey's *tache d'huile* concept.

Nothing illustrated the disparity in thought in top military and civil echelons than this requirement. Despite MACV's authority, it did not command a unified effort. The Saigon government and ARVN remained outside its administrative and operational control, as did such allied units as the Koreans. This meant a variety of pacification efforts, each with its own administrative complex. But MACV also faced internal problems. U. S. Army commanders did not see the pacification task in the same light as Foreign Service officers in CORDS. The U. S. Air Force, U. S. Navy and U. S. Marine Corps, which reported directly to CINCPAC, generally did not agree with the army concept. So far apart were the U. S. Army and U. S. Marine Corps on the pacification issue, that the situation became reminiscent of nineteenth-century warfare, when commanders, separated and out of touch, waged the type of campaign each deemed best.

MACV held for occupation of "liberated" areas by ARVN units working in conjunction with the Saigon government's Revolutionary Development program—an inadequate solution (as discussed earlier) in that ARVN units furnished neither adequate military security nor economic sustenance to peasants, with whom they did not seem able to identify.

The marines approached the problem differently, and made some substantial progress. William Lederer pointed out that, during 1967, the number of villages under NLF-PRP control increased ". . . except in one small area where the United States Marine Corps combined action platoons (CAP) are operating." In his opinion, it was ". . . the only

36. Ibid.; see also J. E. Heelis, "Triumph in Malaysia," *Marine Corps Gazette*, January 1967.

successful American project of any kind whatsoever in Vietnam."[37] One experienced British observer, Major General Richard Clutterbuck, who played a prominent role in the Malayan insurgency and later wrote an excellent book on counterinsurgency, found that the marine effort represented one of "two grains of encouragement" in Vietnam in 1968. Clutterbuck was impressed because the CAP tackled the basic village problem of VC intimidation—in his effective phrase, ". . . the man with the knife":

> . . . The normal popular force [militia] in Vietnam now does not live in the village at night, but outside. In the village at night the man with a knife can get in. If 15 Marines and 35 Popular Forces live inside the village at night, you get somewhere, and you can also patrol the village street at night.

At the time of Clutterbuck's visit, eighty CAPs had been formed, and in 80 per cent of the concerned villages ". . . the hamlet chief can sleep, whereas he can only do so in 20 per cent of the villages in the rest of Vietnam."[38] Although CAPs suffered high casualties, ". . . they are only 50 per cent of the casualties of the normal infantry or marine battalions being flown around by helicopter on large scale operations." Clutterbuck did not add that casualties would radically lower as village complexes were consolidated, policed, and redeveloped.

What went wrong with CAP?

A number of things. By mid-1968, the program included nearly two thousand Americans and twenty-seven hundred Vietnamese militia working in a hundred different hamlets. These figures are not impressive: I Corps area comprised five provinces, with a total 2.7 million population. The prototype program could only expand if additional combat personnel were made available. These would have had to come from one of two sources: from operational units, which would have meant adopting a defensive posture, in other words severely limiting or even ending search-and-destroy or "spoiling" tactics; or from fresh units sent from the United States.

But Westmoreland (later Abrams), MACV, and the JCS held no intention of abandoning large-scale actions. Another British observer, Brigadier K. Hunt of The Institute for Strategic Studies, was also favorably impressed with the CAP program, but ". . . when I went down to MACV and referred to this, they said that I had been fixed by the Marines, been brain-washed! They did not agree and said that in any case it would be too expensive."[39] MACV refused to accept early successes and went out of its way to sabotage the program by forcing Walt to commit increasing numbers of combat units to the DMZ fighting. To emphasize displeasure, Westmoreland created a new command in the north

37. Lederer, op. cit.
38. RUSI Seminar, *supra;* see also Mulligan, op. cit.
39. RUSI Seminar, *supra.*

under an army general, which exacerbated already tense command relations between the two services.[40] Tactical abilities aside, it was Belisarius fighting Narses at the expense of both.

But even MACV's attitude was not the major stumbling block to a pacification program. Walt and Westmoreland could have committed a hundred thousand American troops to the effort and still drawn a blank—so long as the South Vietnamese Government failed to govern properly.

By end of 1968, then, American tactics continued to provide mobility without purpose and purpose without mobility. They continued to expend American lives and dollars for minimum combat results, and, in addition, to destroy the vital ingredient of counterinsurgency warfare: peasant co-operation. In trying to win the shooting war, American military strategy was contributing to the loss of the real war. How to reverse the situation or at least to salvage some semblance of national self-respect from it was perhaps the chief problem inherited by Richard Milhous Nixon.

40. Saipan all over again! See Vandegrift and Asprey, op. cit.

Chapter 91

Richard Nixon's promise • His position on Vietnam • Enter Henry Kissinger • His plan for disengagement • Combat operations continue • Abrams' tactics • The war escalates • Dissent on the home front • The military and the Hellespont • Soedjatmoko speaks out • Stalemate in Paris • Secret talks with Hanoi • Saigon obstructionism • The President's new plan • First troop withdrawals • The Midway meeting • The Clifford plan (I)

AS THE KOREAN WAR had influenced 1952 presidential elections, the Vietnam war produced heated debate throughout 1967 and to the November elections of 1968.[1] Richard Nixon not only severely criticized President Johnson's Vietnam policy, but implied that he had a secret plan to win the war. As he told prospective voters in New Hampshire early in the year: ". . . I pledge to you the new leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific. . . . I do not suggest withdrawal from Vietnam. I am saying to you that it is possible if we mobilize our economic and political and diplomatic leadership it can be ended. The failure in Vietnam is not the failure of our fighting men in Vietnam but the failure of our leadership in Washington, D.C., to back them up."[2] In his inaugural address, he spoke of moving from ". . . an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation."

1. U. S. Congress, "The Candidates' Views," *Congressional Quarterly*, May 3, 1968. Quoted in *Survival*, July 1968; see also T. H. White, *The Making of the President 1968* (New York: Atheneum, 1969).
2. U. S. Congress, "The Candidates' Views," *supra*.

If Nixon supporters imagined that he was going to pull an Eisenhower —visit Vietnam and bring about a cease-fire (a dramatic effort, with disappointing results, in the case of Korea)—they were doomed to disappointment. Nixon was and is a man of covert compromise, and, in his mind, Vietnam called for a particularly careful political approach.[3]

Nixon entered office a prisoner of three major forces: his own fears of communism, which he had repeatedly emphasized by provocative and even bellicose statements and actions in refuting the idea of negotiation as a proper basis for ending the Vietnam war; a hawkish military strategy, which he had favored; the South Vietnamese Government, which he had helped build. He could not summarily cut the bonds of these forces. Rather, he had to shift and wiggle, hoping to free himself sufficiently to gain his political ends.

Shortly after taking office, Nixon relieved negotiator Averell Harriman in favor of Henry Cabot Lodge, whom he instructed to avoid private negotiations at the Paris talks. At the same time, he permitted General Creighton Abrams, Westmoreland's successor in South Vietnam, to continue attrition strategy by keeping pressure on the enemy. So far, this was "more of the same," but the new President also made an appointment that surprised a great many persons: he named Professor Henry Kissinger to the influential post of presidential adviser on national security affairs.

Kissinger's appointment would have raised eyebrows under normal circumstances. Forty-five years old, he had come to America in 1938, a German Jewish refugee who studied at Harvard and subsequently became a professor of government there. Within the Establishment, he was well known as a theoretician and writer on national strategy and limited war—indeed, about the only Republican with such a background in depth. A brilliant and controversial man, he had advised three administrations on international affairs; he had long been involved in behind-the-scenes diplomacy concerning Vietnam; and he held some positive ideas on action in the South, having worked the previous summer on Governor Nelson Rockefeller's four-point escalation formula.

From the hawk standpoint, Kissinger was a disappointing selection. He was not a military man, nor did he necessarily embrace force as a proper solution to political problems. He was willing to listen to those who favored a military solution, but he did not suffer fools gladly, and he had an annoying habit of producing facts and figures that weighed heavily against those cited by various hawks. The latters' fears were greatly increased when the January 1969 issue of *Foreign Affairs* carried his work "The Viet Nam Negotiations" as its lead article.[4]

In a brief review of the situation in South Vietnam, Kissinger discounted American attrition strategy, which ". . . failed to reduce the

3. Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967.
4. Kissinger, op. cit.

guerrillas and was in difficulty even with respect to the North Vietnamese main forces." A predominant military influence ". . . caused our military operations to have little relationship to our declared political objectives. Progress in establishing a political base was excruciatingly slow; our diplomacy and our strategy were conducted in isolation from each other. . . ." This explained, among other things, the failure of the pacification program. The Tet offensive, which, militarily, Kissinger judged an American "victory," was ". . . a political defeat in the countryside for Saigon and the United States." This action

> . . . marked the watershed of the American effort. Henceforth, no matter how effective our actions, the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objectives within a period or with force levels politically acceptable to the American people. This realization caused Washington, for the first time, to put a ceiling on the number of troops for Viet Nam. Denied the very large additional forces requested, the military command in Viet Nam felt obliged to begin a gradual change from its peripheral strategy to one concentrating on the protection of the populated area. This made inevitable an eventual commitment to a political solution and marked the beginning of the quest for a negotiated settlement. . . .

Kissinger then went on to review earlier, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and emphasized the difficulties that had to be overcome before meaningful talks could occur. A variety of factors were at work in each of the interested countries, and these combined in a dozen ways to affect internal and external relationships, thereby limiting each country's freedom of maneuver. At best, Kissinger believed, the United States could expect ". . . prolonged negotiations progressing through a series of apparent stalemates."

Negotiations surrounding the bombing halt showed a situation so tense, a distrust so deep, Kissinger went on, writing from personal experience, that each country was going to have to adjust its understanding of its own and the other's position. In the case of the United States, ". . . before we go much further in negotiations, we need an agreed concept of ultimate goals and how to achieve them." Lacking such a concept, all the United States could do was negotiate over interim items, such as a cease-fire and coalition government—a course fraught with hidden dangers.

Instead, Kissinger wanted to seek agreement on ultimate goals first, then work back to details. To achieve this, he called for a realistic evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in each country's position in order to obtain

> . . . a clear definition of objectives. The limits of the American commitment can be expressed in two propositions: first, the United States cannot accept a military defeat, or a change in the political structure of South Viet Nam brought about by external military force; second, once North Vietnamese

forces and pressures are removed, the United States has no obligation to maintain a government in Saigon by force.

American objectives should therefore be (1) to bring about a staged withdrawal of external forces, North Vietnamese and American, (2) thereby to create a maximum incentive for the contending forces in South Viet Nam to work out a political agreement. The structure and content of such an agreement must be left to the South Vietnamese . . .

Details would have to be negotiated, but

. . . the withdrawal should be over a sufficiently long period so that a genuine indigenous political process has a chance to become established; the contending sides in South Viet Nam should commit themselves not to pursue their objectives by force while the withdrawal of external forces is going on; in so far as possible, the definition of what constitutes a suitable political process or structure should be left to the South Vietnamese, with the schedule for mutual withdrawal creating the time frame for an agreement.

The United States, then, should concentrate on the subject of the mutual withdrawal of external forces and avoid negotiating about the internal structure of South Viet Nam for as long as possible. . . .

Kissinger called for three-tiered negotiations. Washington and Hanoi would work out ". . . mutual troop withdrawal and related subjects such as guarantees for the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia"; Saigon and the NLF ". . . would discuss the internal structure of South Viet Nam"; a third forum ". . . would be an international conference to work out guarantees and safeguards for the agreements arrived at in the other committees, including international peacekeeping machinery."

While Hanoi pondered such an approach, the United States should adopt ". . . a less impatient strategy—one better geared to the protection of the population and sustainable with substantially reduced casualties." If Hanoi spurned the effort,

. . . we should seek to achieve as many of our objectives as possible unilaterally. We should adopt a strategy which reduces casualties and concentrates on protecting the population. We should continue to strengthen the Vietnamese army to permit a gradual withdrawal of some American forces, and we should encourage Saigon to broaden its base so that it is stronger for the political contest with the communists which sooner or later it must undertake.

The newly elected President was not familiar with this article, so the story goes, when he tapped its author for the new and responsible job of national security adviser. His final choice implied tacit acceptance of Kissinger's thinking.

Kissinger's appointment, however, spelled no immediate or dramatic action. Several of his points had been raised over a year earlier by a proven authority on Indochina, Robert Shaplen, also writing in *For-*

eign Affairs.[5] Instead of a specific program, Kissinger offered general guidelines. The dissident factors he had discussed that existed in Hanoi, Saigon, and Washington exerted themselves on the new Administration just as they did on Saigon and Hanoi governments. Top American officials, civil and military, were still divided into hawks and doves. Three months after Nixon assumed office, *Newsweek* reported that a canvass of the Pentagon, the State Department, the American Embassy in Saigon, and the American team in Paris made it clear

> . . . that none of these governmental "satrapies" could agree on the facts of the Vietnam conflict, much less on what conclusions to draw from those facts. As a result, at the first full-dress National Security Council meeting devoted to Vietnam, the participants were asked to consider no fewer than nine possible courses of action to end the war—four military and five political. . . .[6]

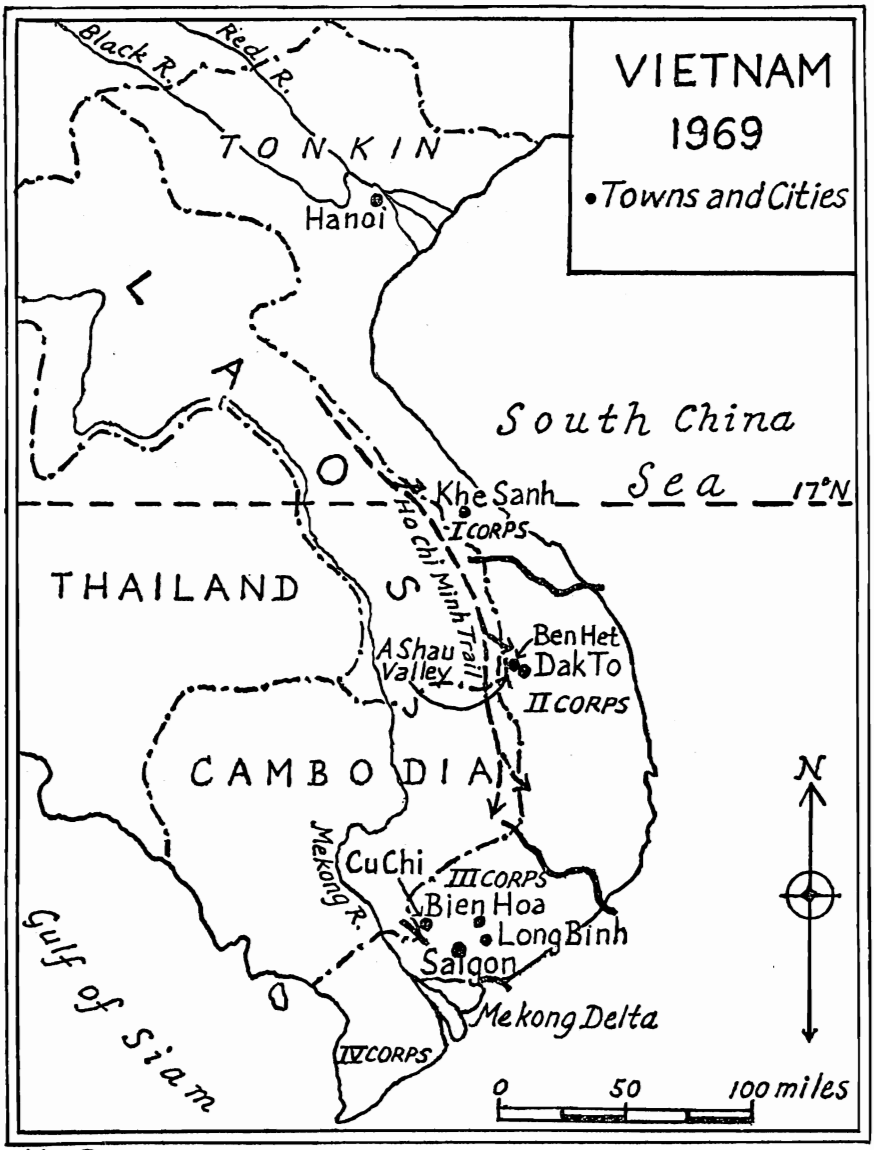
Nor did the enemy pause while the new American President debated a course of action. Although his 1969 Tet offensive in no way approached the 1968 effort, it nevertheless showed a capability of launching rocket and mortar attacks against ". . . more than a hundred towns, cities, and American installations" while variously launching small ground attacks, a total effort that, in a few days, killed some four hundred Americans and six hundred South Vietnamese, at an estimated enemy cost of six thousand.[7]

Shortly after Abrams relieved Westmoreland, American tactics had begun to alter. Although Abrams was a World War II tank commander wedded to conventional Western military thinking, he apparently entertained some doubts about Westmoreland's attrition strategy with emphasis on large-unit search-and-destroy operations. As stated in a previous chapter, he converted in part to Sting Ray tactics—small patrols instead of battalion and brigade actions. As we have noted, such tactics are essential to successful prosecution of this type of war. But, in Abrams' case, three factors tended to lessen beneficial effects on tactical changes.

The first was that Abrams did not seem to understand the nature of this war any more than had Westmoreland. He insisted on gaining a military solution by keeping "maximum pressure," so-called "pile-on" tactics, against an enemy willing to fight back. A RAND analyst who worked in Vietnam from 1966–69, Brian Jenkins, put his finger on the problem in a later report:

> . . . The lack of a clear, attainable or decisive objective makes it difficult to assess the progress of the war in Vietnam. Enemy soldiers continue to die at a greater rate than our own but we do not know how many enemy

5. Shaplen ("Crisis"), *supra.*
6. *Newsweek,* April 7, 1969.
7. Shaplen (*The Road from War*), *supra.*



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soldiers must die before the enemy's will cracks or his army begins to disintegrate. Frequently, increases in the amount of our military efforts are measured and this is called progress. On this basis, if twice as many bombs are dropped per month in 1969 as were dropped per month in 1967, we

are doing better—the same with leaflets, battalion days of operations, night patrols, and so on.

In time, perhaps, Abrams' tactical adaptation, though limited, might have produced sufficiently important results to bring a change from the quantitative to the qualitative, with emphasis on political aspects of the war. But now the second factor emerged: Abrams' changes, minor enough, immediately encountered doctrinal hostility from *within the U. S. Army,* whose senior commanders were lukewarm to any tactical changes, the more so because they still did not, and perhaps never would, comprehend the nature of this war, much less its tactical challenges. Related to this was a final factor: each arm attempting to outdo the other in staking its claim as the arm most suitable for fighting counterinsurgency warfare, and, in the process, frequently operating in such a way as to reduce or totally neutralize beneficial effects of civil pacification programs.

Thus it was that American military operations under Abrams' command differed not in kind, but only in degree. All the wars previously discussed—air, naval, and ground—continued to escalate. Dispatches sounded no radical departure from Westmoreland's attrition strategy. Fred Emery, writing from South Vietnam, noted expanding naval operations in the Mekong Delta:

> . . . Operation Giant Slingshot . . . had put more than 65 boats on to constant day and night patrols on the river system. They act in combination with armed helicopters, artillery, aircraft patrolling with "sensors," naval commando squads (Seals), Vietnamese ground forces, and even (in yet another role) troops from the United States 1st Air Cavalry Division, equipped with helicopters. Results so far have seemed impressive with the seizure of more than 35 tons of new weapons and ammunition. . . . About 55 Vietcong have been reported killed so far, against losses of four United States Navy men killed and 50 wounded. . . .[8]

Army units simultaneously combed suspect areas—we read of one effort in January ". . . supported by helicopter gunships . . . stalking a big Vietcong force only 20 miles from Saigon. . . ."[9] As the Thieu-Ky government promised new reforms and more-extensive pacification efforts, MACV continued to claim numerous enemy dead and tons of material captured. Simultaneously, in-country naval and air operations, both independent and in conjunction with ground operations, continued to grow in intensity as the enemy opened new offensives. Correspondents wrote of new and fearsome weapons systems such as those employed in hovercraft operations:

> . . . The ACVs are one of the weapons systems most dreaded by the Vietcong. With fearsome-looking shark teeth painted across their bow skirts, the

8. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), January 21, 1969.
9. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), January 29, 1969.

spray all around them and the tremendous noise of their aircraft-type propellors, the psychological impact is dramatic. . . .

ACVs are able to sweep over much treacherous territory, destroying as they go Vietcong sampans loaded with arms and supplies and flushing out VC when they hide under swamps by using protruding hollow reeds to breathe through. . . .[10]

The correspondent did not say how hovercraft gunners identified the sampans or went about flushing Viet Cong guerrillas. The air war also escalated in the South, with army and marine fliers flying thousands of sorties per day. In late April, one read that B-52s ". . . dropped 2,000 tons of bombs on Tay Ninh province in the biggest raid of the Vietnam war"; the province ". . . is riddled with infiltration routes leading from the Cambodian border to Saigon, the [U.S.] officials said."[11]

As Abrams' version of attrition strategy continued, as search-and-destroy operations blossomed throughout South Vietnam, so did attendant evils we discussed earlier. Sometimes these remained in small print. Thus, in discussing U. S. Navy operations in the Mekong Delta, Emery noted:

. . . one section of the river is already known to the sailors as "blood alley," and their machine guns rake the banks as we pass over a reach barely concealing well-built earth bunkers from which the patrol boats have been repeatedly fired upon. Any sampans encountered are stopped and checked for papers, but at night this invariably means opening fire and sinking them. . . .[12]

Some escaped notice until a later time. One of the most heavily decorated officers in the army, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Herbert, later testified, for example, that, in mid-February 1969, he witnessed a battle with the Viet Cong near Cuu Loi:

. . . after the fire fight, I walked up on these [civilian] detainees—there were about 15 of them—and they were in the custody of an ARVN unit and an American lieutenant.

There were four dead already, and when I walked up, they had a knife at the throat of a woman. Her baby—there were several kids in the bunch—her baby was screaming and grabbing at her leg, and her other child . . . was being suffocated by an ARVN who was pushing its face into the sand with his foot.

I ordered them to stop, but with me just standing there looking, they proceeded to slit the woman's throat. I asked the lieutenant what the hell was going on and then I ordered him to get his tail out of the area and take his ARNV with him. They left and I sent one of my sergeants with the

10. Anthony Rowley, *The Times* (London), April 2, 1969.
11. *The Times* (London), April 24, 1969.
12. *The Times* (London), January 21, 1969.

detainees to the L.Z. [Landing Zone]. I told him to get them out and back so they could be processed.

Well, it wasn't long after he left that I heard firing in the direction he'd taken them. He came running back, yelling, mad as hell. He told me the American lieutenant and the ARVN's had jumped him, overpowered him and killed all the detainees. I followed him back and found the bodies. All of them. The children, too.[13]

Herbert subsequently witnessed torture of prisoners by American military intelligence personnel. His insistent reports of these criminal activities won him only opprobrium of his seniors, Lieutenant Colonel J. Ross Franklin and Major General John Barnes, and he was shortly relieved of his command and sent to military limbo.[14]

Other evils appeared. Despite intense security, Viet Cong guerrillas continued to penetrate American base areas such as that at Cu Chi, where special raiding teams, covered by rocket and small-arms fire, destroyed nine and severely damaged three Chinook helicopters in a brief night action, an estimated $16-million loss, described by MACV as "light material damage."[15] In warding off a Tet attack on the big American base at Long Binh, American aircraft were forced to level the village of Bien Hoa, a frantic action that resulted in heavy enemy casualties and was, once again, claimed by MACV as a "victory."

As one perceptive correspondent, Nicholas Tomalin of *The Times* (London), noted:

. . . NOW: who won the battle of Bien Hoa? Except that it was fought in daylight, it was an archetype of virtually all the significant battles in Vietnam. The side that won Bien Hoa wins the war. . . . The Americans and SVN [South Vietnamese] claim it as a great victory. . . . Hanoi also claims the battle . . . as a victory. . . .

Tomalin went on to compare criteria. MACV pointed out that the attack failed to attain a military objective and cost 234 enemy dead and eighty prisoners taken, at minimal cost of U.S.-ARVN forces. Opposed to this was enemy penetration of an area supposedly "secure," with an HES rating of "B," the second highest—yet the people not only gave *no* warning to local authorities but obviously participated in digging tunnels and other preparatory enemy measures. A similar situation occurred in the Cu Chi area, where American officers were so careful to avoid "incidents" that in-camp guards had to telephone a superior for permission to open fire in order to avoid killing innocent civilians. As in other areas, the army concentrated on civil relations. The command was alerted to the possibility of attack,

13. James T. Wooten, "How a Supersoldier was Fired from His Command," New York *Times Magazine,* September 5, 1971.
14. Ibid.
15. Nicholas Tomalin, *The Times* (London), February 26, 1969.

. . . yet 80 Vietcong sappers managed to spend three and a half hours cutting through the 10 barbed wire fences that protect Cu Chi perimeter, without any of the American ambush patrols, sentries and bunker defense units detecting them. . . .[16]

Again the peasants knew of strangers among them—and kept silent.

Matters did not greatly improve in I Corps area, where marines seem to have learned few lessons. In February, 3rd Marine Division in conjunction with ARVN units had kicked off Operation Dewey Canyon, an immense sweep of tortuous terrain running west to the Laotian border. Although few enemy contacts resulted, marine spokesmen called the operation one of ". . . the most successful of the war" and insisted on the importance of captured weapons and material (some 450 tons) to justify 121 killed, several hundred wounded, and units exhausted. Marines followed this with sweeping operations around Khe Sanh while air and naval units continued to pound enemy positions in and around the DMZ, a gigantic effort that included USS *New Jersey* firing one-ton shells on suspected bunker positions.

In late May, paratroopers of 101st Airborne Division, while carrying out Operation Apache Snow, a sweep of A Shau Valley, south of the marine area of operations, "surprised" an enemy force dug in on Ap Bia Mountain. Rather than surround the complex and eliminate or at least badly damage the enemy by air strikes, the local commander ordered an assault in force. For several days, well-disciplined and terribly brave paratroopers fought up what became known as Hamburger Hill. They "captured" it at a cost of eighty-four dead and 480 wounded. A few days later, they evacuated. When North Vietnamese troops again occupied it, the division commanding general, John Wright, Jr., announced ". . . that if ordered to take the hill again, 'I am prepared to commit everything that it takes, up to the entire division, to do the job.' "[17] Fortunately for his troops, he was not so ordered. (Perhaps some senior remembered the warning given by Belisarius to his army: ". . . Remember that even intrepidity must be restrained within certain and moderate limits, and, when it becomes pernicious, ceases to be honorable.")

While paratroopers were bleeding and dying on Hamburger Hill, Giap, as usual, was preparing another unpleasant surprise for allied forces. This time, he chose the old battlegrounds around Dak To and Ben Het, the latter defended primarily by ARVN units. In May, South Vietnamese patrols had attempted to upset Giap's plans, but the newly reorganized army that American advisers were boasting about did not hold together. By early June, the South Vietnamese were dug in at Ben Het. By mid-June, PAVN units had cut off the strong point from the American garrison at Dak To, besieged it for a month, and disappeared,

16. Ibid.
17. *Time*, June 27, 1969.

an inconclusive action once again underlining Giap's retention of tactical initiative.

The Administration had already suggested that matters were not going to improve radically overnight. In early March, the President defended his policy, blaming it on the enemy:

> . . . we had no other choice but to try to blunt the offensive. Had General Abrams not responded in this way, we would have suffered far more casualties than we have suffered, and we have suffered more than, of course, any of us would have liked to have seen.[18]

In view of the current offensive, the President said, ". . . there is no prospect for a reduction of American forces in the foreseeable future." In mid-March, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird warned that the United States could not reduce troop commitment until North Vietnam withdrew its troops; according to military commanders in South Vietnam, another two years would be required to bring the situation "in hand."[19]

The Administration's "more of the same" attitude unleashed increasingly vocal and hostile voices in the United States. In late March, a protesting congressman placed the names of 31,379 American dead in the Congressional Record. In early April, Henry Niles, chairman of the increasingly influential BEM (Business Executives Move for Peace in Vietnam), complained that ". . . over 2,000 Americans have been killed in Vietnam since President Nixon took office. . . . The honeymoon is over. We want peace."[20] A New York *Times* dispatch of May 22, from Saigon, stated that U.S. commanders in Vietnam

> . . . are still under orders to pursue the enemy relentlessly, using every tactic and weapon at their command, to deny the North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops any strategic advantage as a result of the halt in bombing. The United States commanders in the field have followed the order to the letter, and have dramatically stepped-up the number of offensive operations initiated by the allies.[21]

In the Senate, Edward Kennedy reminded fellow senators that Nixon had not ordered or intended to order any reduction of military activity in Vietnam; he continued:

> . . . President Nixon has told us, without question, that we seek no military victory, that we seek only peace. How then can we justify sending our boys against a hill a dozen times or more, until soldiers themselves question the

18. Richard M. Nixon, *Public Papers of the President* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970), Vol. 1.
19. *The Times* (London), Washington, March 19, 1969.
20. *The Times* (London), April 9, 1969.
21. *Washington Watch,* May 26, 1969.

madness of the action? The assault on "Hamburger Hill" is only symptomatic of a mentality and a policy that requires immediate attention. . . .[22]

A month earlier, in the April issue of *The Atlantic,* a former marine commandant, General David Shoup, warned the public of a new and dangerous American militarism, "a poisonous weed" that would have to be exterminated.[23]

Shoup's article caused a major furor in Administration circles, as did continued press criticism of military actions in Vietnam. Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps General Lewis Walt charged that ". . . news coverage of the war, assessment of the caliber of the South Vietnamese army and allegations of corruption in the Saigon government" were "inadequate or misleading." Admiral Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations, ". . . complained of the reporting on American military morale and the 'so-called existence of an evil military-industrial complex.'" The Washington *Post* noted: ". . . Criticism of press and television has joined ABM [anti-ballistic missile] boosterism as a predictable ingredient in top Defense Department speeches."[24]

Military hawks were fighting a losing battle, however. In taking on the national press, they were going to prove as effective as Xerxes when he tried to punish the Hellespont for destroying his bridge.[25] Like the Hellespont, the nation's press was too big, powerful, and insensitive, particularly when intelligent and politically influential observers around the world were pointing out fallacies that had underlain American policy in Vietnam. One of the most intelligent voices belonged to the Indonesian ambassador in Washington, Soedjatmoko, who told a Honolulu audience, on the same day President Nixon addressed the nation, that ". . . the future of the South-east Asian region will not be determined solely by the outcome of that war."

. . . Firstly, the population of Vietnam, or even of the whole of erstwhile Indo-China together, constitutes less than one-third of the total population of South-east Asia. On the other hand, Indonesia's population alone accounts for almost half of that total. In keeping the Vietnam war in its proper proportions, it is important to realize that if Indonesia had become a Communist country, any military gains in the Vietnam war would have been nullified.

22. Ibid.

23. David M. Shoup and James A. Donovan, "The New American Militarism," *The Atlantic,* April 1969; see also James A. Donovan, *Militarism, U.S.A.* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

24. *Washington Watch,* June 23, 1969.

25. Herodotus, op. cit.: Xerxes ". . . straightway gave orders that the Hellespont should receive three hundred lashes, and that a pair of fetters should be cast into it. Nay, I have even heard it said, that he bade the branders take their irons and therewith brand the Hellespont."

The domino theory, so popular in American administration circles, was fallacious, because it did not respect regional facts:

. . . It is, therefore, not the political color of a regime that counts in the end, but its capacity for nation-building and development. More important than the question whether a country will turn towards Communism—however important that may be to the country concerned—is the question whether in doing so it will become a satellite of outside forces or not. For underlying my whole argument is the conviction that in the present world situation no outside power can for long force any South-east Asian country to do its bidding. The South-east Asian nations do not constitute lifeless entities that automatically fall one way or the other, depending on which way their neighbor falls. History does not operate that way. What matters is the will, the political will, the determination of a nation to preserve its own identity. Out of our own national experience, we in Indonesia more than ever believe that this is the crucial element in the equation. Without such a will and determination, the infusion of external power will fail to make much difference. The domino theory, therefore, is to us rather a gross over-simplification of the nature of the historical processes that go on in the area. It obscures and distorts rather than illuminates our understanding and offers no guidelines for realistic policy.[26]

So long as China pursued her present policy, the ambassador continued, the primary threat to Southeast Asian nations ". . . is one of internal subversion and insurgency." But:

. . . It is not primarily a nation's military capability that will determine its capacity to overcome these threats to internal security, but rather the cohesion of its political system, the viability and the effectiveness of its government in dealing with the problems of poverty, social inequalities and injustices, in bringing about economic development and in continually expanding its base for popular participation. Here again it is not only factors of economic growth, but beyond that the elements of will and determination that are decisive, as well as the people's loyalty to the government and faith in its purposes. . . .[27]

At some point in this spring of 1969, President Nixon decided to abandon hawkish desire for military victory in favor of negotiated settlement. Unfortunately, his decision did not make the deed. Although some observers drew comfort from the limited action of the 1969 Tet offensive —mainly indiscriminate shelling of South Vietnamese cities—the action showed an unhealthy enemy strength, as did expensive encounter actions in the DMZ and particularly along the Cambodian border, which continued to take a high toll of American lives. Enemy intransigence also

26. Soedjatmoko, op. cit.
27. Ibid.; see also Eugene R. Black, *Alternative in Southeast Asia* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969).

showed in Paris, where it was complemented by President Thieu's lukewarm attitude, until virtually an impasse had been reached. Mounting criticism at home alarmed Administration officials, while Nixon's continued silence infuriated critics.

Finally, in a speech in early April, the President hinted that secret talks were taking place with Hanoi:

> . . . We think we are on the right track but we are not going to raise false hopes. We are not going to tell you what is going on in private talks. What we are going to do is our job and then, a few months from now, I think you will look back and say what we did was right.[28]

Meanwhile, he told his audience, he wanted time. As for Administration intentions, Secretary of State William Rogers told a Senate committee two days later, ". . . We're prepared, if the other side is prepared, to have a [troop] withdrawal over a very short period of time."

The other side, or, rather, three other sides—the Saigon government, the Communists in the South, and the Hanoi government—still did not seem in a hurry to begin productive talks. About the last action that the Thieu regime wanted was an American withdrawal, and, as it had attempted to sabotage every major American effort toward de-escalating the war in the previous three years, so now it obfuscated major issues with dreary dilatory procedures that tried American officials nearly as much as the NLF's and Hanoi's repeated mouthings of all or nothing. Hanoi seemed equally obdurate. Writing from Paris in early May, Stewart Alsop concluded that the Communists ". . . presently have no intention whatever" of agreeing to mutual withdrawal:

> . . . to believe that the Communists have any interest in a reasonable settlement it is necessary, like the Red Queen, to "believe six impossible things before breakfast."[29]

Nixon was in a position where he had to believe more than six impossible things before breakfast, and he chose to make the best of a difficult situation. Administration spokesmen pointed to indications of a possible breakthrough: The enemy was sitting at a table in Paris along with Saigon government representatives. That government had tabled a six-point peace proposal; Hanoi had countered with a four-point plan. In May, the NLF proposed a ten-point plan. If all this seemed relatively meaningless, particularly to the combat soldier in Vietnam, the Nixon administration accepted it as a necessary prelude to real negotiations that might even reverse the enemy policy of fighting before talking to that of talking before fighting.

Just how far the Nixon administration had moved from the U.S.A.'s previous bellicose attitude became apparent in mid-May, when the Presi-

28. *Newsweek,* April 7, 1969.
29. *Newsweek,* May 5, 1969.

dent appeared on television to make a major policy speech ". . . on our most difficult and urgent problem."[80] The President defended the American presence in Vietnam as necessary to accomplish the American objective, which he now defined as ". . . the opportunity for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without outside interference." This and other bromides (". . . we seek no bases . . . we insist on no military ties . . .") were to be expected. But he also ". . . ruled out attempting to impose a purely military solution on the battlefield," committed the Administration (and, by implication, the Thieu-Ky government) to negotiation, formal or informal, and offered a one-year plan for mutual troop withdrawals under international supervision. Once a final cease-fire was negotiated, national elections could be held.

Although *Time* magazine greeted the plan as a sort of political Sermon on the Mount, its importance did not lie in the relatively vague proposals to the enemy, or even in Nixon's expressed willingness to negotiate theretofore *verboten* points such as the Saigon-NLF relationship and an interim provisional government. Its importance lay in Nixon's determination to proceed with negotiations, a not-so-hidden message that the Administration had no intention of maintaining the status quo; thenceforth the South Vietnamese would begin to share the combat burden and would search for a satisfactory internal political solution. Prior to the speech, Administration officials leaked the existence of a plan for unilateral withdrawal of American troops.

Although Nixon's speech had been shown to Thieu, who allegedly stated no objections, the Saigon government reacted quickly and sharply. Thieu at once rejected any talk of coalition government, and, in so doing, emphasized his respect for democratic procedures by banning distribution of American magazines that covered the speech. In Seoul, he persuaded South Korea's President, Chung Hee Park, to denounce both coalition government in South Vietnam and unilateral American withdrawal—not a difficult task, considering Park's own authoritarian government.

But the Administration refused to budge. At Midway, where Thieu and Ky met with Nixon in early June, they learned that Washington not only intended to push for elections in South Vietnam, but that it intended to emphasize desire for negotiated settlement by slowly withdrawing American combat support: The Administration, Nixon announced, was unilaterally withdrawing twenty-five thousand troops to evidence pacific intentions: ". . . We have opened wide the door to peace," Nixon announced, back in Washington, in words sounding as if Billy Graham had written them, "and now we invite the leaders of North Vietnam to walk with us. . . ."[81]

30. Nixon (*Public Papers*), *supra.*
31. Ibid.

Again, the message was intended for both North and South Vietnam. Although Thieu, at Midway, had promised the usual reforms (including still another land-reform program) and spoken optimistically of ARVN's increasing ability to take over the military load, the Nixon administration emphasized its intentions when Secretary of Defense Laird suggested that further withdrawals would be considered in August.

The President's action did not silence important critics at home. Writing in the July 1969 issue of *Foreign Affairs,* Clark Clifford, former Secretary of Defense in the Johnson administration, called for a complete reappraisal of American policy in Vietnam. Pointing to profound and, from the Western standpoint, favorable political changes in Southeast Asia and in Asia generally, Clifford argued that South Vietnam could stand increasingly on its own feet and should be left with minimum American logistic and air support. Clifford wanted a hundred thousand American soldiers withdrawn by end of 1969, the remainder by end of 1970.[32] Stung by this and other criticism, Nixon suggested further imminent troop withdrawals: ". . . I would hope that we could beat Mr. Clifford's timetable."[33] Although White House aides nervously suggested that the President had not committed himself, Nixon privately spoke of a desire to virtually end American military participation by end of 1970.

32. Clifford, op. cit.
33. Nixon (*Public Papers*), *supra.*

Chapter 92

The Hanoi scene • Emergence of the PRG • Combat action drops • General Wheeler's stand • The doves reply • Nixon's decision • Increasing American costs (IV) • Administration problems • CIA and Special Forces • Ho Chi Minh's death • Further troop withdrawals • Progress in South Vietnam • The President's November address • The Thompson report • Blurs on the canvas • Hanoi's position • Increasing dissent at home • Pacification problems • Thompson's report examined • The Saigon government • End of a year

WE DO NOT KNOW the exact effect of President Nixon's June 1969 overtures in Hanoi or in enemy ranks in the South. They could not have been unwelcome, however. Considerable friction existed in party ranks both in Hanoi and in the South prior to the 1967 Tet offensive. As Giap's heavy losses over a decade earlier, when fighting the French, had caused party dissonance, so must heavy losses in 1967. While hawks such as Truong Chinh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and probably Le Duan continued to demand total victory in the South, more moderate voices, including those of Ho Chi Minh and Premier Pham Van Dong, could point to devastating losses, to morale problems occasioned by heavy casualties, to severe economic difficulties in part brought on by floods, and suggest that some form of negotiated settlement was in order, particularly if it would result in an American exodus, which would leave the North free to undermine the Thieu-Ky government and eventually take over the South.

Apparently, dissident factions compromised in June, when the Na-

tional Liberation Front (NLF) announced creation of a new ". . . provisional revolutionary government of the Republic of South Vietnam," the PRG, which was quickly recognized as a legitimate government by the Soviet Union and twelve other nations. The announcement created a brief flurry of interest, which subsided when the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris failed to follow with specific proposals.

That something was astir, however, became apparent in early July, when the enemy suddenly broke off a major attack against an ARVN post, Ben Het; action elsewhere faded, and American killed-in-action dropped to the lowest in 1969, a hundred fifty a week. Three North Vietnamese regiments reportedly withdrew north across the DMZ, while intelligence also reported a significant drop in infiltration via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Although enemy guerrilla units continued spasmodic attacks, including those against American installations at Bien Hoa and north along the coast, the action continued to de-escalate until, in late July, American fatalities decreased to under a hundred a week.

The over-all trend set off an explosive, if secret, debate in Washington. Pentagon and State Department hawks argued that enemy disengagement was meaningless. On July 20, General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the JCS, announced in Saigon, at the end of a four-day inspection tour, that the recent lull did not appear to be politically significant; he disputed reports that PAVN regiments had withdrawn north and seemed to imply that an American military de-escalation was not justified.[1] Wheeler praised the continued development of ARVN—the U. S. Army had been "developing" ARVN since 1954, the current project costing over $6 *billion*—and said that allied forces ". . . are well prepared for any new military initiatives the enemy may attempt." He also said, in words undoubtedly intended for presidential ears, ". . . that the [South] Vietnamese could not take over the full war effort by the end of 1970."[2] In a secret briefing of the Senate Armed Services Committee at month's end, he allegedly said ". . . that the Nixon plan to de-Americanize the war had been dropped. He inferred a more aggressive strategy was needed to win the war."[3]

Doves retorted that the lull was politically significant, just as it had been after President Johnson halted the bombing. The military had erred then, the argument ran, by keeping up military pressure after Hanoi had withdrawn three PAVN divisions north of the DMZ. This time, doves insisted, Hanoi must be given a chance to show true intentions, particularly since it apparently had forsaken military conquest and reverted to political struggle, as suggested by the creation of the new Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) in the South in June.[4]

1. *The Times* (London), July 20, 1969.
2. Ibid.
3. *Washington Watch,* August 7, 1969.
4. Shaplen (*Road*), *supra,* offers an excellent analysis of these conflicting positions.

Nixon had already decided to wind down the shooting war. Hanoi's reactions aside, he was in serious political trouble. Early in July, the figure of American dead in South Vietnam had gone over the thirty-seven thousand mark. Official figures admitted loss of 5,666 aircraft, including nearly 2,900 helicopters—a total financial loss of above $3 billion.[5] The American people, not only students and other "troublemakers," were slowly realizing that an era of militarism was bankrupting the United States both spiritually and financially. More than two thirds of federal expenditure since World War II—over $1 *trillion*—had gone to armaments and armed forces. The 1970 defense budget topped $80 billion. Military leaders were clamoring for new weapons systems, new bombers, strategic missiles, tanks, aircraft. While poverty claimed large areas of the United States, while the population was outgrowing schools and social services, while American cities were coming apart at the seams, the Vietnam war would take $28 billion in *direct* costs in the new fiscal year. As David Calleo, of the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research, put it:

> . . . It is not isolationism that is reviving in the United States but humanism. Prodded by the prolonged agony of Vietnam many Americans now perceive grotesque distortions in their Government's values. The United States, they believe, is sacrificing the quality of its national life to the demands of a military empire.[6]

Widespread dissent continued to show itself, not only in draft-card burning and student demonstrations, but in the intellectual fabric of America and increasingly in Congress. In that summer of 1969, Nixon, in many ways, was facing an incipient rebellion, and it is a great argument for the worth of democracy that, though he favored force—he promised to respect what he called U.S. "commitment" to Thailand under the SEATO treaty, which some observers interpreted as including use of U.S. troops—public opinion was pushing him toward disengagement.

In late July, Nixon sent orders to Abrams not only to cut down offensive missions but to begin withdrawing American units from combat positions as rapidly as ARVN units could replace them. In late July, the President undertook a tour of Asia to spread a new gospel, which can be summarized as Nixon helps those who help themselves. Although the United States would honor its commitments in Southeast Asia, the President explained to leaders in Djakarta, Saigon, and Bangkok, it would thenceforth emphasize economic rather than military action. The time had come, Nixon proclaimed, to end a war and build a peace.[7]

5. *The Times* (London), July 25, 1969: 2,545 destroyed by enemy action; 3,121 destroyed by crashes or other accidents. I have not been able to determine the exact number of planes destroyed or badly damaged by guerrilla actions, but, in view of numerous successful raids, the figure must be high.

6. *The Times* (London), July 29, 1969.

7. Nixon (*Public Papers*), *supra.*

If Nixon hoped to quiet American critics by such oratory, he was quickly disappointed. A series of shocks now befell the Administration, and particularly the armed forces. In late July, a Congressional subcommittee, in a report on the *Pueblo* disaster (see Chapter 87), rapped the military soundly on the knuckles:

> . . . The inquiry reveals the existence of a vast and complex military structure capable of acquiring almost infinite amounts of information but with a demonstrated inability, in these two instances, to relay this information in a timely and comprehensible fashion to those charged with the responsibility for making decisions.[8]

Further adverse publicity spilled over the U. S. Navy a month later, when it announced that USS *New Jersey,* the battleship that had been refitted for service in Vietnam waters at a cost of $40 million, was being put back in mothballs after eighteen months' service.[9]

In early August, a scandal broke in Saigon with the arrest of one Huynh Van Trong and some fifty associates. Trong was special assistant and confidant on political affairs to President Thieu. He was charged with running an espionage ring for North Vietnam! The American public was still digesting this upsetting development when MACV announced the arrest of eight Special Forces soldiers, including the Green Beret commander in South Vietnam, Colonel Robert Rheault, for murdering a Vietnamese civilian. The victim, who allegedly worked for both CIA and Special Forces, was said to have been "doubled" by the Communists. When this was discovered, CIA ordered him "terminated with extreme prejudice"—a death sentence allegedly carried out by Special Forces.

The case was important for three main reasons: First, it caused tremendous speculation, mostly critical, concerning American policy; NBC, for example, reported that Special Forces had committed over three hundred political assassinations in South Vietnam, including those of senior Vietnamese officials.[10] Second, it raised problems in the Phoenix program, the joint American-South Vietnamese effort that had been trying to root out VC infrastructure in liberated areas. The covert part of this program involved assassination of enemy agents by American-Vietnamese Provisional Reconnaissance Units (PRUs). Nearly five hundred American "advisers" now wondered if they were to be tried for murder.[11] Third, CIA's refusal to produce witnesses for prosecution of Rheault and his fellows caused the army to drop the case. Instead of airing policy, CIA claimed executive privilege and Nixon allowed the claim: But this did not repair damage done to the prestige of Special

8. *The Times* (London), July 28, 1969.
9. Los Angeles *Times,* September 2, 1969.
10. *The Times* (London), September 11, 1969.
11. *The Times* (London), August 21, 1969.

Forces, nor did it quiet critics who did not like the idea of CIA's "terminating" people with or without "extreme prejudice." To a good many intelligent Americans, the terminology belonged to SMERSH and James Bond, not to a democracy that claimed to embrace the principle of trial by jury.

More was to come. An article by two American scientists in the August issue of *Scientific Research* condemned the defoliation program in South Vietnam and directly challenged U. S. Army claims that herbicides caused only minimum damage. Pointing to established decreases in rice and rubber production caused in part by killing plants and trees, the scientist-authors claimed that herbicides were causing long-term ecological damage, as was B-52 bombing. In 1968, they pointed out, American bombs had created 2.6 million craters ". . . with currently incalculable consequences for the countryside."[12]

Still more criticism broke over the Administration when President Thieu replaced his civilian prime minister, the rather gentle Tran Van Huong, with General Tran Thien Khiem, generally considered a hawk. Administration critics bluntly accused Saigon of pursuing a militaristic policy at a time when the United States was trying to negotiate a peace. In late September, Averell Harriman, whom Nixon had relieved as envoy at the Paris peace talks in favor of Henry Cabot Lodge, stated that the United States must ignore Saigon and forge an agreement with North Vietnam and with the National Liberation Front in the South. The Nixon administration was acting ". . . as though it is some sort of a satellite of the Saigon government. A government should not be imposed on the south but the personal interests of President Thieu and Vice President Cao Ky should not be allowed to become the premises of American policy."[13] Also in late September, Senator Mike Mansfield returned from a tour of Asia and stated ". . . that the American involvement in Laos had grown to such an extent that it could lead to another Vietnam war."[14] Citing Nixon's new Asian doctrine, he ". . . added that present tendencies in Laos were running directly counter to what should be expected."[15] Mansfield's remarks brought correspondents to the Laotian scene like bees to honey. In late October, the New York *Times* reported details of the private war being run by CIA in Laos. Once again, critics had a field day, and not a few Americans agreed with Senator Stuart Symington, a one-time hawk, who now expressed worry about extensive American commitments in light of a worsening domestic situation: ". . . We spend $44 for every child's education up to college age, but in Vietnam we spend $21,600 in ammunition alone to kill one enemy soldier."[16]

12. *The Sunday Telegraph,* August 10, 1969.
13. *The Times* (London), September 18, 1969.
14. *The Times* (London), September 21, 1969; see also Zalin B. Grant, "What Are We Doing in Thailand?" *The New Republic,* May 24, 1969.
15. *The Times* (London), September 21, 1969.
16. *The Sunday Times* (London), November 2, 1969.

Meanwhile, other prominent Americans were questioning Administration efforts to negotiate a peace. Cyrus Vance, who had been deputy of the American delegation at the Paris peace talks until the previous February, announced his own six-point peace program, which called for a "standstill cease fire," that is, an admission that the NLF/VC controlled large areas of South Vietnam and would have a share in determining a new government.[17] This was scarcely original—Robert Shaplen had suggested it two years earlier, in an article in *Foreign Affairs*[18]; it was still anathema to the Nixon administration, and especially so to the Thieu-Ky government.

President Nixon did not accept this and additional criticism passively, and, indeed, a few streaks of light appeared in somber skies. Some were transitory. Ho Chi Minh's death, in early September, brought hopeful prophecies from some Hanoi-watchers of a power struggle that would probably end in a peace party's gaining dominance.[19] It did nothing of the sort. The transition appeared orderly, and the new government, in less than a month, admitted severe problems, not the least being its dependence on China and the political price entailed,[20] a problem scarcely new and one admitted by Hanoi representatives in Paris to Ambassador Harriman the previous year.[21]

Nixon did send two specific signals to the new government. One was a three-day halt of B-52 raids in South Vietnam; when this evoked no response from the enemy, the raids were resumed. Another was an announcement, in mid-September, that he was withdrawing at least another thirty-five thousand American troops from South Vietnam before the end of 1969, an occasion used to place the onus again on North Vietnam with an appeal to begin "meaningful negotiations." Nixon also canceled draft calls for November and December and dismissed General Hershey, octogenarian subject of extreme criticism particularly from students objecting to the draft's bias.

Nixon also continued his partial-withdrawal policy in South Vietnam, and here he scored a major gain. By late September, most American combat units had been withdrawn from the Mekong Delta area. To the surprise of all but genuine counterinsurgency experts, pacification now proceeded much more rapidly than it had when the military was tearing up the countryside with futile search-and-destroy missions. A veteran British correspondent, Murray Sayle, found village elections ". . . going on all over the Delta. . . . Every Delta village is being paid 400,000 piasters for village deployment. . . . Villages prepared to elect a village chief are paid one million piasters. The money, which comes ultimately

17. *The Times* (London), New York, September 22, 1969.
18. Shaplen ("Crisis"), *supra.*
19. But see also Richard Hughes, "After Ho, Watch for Giap and a Tougher Line in Hanoi," *The Sunday Times* (London), September 7, 1969.
20. *The Times* (London), September 28, 1969.
21. *The Times* (London), September 18, 1969.

from American sources, is paid into a bank account operated by the village chief and his six-man council." Although assassinations by VC terrorists continued—". . . more than 30 village chiefs and minor government officials have been assassinated in the province around Mytho this year"—the Phoenix program at last was taking hold. Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs) were ferreting out VC infrastructure, killing VC where necessary, bribing where possible with rates that varied from a thousand piasters for identification of a VC courier to fifty thousand piasters for a VC district chief.[22] Although military hawks argued that such progress was the result of attrition strategy including the 1968 Tet "victory," other observers insisted that the key lay in withdrawing American combat units. Nixon accepted the arguments of the latter group, and MACV turned to a strategy not dissimilar to that recommended by General James Gavin in 1965—an enclave strategy derided by hawks at the time. If nothing else, however, casualties dropped significantly, despite the warnings of military experts who said they would rise!

Nixon was walking a political tightrope during this autumn and early winter of 1969. Faced with increasing dissent, including a nationwide moratorium, his major pitch continued to be a plea for time. In late September, he pointed to some hopeful facts, for example that North Vietnamese infiltration into the South was down two thirds from the previous year, American casualties had decreased one third, combat remained at a minimum level. If the American people formed a popular front behind his peace proposals, the President predicted, the Vietnam war would end the next year.[23]

In early November, the President made another major policy speech designed to calm an impatient electorate: ". . . The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy."[24] The situation was particularly grim, the speaker went on, when he assumed the presidency:

> . . . The war had been going on for four years; 31,000 Americans had been killed in action; the training program for the South Vietnamese armed forces was behind schedule; 540,000 Americans were in Vietnam with no plans to reduce the number; no progress had been made at the negotiations in Paris, and the United States had not put forth a comprehensive peace proposal; the war was causing deep division at home and criticism from many of our friends as well as our enemies abroad.

In short, and the President carefully pointed this out, the Democrats had left him an unholy mess.

22. *The Sunday Times* (London), September 28, 1969.
23. *The Times* (London), September 26, 1969.
24. Nixon (*Public Papers*), *supra;* see also *The Sunday Times* (London), November 5, 1969.

What had he done?

He had refused to accept defeat:

. . . For the United States, this first defeat in our nation's history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world.

For this reason, he refused to withdraw all of America's military forces in South Vietnam:

. . . I chose instead to change American policy on both the negotiating front and the battle front.

After repeating his peace proposals, he stressed his flexibility: ". . . anything is negotiable except the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future."

The President next reviewed the Administration's public and private attempts to work out a *modus vivendi* with Hanoi; unfortunately, ". . . no progress whatever has been made except agreement on the shape of the bargaining table." This effort having failed, he was concentrating on a contingency plan:

. . . At the time we launched our search for peace I recognized we might not succeed in bringing an end to the war through negotiation. I, therefore, put into effect another plan to bring peace—a plan which will bring the war to an end regardless of what happens on the negotiating front.

This was turning the war back to the people most intimately concerned:

. . . In the previous Administration, we Americanized the war in Vietnam. In this Administration, we are Vietnamizing the search for peace.

The President's approach appeased a good many Americans, as did continuing favorable news from the war-torn country. In early November, the Saigon government announced that, in October, over five thousand Viet Cong rallied to the government's side, to make a total of nearly forty thousand defectors for the year. In late November, Lieutenant General Julian Ewell, commanding a large allied force in III Corps area north of Saigon, told reporters that ". . . the Vietcong were rapidly becoming non-existent, the North Vietnamese were being forced to write off certain units to be withdrawn." The general claimed that 97 per cent of the rural population in his area was ". . . under nominal Government control"; 82 per cent of the remaining sixty-one thousand enemy, he continued, were North Vietnamese.[25] The British correspondent Fred Emery, who reported the above, wrote in a dispatch the following day that VC defectors had climbed to twenty-six thousand this year, that Regional and Popular Forces recruitment had doubled, and

25. *The Times* (London), November 24, 1969.

that a million peasants had joined the People's Self-Defense Forces.[26] High percentages of Mekong Delta villages and hamlets had elected their own officials.

. . . None of these figures, it is true, supports the contention that people have been swung behind the Government. The "geometric progression of confidence" some Americans detect is still mainly on their charts.

Yet there is little doubt that many people are living freer from direct harassment than they can perhaps remember, and many more are directly committing themselves against the Vietcong by shooting at them.[27]

A month later, a *Time* correspondent, Mark Clark, reported from Saigon that, although ". . . statements of optimism are far more muted than in the halcyon days that preceded *Tet* in 1968, there is an unmistakable air of confidence." The Thieu regime, Clark reported, ". . . is a going concern. While Thieu is not a popular hero, he heads a government that is stable."[28]

A similar report was made to the President in late December, by a British counterinsurgency expert, Sir Robert Thompson, whom Nixon had sent to Vietnam to "reassess" the situation. The corpus of Thompson's report, based on a five-week tour, remained secret, but in articles, interviews, and private conversations, he displayed enthusiasm made the more impressive by contrast to the critical and pessimistic tone of his book *No Exit from Vietnam,* published in March 1969.

In an interview with Brian Crozier in London, Thompson optimistically discussed pacification progress: ". . . In this last year there has been a race back into the countryside which has been won by South Vietnamese, helped by the Americans." The South Vietnamese and Americans were working much more effectively together than formerly, and as a result the Viet Cong's position in the countryside was being eroded. The enemy had also suffered so badly that the balance of power had changed in favor of the allies:

. . . In last year's battles, the North Vietnamese lost the cream of their regular army and are having great difficulty now in restoring the strength of their units. The recruits are much younger, so that their morale and their capability is [sic] much lower than it was [sic]. This means that though they may be in a position, as a result of the infiltration that is now occurring, to mount an offensive again in the coming months, it is unlikely that they will be able to sustain any such offensive, and its targets will necessarily be limited.

26. *The Times* (London), November 25, 1969.
27. Ibid.
28. *Time,* December 26, 1969.

Thompson was also impressed with the South Vietnamese Government's performance:

. . . The war is not, of course, solely a military issue. There is the political side, and one thing that definitely impressed me was that the present Government in South Vietnam is not only more stable than any government we have had for a number of years, but is also becoming more effective and its performance is improving. There is a much more relaxed atmosphere, and the confidence of the Government in its capacity to carry on the war is increasing daily.

Thompson concluded:

. . . The war in South Vietnam can therefore be won, in the sense that a just peace can be obtained, whether negotiated or not, and that the South Vietnamese people will be in a position to determine their own future without any interference or compulsion from the North. This after all is the limit of the American aim, and has been very clearly laid down by the President, particularly at the Paris peace talks. To requote this paragraph in my report which President Nixon quoted last Monday: "A winning position in the sense of obtaining a just peace, whether negotiated or not, and of maintaining an independent non-Communist South Vietnam, has been achieved but we are not yet through."[29]

Nixon could not have invested in a better report, and he proudly quoted from it in a major speech in mid-December, at the same time announcing that he was withdrawing another fifty thousand American troops, mostly combat units, before April 1970[30]; in early January, the President cited Thompson's "positive appraisal" of the situation.[31] A month later, in Saigon, President Thieu emphasized his claim of controlling 93 per cent of the South Vietnamese countryside by staging a 475-mile bicycle race, whose seventy-three contestants pedaled the course without VC opposition.

As with optimistic pictures previously drawn by Saigon and Washington administrations, a few blurs marred this canvas.

The first was the Administration's negotiating position. Nixon's wounded tones in discussing Hanoi's intransigence bore little semblance of reality. Whatever his hopes, he had few reasons to expect Hanoi to negotiate an unfavorable peace after fighting a war that had destroyed much of North Vietnam and, by the American administration's own figures, taken the lives of over 450,000 enemy soldiers, not to mention those of thousands of civilians, within the previous six years.

29. Robert Thompson, "On the Way to Victory," *The Sunday Times* (London), December 21, 1969.
30. Nixon (*Public Papers*), *supra*.
31. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), January 17, 1970.

Did the President expect Hanoi to be frightened? intimidated? contrite? In August 1969, a Canadian broadcasting correspondent, Michael Maclear, visited North Vietnam. American bombing, he reported, had made Highway One, 250 miles south of Hanoi, ". . . like one continuous, bone-jarring pothole." American planes had leveled five North Vietnamese cities and eighteen towns with a total population of 2 million: ". . . Urban civilization has ceased to exist in most of Viet-Nam's southern provinces—a region containing one-third of North Vietnam's 17 million people." Maclear found a bombed-out wasteland:

> . . . as far as I could see, and certainly according to local officials, there is not a single modern school, hospital, factory or administrative building remaining. It is a world of clay and thatch. . . .[32]

The President could resume bombing of the North, it was true, but, short of people, little remained to bomb. And bombing people out of existence—Giulio Douhet's strategic-genocide theory—would not be permitted either by American or world opinion.

What Nixon and his advisers, and a good many American citizens, failed to realize was that Hanoi could not be further hurt. She had suffered—but she had survived. Peking continued to vie with Moscow to supply essential needs and, in Moscow's case, to guarantee general postwar rehabilitation. American bombing had long since given the North Vietnamese people a genuine stake in the war. They would continue to exist on a subsistence level—a disciplined people is as essential to protracted war as flexibility in tactics and strategy. Whatever methods chosen to fight the war so far, Hanoi never forgot the requirements of portracted war: As Callwell had pointed out nearly a century earlier (see Chapter 15, Volume I), the "savages" were the professionals in their own environment.

Other factors entered. Hanoi was on the brink of winning a tremendous psychological victory by chasing American forces from the scene. Decades before, Lyautey had protested regarding the Spanish withdrawal in Morocco: ". . . My God! An army retreats when it must but it does not announce the fact to the enemy in advance." Nixon was forced to make this very announcement, which increased the influence of Hanoi hawks, who, negotiations or no, saw themselves on the verge of obtaining a major objective. Why should Hanoi hurry to negotiate when continuing criticism of the war in the United States and throughout the world would force Nixon's hand further and further? In mid-November, the scandal of the My Lai killings had broken, and though the full effect of the shock on the American people had not yet been wrought, cacophonous voices were already shrilling the shameful facts. Also in November, Senator Fulbright, a long-time critic of the war, publicly criticized growing presidential power to involve the United

32. *The Sunday Times* (London), November 9, 1969.

States in such areas as South Vietnam, where ". . . the United States has no vital security interest."[33] Fulbright kept up his attack in December, stating that Nixon's Vietnamization policy meant ". . . a continuing war of stalemate and attrition." Other legislators reacted adversely to reports of a secret war in Laos, and, in mid-December, the Senate voted to bar American combat troops from Laos and Thailand.[34] Dissension, in short, now ruled Washington counsels as it ruled the nation—all to Hanoi's benefit.

What about the optimistic situation in the South Vietnamese countryside?

Here, again, the Administration exhibited considerable naïveté, by treating a lull in guerrilla activity as if it were a major victory—precisely what Sir Charles Gwynn had warned against in 1934. American commanders would have been wise to respect the Spartan admonition to Philip of Macedon: ". . . If you imagine that your victory has made you greater than you were, measure your shadow." If parts of South Vietnam were being cleared of enemy, large numbers of enemy remained. In early November, the respected Washington correspondent of *The Times* (London), Louis Heren, reported that, of PAVN's 430,000 troops, about 130,000 were in the South or in border sanctuaries. He placed VC strength at sixty thousand trained guerrillas, ninety thousand in political cadres, and perhaps fifty thousand in local irregular forces.[35] Fred Emery reported from Saigon in mid-November that the enemy was launching sporadic attacks:

. . . Less eye catching but more important is continued VC terrorism. Against all the rosy claims for the Government's accelerated pacification—which undoubtedly has taken it into occupation of ever expanding areas—must be set the one ineradicable statistic of terrorist incidents which has barely gone down at all with last year.

Over the past fifteen months, there has been a rough average of 19 incidents a day throughout the country, and today's Government bulletin, covering a 24-hour period of delayed reports, is a particularly grim example, showing 32 civilians killed and 45 wounded. The worst incidents were buses running over mines, but the killed included no fewer than five village and hamlet officials, and two Government revolutionary development cadres, all attacked inside hamlet areas.

It is of little comfort to assert, as some do, that this shows the success of the pacification program, which has so discomfited the Vietcong that they are making a special target of these kind [sic] of people. It is precisely because, whatever the military lull, they can inflict retribution on this scale,

33. *The Times* (London), November 13, 1969; see also Senator Fulbright's statement, on February 3, 1969, announcing a senatorial ad hoc subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad. Quoted in *Survival*, April 1969.

34. *The Times* (London), December 15, 1969.

35. *The Times* (London), November 3, 1969.

discriminately and indiscriminately, that pacification is shown to be rarely the same thing as security. And the difference is vital.[36]

In a later dispatch, quoting optimistic reports of General Ewell concerning eleven provinces north of Saigon, Emery also noted that the American general envisaged ". . . a war around here somewhere for the next 50 to 150 years."[37] President Nixon, in his mid-December speech, also noted ". . . one disturbing new development," which was a substantial increase in infiltration—some eight thousand a month from the North.[38]

Sir Robert Thompson's expressed optimism also glossed over some disturbing facts. Thompson had been enthusiastic before—in 1963, for example—and had been wrong. Whatever the total content of his report to the President, he had to admit to grave deficiencies in the scene that he had surveyed as paid consultant to the Nixon administration. Thompson had always deemed a constable force necessary for defeating an insurgency and maintaining the peace. At a London seminar in early 1969, he had pointed to the South Vietnamese failure to build a viable rural police force: ". . . In fact the Police Force in South Vietnam today is, from the point of view of numbers, just about the size the country would require in peace time, and it is not even trained for that."[39] This deficiency continued to exist. Another deficiency, to which he privately admitted, was a lopsided economic position, by which a country of 17.5 million people, with an estimated GNP of $2.5 billion (in large part, U.S.-subsidized), was supporting an armed force over one million strong (including 472,500 regular troops). This condition could scarcely improve under what Thompson called ". . . a long-haul, low-cost strategy" (with South Vietnam increasingly assuming the military burden) that would be necessary for at least three to five years, ". . . before Hanoi is compelled to give up her purpose and to negotiate a real settlement."[40]

We don't know what Thompson privately reported to President Nixon concerning President Thieu and his government. Publicly, he shared *Time* magazine's enthusiasm, and spoke admiringly of Thieu, whom he considered a real politician.

Thieu might have been a real politician—whatever that meant—but he had already proved himself a strong man in the worst totalitarian tradition: As someone disparagingly remarked, ". . . The Brown Sahib has replaced the White Sahib." His officials censored newspapers as frequently as his secret police arrested political dissidents. Magazines disavowing any of his acts were suppressed, such as *Time* and *Newsweek;*

36. *The Times* (London), November 11, 1969.
37. *The Times* (London), November 24, 1969.
38. Nixon (*Public Papers*), *supra.*
39. RUSI Seminar, *supra;* The reader perhaps will remember that Diem subverted the Michigan State University training effort to gain a national Gestapo-like police force. See Chapter 65.
40. *Time,* December 26, 1969.

he filled jails with political prisoners—Communists, yes, but also non-Communists; his secret police arrested and held opponents without charge. Some of his legislation was as oppressive as that dreamed up by the Diem-Nhu regime. The evils of earlier Saigon governments were carried over to the Thieu-Ky regime, and American efforts to put them right proved futile. General Duong Van Minh, leader of the revolt against Diem, returned from a four-year exile in Thailand and almost immediately denounced the minority basis of Thieu's government, stating, according to Fred Emery, ". . . that the Government has cut itself off from the people, and he adds that this cannot be. . . ."[41]

Government ineptness and corruption had been the Viet Cong's secret weapon since 1954, and so it remained. In enemy minds, North and South, Nixon could de-escalate at will, but the target remained the South Vietnamese people, and the VC were still adept at persuading or intimidating or otherwise preventing peasants from supporting established government.

So long as this government remained authoritarian, so long as Thieu's political base rested on force, so long as a gulf existed between mandarin bureaucracy and peasants, the Viet Cong would continue to operate. In the enemy's mind, American presence or no, the Saigon government would eventually fall. So the problem for Hanoi and the PRG was what it had always been: helping the process along with flexible tactics of revolutionary warfare.

This was what neither Nixon nor his advisers seemed to understand at the close of the Administration's first year. And this is what Thompson apparently failed to understand, a failure made the more dangerous because of his reputation as counterinsurgency expert.

Those fortunate enough to know either Sir Robert personally or his works on counterinsurgency are generally impressed with his genial presentation of a complicated subject. *Defeating Communist Insurgency* and *No Exit from Vietnam* should be read by anyone interested in the subject, since Thompson is undoubtedly more capable than most of examining a counterinsurgency environment to determine the degree of governmental success in prosecuting a campaign.

But, like many of us, Thompson is also a prisoner of his background. At the time of his mission, he was fifty-three years old, an English public school-Cambridge product, Malayan civil service, wartime service with the RAF and with Wingate in Burma, then civil service and a prominent role in the suppression of the Malayan insurgency. This background helps explain his expertise in counterinsurgency. Unfortunately, it did not endow him with deep political understanding, either of Asia or of the world, either in general or in revolutionary particulars. Once Thompson leaves the nuts and bolts of an insurgency situation for the machinery of political theory, he is a doomed mechanic, as witness his latest

41. *The Times* (London), November 14, 1969.

book, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy 1945–1969*,[42] in which he pleads (among other things) the theory of monolithic communism. As one reviewer unkindly put it, ". . . One can easily be 'the world's greatest expert' on the art of killing Asian revolutionaries without having the slightest idea of what Asian revolution is all about."[43]

Thompson unavoidably carried certain preconceptions with him to Vietnam in late 1969. One was an approach to counterinsurgency based largely on his Malayan experiences. While agreeing in general with this approach, we point out that what was good for counterinsurgency in Malaya was not always good for counterinsurgency in South Vietnam, where a far more complex situation called for a more selective and decentralized approach.[44] Thompson also took with him a strong belief in a "win" policy. In early 1969 he told a seminar, ". . . The moment you say that you will negotiate in a situation like this, it means that you are prepared for less than victory. In insurgency less than victory means defeat. In other words, you are prepared to settle for defeat."[45]

Thompson presumably is talking about "victory" of the type achieved in Malaya, a claim forever made by British authorities despite Ch'en P'ing's escape, his subsequent guerrilla operations in the North, and, perhaps more important, Malaya's current internal troubles.[46] Rather than resulting in clear-cut "victory," Britain's campaign in Malaya provided local government with breathing space in which to remove or ameliorate basic frictions and build a viable state. This is laudable—it has happened before—but it is not "victory," which, even in a conventional sense, is at best ephemeral.

In denying the validity of negotiation as a way to end the war, Thompson indirectly was condemning the efficacy of the Saigon government (which, indeed, he should have done). Presumably, he expected this government to continue to strengthen, while the American Government carried out ". . . a long-haul, low-cost strategy." But this term was surely relative; one might have asked: "How long and how low?" Fifteen billion a year? Ten billion? Five billion? Three years? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years? This type of "long-haul, low-cost strategy" scarcely respected either the state of American finances or the temper of the American people. The time for a long-haul, low-cost strategy was 1965. In 1969, the situation demanded settlement.

Finally, Thompson did not point out, at least publicly, another continuing deficiency: the old quarrel between civil and military control

42. Robert Thompson, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy 1945–1969* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1970).

43. John Gittings, *Survival*, March 1971.

44. Heilbrunn, op. cit., discusses this in detail.

45. RUSI Seminar, *supra;* see also Robert Thompson, "My Plan for Peace in Vietnam," *Reader's Digest*, March 1970.

46. John Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy* (London: John Murray, 1969).

of the American mission. In theory, seventy-four-year-old Ambassador Bunker was running the show. In fact, the civil effort continued to diverge from the military effort, which at times was independent and usually in conflict. Although Nixon attempted to bolster the ambassador's authority, he erred, as had Kennedy and Johnson, in allowing the military effort to assume operational predominance.

Neither Nixon nor his advisers seemed to understand, at the close of the Administration's first year, that they were grappling with a political problem. Kissinger already had sounded the key word: *honor*. The Administration was embracing Comines's dictum, ". . . he who has success has honor," while overlooking Talleyrand's remark: ". . . Honor in our age of corruption has been invented in order to make vanity do the work of virtue." Nixon failed to see that victory could come only from within a country whose government was attuned to the demands of its peoples. Failing to see this, he made the fatal error of yielding to military advisers who forever believed that the threat was external and who, if they had had their way, would have enlarged the action to nuclear-warfare proportions.

As we shall see, the military got their way sufficiently to reverse the trend set by the President and to carry the war to Cambodia and Laos.

Chapter 93

Confused U.S. objectives • Congressional opposition mounts • Involvement in Laos • President Thieu's stand • President Nixon's dilemma • The Cambodian invasion • Disappointing results • Clark Clifford's new plan (II) • Renewed action in South Vietnam • Nixon's dominoes • Administration reverses • Paris: peace plan versus peace plan • The situation in South Vietnam: fact or fiction? • Enemy offensive moves

CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL of President Nixon's course in Vietnam continued into 1970. In mid-February, the President submitted a foreign-policy report to Congress that contained no specific statement of international objectives—". . . a disappointment to those who looked for an ordered definition, as opposed to a declamation, of American interests."[1] In the same month, a staff study published by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concluded that ". . . the assumptions on which American policy [in Vietnam] are based are ambiguous, confusing, and contradictory." Nixon's policy depended on three factors, the study suggested: progressive Vietnamization, the stability of the Saigon government, and lack of enemy interference.

. . . We believe that the evidence presented in this report leads to the inference that the prospects for a successful outcome of any of the aforemen-

1. The Institute for Strategic Studies, "The Super-Powers." In *Strategic Survey, 1970* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971).

tioned three factors, much less all three, must be regarded as, at best, uncertain.

Dilemmas thus seem to lie ahead in Vietnam, as they have throughout our involvement in this war that appears to be not only far from won but far from over.[2]

In public hearings, individual senators bluntly made clear their hostility. Charles Goodell spoke of "illusions" entertained by the Administration and concluded: ". . . We have not Vietnamized the war: we have cosmetized it." Senator Fulbright cogently asked: ". . . In what exact ways have we advanced toward peace? The war, as we know, is still going on. Replacements are still being sent to Vietnam; we are still suffering about 750 casualties a week; and the war is still costing the American people about $70 millions a day." Senators Harold Hughes and Thomas Eagleton proposed a resolution calling on the Saigon government for immediate reforms; in lieu thereof, ". . . the President of the United States should declare officially that our commitment to the present Government of South Vietnam is ended."[3]

Adding to legislative dissatisfaction was the increasingly serious Laotian situation. Nixon's refusal to deny or confirm alleged American involvement drew strong criticism from Senator George McGovern in early March. Requesting that the Senate secretly debate the subject, McGovern condemned the notion of a secret war:

> . . . It is absolutely incredible that a great nation such as ours could be waging a major military operation in a foreign country without the knowledge of either citizens or its Congress. But that is the fact.
>
> We don't know the truth about our heavy involvement in Laos. We are increasingly in the dark about what is really going on in Vietnam. Indeed, the entire southeast Asia involvement is more and more riddled with confusion and contradiction.[4]

Although Nixon assured Congress that no American ground troops would be sent to Laos, he did not explain the presence of those already there—estimated from one to five thousand. Two weeks later, Secretary of State Rogers scarcely mollified worried congressmen by stating ". . . that the possibility of using American ground troops in Laos could not be ruled out, although there were no plans to do so at present."[5]

Even more alarming than these dissembling statements was the tack taken by President Thieu in an interview published in the March 9 issue

2. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., February 2, 1970.
3. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., February 3, 1970.
4. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., March 3, 1970; see also Roland A. Paul, "Laos: Anatomy of an American Involvement," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1971, for an analysis of the reasons for (and fallacy of) American official silence.
5. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., March 17, 1970.

of *U. S. News and World Report*. Thieu reverted to the domino theory: If the United States withdrew from the Asian mainland, the Chinese would take over Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia. South Vietnam, Thieu insisted, was the key to the whole area: ". . . We have to contain the rush of the communists right here—not in the U.S., not at Midway or Hawaii or in mid-ocean, but right here on the Asian mainland." Thieu insisted ". . . that there was no fixed timetable for the withdrawal of American troops. The South Viet-Namese forces must be given sufficient and adequate means to fight the communists. . . ."[6]

Some observers read this as a desire to widen the war to Laos and, with Sihanouk's fall, to Cambodia. Thieu had every reason for maintaining a state of emergency: It was his principal justification for running one of the most repressive and corrupt governments in the world.

Unfortunately, the American military, both MACV and the JCS, agreed, in part, with Thieu. The well-informed correspondent of *The Times* (London) in Washington, Louis Heren, wrote that ". . . the [American] Army is resisting further cuts [in South Vietnam]. General William Westmoreland, the Chief of Staff, is reported to be pressing for a six-month delay ostensibly because the rate of 'Vietnamization' is too fast for safety and comfort."

In spring of 1970, Nixon was caught between two powerful forces: public opinion at home, military opinion at home and abroad. If for no other than domestic political reasons, he had to continue winding down the war in Vietnam. At the same time, MACV and the Pentagon were pointing to forty thousand Communist troops active in Cambodia and renewed enemy activity in South Vietnam, and were violently arguing against further troop withdrawals.

In trying to satisfy everybody, Nixon satisfied no one. He further erred by reintroducing the bogey of atomic warfare, which alarmed and enraged other countries, friendly, neutral, and enemy.

On April 21, the President told the nation that he had based his troop-withdrawal program on three criteria. Two had been met: Training and equipping South Vietnamese forces had ". . . substantially exceeded our expectations"; and there had been "extensive progress" in pacification (including a new land-reform bill that, in theory, would provide over 3 million acres for distribution).[7] No progress, however, had been made on the negotiating front. Despite that disappointment and despite threatening Communist activity both in Cambodia and South Vietnam, he was continuing the withdrawal program—115,500 troops having already returned home. He was now planning to withdraw another 150,000 by spring of 1971—more, if progress was made in negotiations.

6. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., March 9, 1970.
7. *Time*, April 6, 1970.

Having thrown this bone to the political dogs, he tossed a biscuit to the military mastiffs:

. . . Viewed against the enemy's escalation in Laos and Cambodia and the stepped-up attacks this month in South Viet-Nam, it [further troop withdrawal] clearly involves some risks. But I again remind the leaders of North Viet-Nam that, while we are taking these risks for peace, they will be taking grave risks should they attempt to use the occasion to jeopardize the security of our remaining forces in Vietnam by increased military action in Vietnam, in Cambodia, or in Laos. . . . If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces . . . I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures.[8]

In case anyone missed the point, James Reston noted in the New York *Times:*

. . . what the President *says* should be taken with the utmost seriousness. For if he personally takes the responsibility for withdrawing troops against the advice of General Abrams, and the enemy then launches an attack that threatens a major military defeat or even the destruction of General Abrams' command, it is not too much to say that he will use any weapon at his command, repeat *any* weapon, to avoid the destruction of his remaining soldiers.[9]

The threat of either atomic warfare or bombing the North was implicit in the President's words, but hawks paid little attention. For the biscuit tossed to them formed but an appetizer for a carcass soon to follow. Paradoxically, while Nixon was speaking of further troop withdrawals, MACV was completing plans to invade Cambodia.

In mid-March, a coup in Phnom Penh had ousted the querulous playboy-mystic Prince Norodom Sihanouk, in favor of General Lon Nol, who became prime minister and acting chief of state. Whether American-inspired or not, the coup seemed to MACV and Pentagon planners a heaven-sent opportunity. Administration hawks at once began demanding substantial support for the new ruler, who was vociferously protesting the presence of some forty thousand Communist Vietnamese troops on Cambodian soil. Henry Brandon noted from Washington that ". . . those favoring American aid claim that the North Vietnamese forces are already in such disarray along the South Vietnam-Cambodian border that American aid would have a decisive effect in ending the war especially as the North Vietnamese are overextended."[10]

President Nixon apparently agreed. In response to a request from Premier Lon Nol, never a man to think small—a fuming Senator Ful-

8. *The Times* (London), April 22, 1970.
9. James Reston, *The Times* (London), New York, April 21, 1970.
10. Henry Brandon, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., April 25, 1970.

bright said that his request was for ". . . hundreds of millions of dollars worth of arms"—the President authorized MACV to send several planeloads of arms from Saigon to Phnom Penh; these were said to have been AK47 rifles captured from the enemy. At about the same time, the President must have agreed to a MACV-JCS proposal for a combined South Vietnamese-American invasion of Cambodia.

Unfortunately, this was only the beginning. MACV, the Pentagon, and the CIA had been supporting a clandestine war in Laos for four years, and had long been wanting to strike enemy sanctuaries across the six-hundred-mile-long Cambodian border. Planners now dusted off previous contingency plans to emerge with an operation said to have been recommended to the President by a special task force, the Washington Special Action Group, which included Chairman of the JCS Wheeler, Richard Helms of the CIA, and presidential assistant Kissinger.

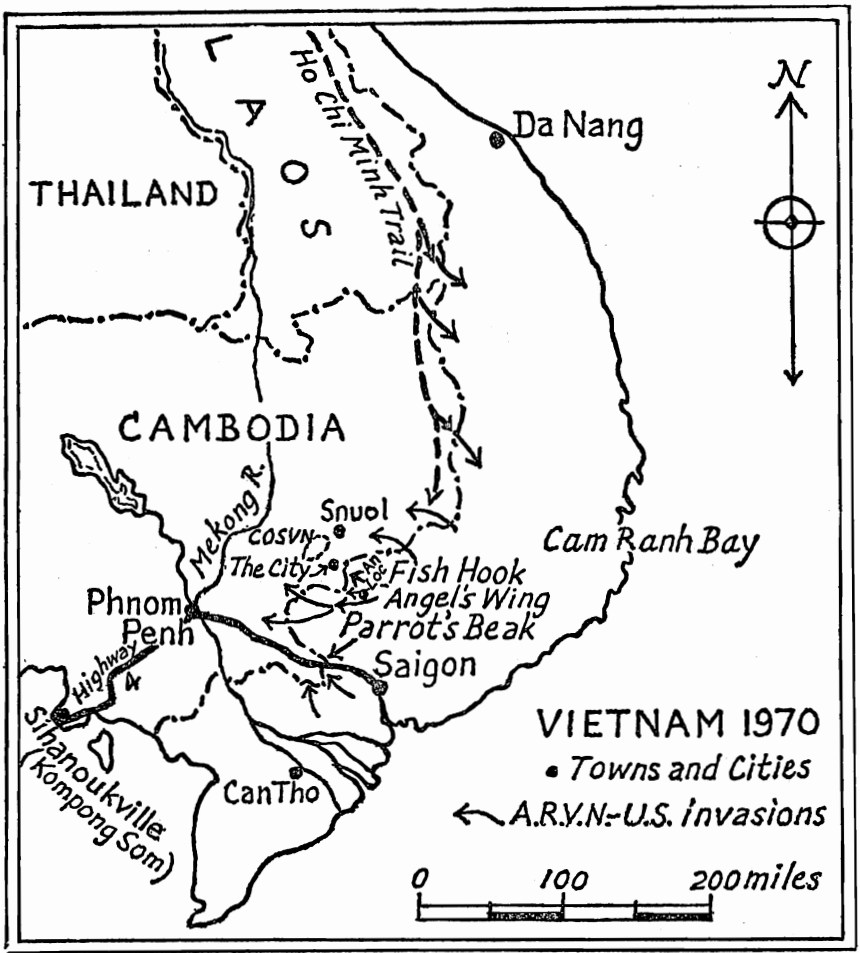
Operation Toan Thang (Complete Victory) kicked off on April 29.[11] American artillery, prepositioned inside South Vietnam, opened preparatory fire while South Vietnamese fighter-bombers further softened the target area. Three ARVN armored columns—some twelve thousand men, with perhaps fifty American "advisers"—then invaded a border area known as Parrot's Beak. American helicopters, including gunships, supported the operation, as did various logistic and medical-evacuation personnel.

Shortly after Vietnamese columns began clanking into Parrot's Beak, a combined task force commenced Operation Prometheus, north of Parrot's Beak. After suitable preparatory air and artillery fire, some five thousand American troops pushed into an area known as Fish Hook, a two-pronged operation that included three South Vietnamese paratroop battalions landed by American helicopters, and one that was designed to close a trap around the enemy. Military spokesmen described the total operation as a "quick-strike" pincers movement converging on the enemy headquarters known as the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN).

The offensive came as a surprise to nearly everyone (except the enemy). A Pentagon spokesman sounded the Administration's line: The purpose of the action was ". . . to destroy an extensive complex of North Vietnamese and Vietcong bases and depots in Cambodian territory, barely 25 miles from Saigon . . . the action is a necessary and effective measure to save American and other free world lives and to strengthen the Vietnamization program."[12] Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri, who commanded Operation Toan Thang, told correspondents that his mission was ". . . to kill as many Viet-cong as possible, destroy

11. More precisely, Complete Victory 42 and 43, following forty-one earlier Complete Victory operations begun after the 1968 Tet offensives.

12. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., April 29, 1970.



M.E.P

their supply depots and neutralize their activities."[13] President Nixon appeared on television to explain, somewhat ingeniously, that the invasion was not an invasion. Sounding not a little like Louis XIV's minister of war, Louvois, when undertaking the destruction of the Palatinate, in 1689, ". . . with the intention of destroying forever the war potential of the enemy,"[14] the President explained that the Cambodian operation was intended to eliminate ". . . the headquarters for the entire communist military operation in South Vietnam. This key control center has

13. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), Phnom Penh, April 30, 1970.
14. Alfred Vagts, *Defense and Diplomacy. The Soldier and the Conduct of Foreign Relations* (New York: Kings Crown Press, 1956).

been occupied by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong for years in blatant violation of Cambodia's neutrality." The present limited action, the President explained, was indispensable for the continuing success of the withdrawal program, for ending the war, and for keeping U.S. casualties to absolute minimum.[15]

Militarily, operations proceeded smoothly enough. Early reports from Fish Hook claimed 202 enemy soldiers killed and another 166 taken prisoner. Major General Elby Roberts, commanding 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division, told correspondents: "We think we have them in the bag. In a day or two we shall reach inside the bag and see what we have. We can't be sure."[16] On May 3, MACV, in Saigon, claimed a total 1,094 enemy killed and 242 captured at a cost of eight American dead and thirty-two wounded.[17] Allied troops also reported capturing large caches of rice and weapons.

So far, so good.

But not very good. As in the fairy tale, Roberts' bag had grown increasingly lighter—with grim results: He reached inside to find almost no enemy.

Had enemy existed, had enormous "kills" and captures been confirmed, had COSVN headquarters been overrun, had prominent VC and North Vietnamese officers surrendered and been taken in tumbrels through Saigon streets—had any of this happened, Nixon might have gotten away with the invasion of Cambodia.

But nothing like this did happen.

How could it?

How could responsible military officers and civilian officials have dreamed of anything like this happening? Had they not by now discovered the basic elements of guerrilla warfare? Did they really believe the nonsense fed to (in some cases unsuspecting) correspondents? Did they really believe that ". . . the operational area," to quote one correspondent, "which includes the Viet Cong's base areas 352 and 353, 'contains the headquarters of the Central Office for South Vietnam [COSVN], the headquarters of the South Vietnam Liberation Army, two separate regiments, an artillery command headquarters and a separate reconnaissance battalion' . . . a command complex said to be the nerve center for the enemy war effort in the southern half of South Vietnam . . ."?

Did they really believe that there, in primitive Cambodian jungles, they were going to find the North Vietnamese version of the Pentagon and Fort Myer? Did they believe that Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces were going to stand quietly by to await a pitched battle in circumstances overwhelmingly favorable to enemy firepower? Did they believe that, in an ARVN and a Saigon government known to be

15. Reuters, Washington, D.C., May 1, 1970.
16. Terence Smith, *The Times* (London), May 1, 1970.
17. Murray Sayle, *The Sunday Times* (London), May 3, 1970.

penetrated with Communist agents, this operation would surprise the enemy?

Apparently, responsible persons believed all this and more. The invasion of Cambodia was a conventional military operation intended to win a great "victory." Dispatches of that day read like those of World War II and Korea. Terence Smith, of *The Times* (London), who accompanied the American task force, wrote under a dateline of May 1:

> . . . A total of 82 heavy artillery pieces had been positioned along and across the border. General Roberts [commanding the American 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division] said it was the greatest massing of artillery he had seen in one area since the Second World War. During the night, waves of B-52 bombers pounded the target in preparation. The heavy artillery began firing at dawn.
>
> Early this morning, American F4 and F100 fighter-bombers began the first of 148 pre-planned air strikes, designed, together with the continuing artillery barrage, to soften up the area before the tanks and armored personnel carriers attacked. . . .[18]

All units apparently advanced on schedule. From Saigon, John Draw, of *The Times* (London), reported that ". . . sources from the battle area attributed the lack of big actions to 'the slow advance of allied troops that were instructed to take it carefully in tightening the noose around an estimated 7,000 Communist troops guarding this area.'" Although ". . . American troops, led by tanks, reached the headquarters zone of the Communist command yesterday and overran several North Vietnamese and Viet Cong base camps with little resistance . . . they were still searching for the underground headquarters itself."

Despite MACV's eulogistic communiqués, correspondents soon began to express doubts that made them unpopular with MACV. James Sterba, of the New York *Times,* for example, pointed out that, as opposed to Administration claims of an immense Communist build-up in South Vietnam, enemy activity, according to American intelligence officers, had been quite normal. Michael Hornsby, of *The Times* (London), reported from Saigon that observers were questioning the discrepancy between large numbers of enemy killed and captured versus the small number of weapons taken—were dead civilians being mistaken for dead enemy? By May 3, military leaders were backtracking. Reports to Washington from the Fish Hook area were "not encouraging"; in Washington, Ian McDonald, of *The Times* (London), wrote that ". . . military commanders now hint that the enemy might have had advance word of the operation . . ."[19]

By this time, President Nixon was undoubtedly sorry that he had ever heard of either the American army or Cambodia. A significant portion

18. Terence Smith, *The Times* (London), May 1, 1970.
19. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., May 3, 1970.

of Congress, on the other hand, was sorry that they had ever heard of Nixon. Not having seen fit to take the nation's legislators into his confidence, the President reaped Congressional wrath. Senator Fulbright called the operation ". . . a major expansion of the war. . . . If you accept the premises on which our justification and objectives have been based, this is consistent with our war policy. It is not consistent with any plan for ending the war."[20] Senator Mike Mansfield said: ". . . We're sinking deeper into the morass. The feeling of gloom in the Senate is so thick that you could cut it with a knife. . . ."[21] State Department officials who had not been advised of the action joined the chorus of disapproval, pointing out that Lon Nol's bellicose stand, taken without an adequate army at his disposal, had brought many of his troubles on himself.[22] Just as had Nixon, who had ". . . isolated himself from his State Department and depended almost entirely on military advice and White House staff work. His decision [to invade Cambodia], when announced, led several officials to resign, while 300 others in the State Department signed memoranda of protest."[23] Senators from both parties quickly moved ". . . to introduce legislation barring the use of funds to support American troops in Cambodia for any reason."[24]

Lon Nol also proved embarrassing. President Nixon reportedly had not seen fit to take the little general into his confidence, but Lon Nol rolled easily with the punches. He protested mildly against outright invasion: From Phnom Penh, Fred Emery, of *The Times* (London), reported that ". . . there is no hiding the strong feeling that the Government would have preferred it done another way." Having gotten one up, Lon Nol next used the rationale of the Nixon doctrine for Southeast Asia by appealing ". . . for arms for 250,000 men, for helicopters, and equipment for a national army." Lon Nol envisaged an army of some four hundred battalions. Mr. Emery reported that ". . . as for capacity they say their present forces strength is already up from the initial 35,000 to over 80,000, and they reckon they can have the full 250,000 in service within no less than five months."[25]

Nixon also faced considerable public hostility, sometimes more vague than concrete. By May 1970, the government's overdraft on credibility was considerable, and though large numbers of Americans still listened to their President and in general wanted to believe what he told them, a mean cynicism was pervading the country, particularly when it came to Pentagon and MACV communiqués. Some hostility was not so vague. The nation's college and university bodies spilled out in protest: Violent

20. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., May 1, 1970.
21. *Time*, May 11, 1970.
22. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., April 30, 1970.
23. John Franklin Campbell, "'What Is to Be Done?' Gigantism in Washington," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1970.
24. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., April 30, 1970.
25. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), Phnom Penh, April 30, 1970.

demonstrations erupted on nearly eight hundred campuses. Student protests in Ohio and Mississippi so alarmed authorities that police and national guardsmen shot twenty-seven and killed six students—we shall not tolerate dissent.

We will not tolerate dissent—but dissent swirled around the Administration, and around an uncomfortable President who had ingeniously de-escalated war by invasion and who was now in trouble. Such was Congressional hostility—increased by Kent State and Mississippi killings—that Nixon promised Congressional leaders, significantly of both parties, ". . . that all American forces would be pulled out of Cambodia within six weeks and that troop withdrawals from South Vietnam would proceed as planned." Meanwhile, Nixon not only wanted, but had to have, a "victory."

Victory was nowhere in sight—the invasion was not going at all the way the generals had promised. COSVN was not to be found. In searching for it, MACV had launched new incursions into Cambodia; one report estimated that fifty thousand troops were now involved.[26]

As invasion became non-invasion, so now non-victory became victory. Military communiqués described in glowing terms the capture of enemy complexes such as "the city," a group of huts twenty miles west of the Fish Hook area. By May 7, MACV claimed that 3,244 North Vietnamese and VC soldiers had been killed, with 529 captured, versus twenty-nine Americans killed and seventy-eight wounded, 163 South Vietnamese killed and 840 wounded.[27] Three days later, the figures rose to 3,740 enemy killed and 1,041 captured, along with over three thousand tons of ammunition.[28]

Developments in Hanoi also seemed favorable. The perennially optimistic Hanoi-watcher P. J. Honey pointed to ". . . the present perilous position of North Vietnam," where, since Ho Chi Minh's death, ". . . Communist leadership had been locked in an internal power struggle from which Le Duan now appears to be emerging the victor."[29] Le Duan, Honey continued, on April 25 ". . . ordered a large-scale purge of the Communist party—the first in its 40 years' existence—which cannot but weaken it in the immediate future." Honey also pointed to ". . . a desperate manpower shortage" in the North, the result of five hundred thousand North Vietnamese casualties in the South, a figure admitted by North Vietnam, which is ". . . unable to replace troop loses even though she conscripts males from 16 to 40 years of age. . . ."

These happy thoughts disguised neither over-all failure of allied action in the South nor an unpleasant political complication. Nixon, like

26. Michael Hornsby, *The Times* (London), Saigon, May 6, 1970.
27. Michael Hornsby, *The Times* (London), Saigon, May 7, 1970.
28. *The Sunday Telegraph*, May 10, 1970.
29. Ibid.

Napoleon after the "conquest" of Vitebsk, might have asked, ". . . Do you think I have come all this way just to conquer these huts?" Despite continuing communiqués claiming capture of Communist huts, arms, and rice, Communist prisoners seemed in short supply. On May 21, the Pentagon explained that COSVN, the elusive headquarters, ". . . had moved back into Cambodia beyond the 21-mile limit set up for U.S. ground operations."[30] This did not mean the end of the operation, however. Vice President Ky had stated that ARVN troops would remain in Cambodia after the American withdrawal on June 30. How long would they remain? For ". . . several months at the least . . . until the Cambodians were strong enough to defend themselves against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. . . ."[31] Ky's statement further depressed Administration officials—as well it might, considering Indochinese historical evolution.

To add to Nixon's woes, on May 25 *Life* magazine published a lengthy article by Clark Clifford, President Johnson's disaffected Secretary of Defense, a one-time hawk who had become a powerful critic of the Vietnam war. Clifford now accused Nixon of contradicting stated policy with positive action—of widening the war to American and world detriment. After denying validity of the domino theory, and pointing to American lack of contributing allies in Southeast Asia, he accused the President of holding a "curious obsession" about Asia in general and Indochina in particular. To consider South Vietnam a strategic necessity—an arena where the future of the world would be decided—made no sense:

> . . . The war in Vietnam is a local war arising out of the particular political conditions existing in southeast Asia. I consider it a delusion to suggest that it is part of a world-wide program of common aggression.

As to the war's nature,

> . . . our problem in Vietnam is due not only to our inability to attain the military goals, despite our great effort, but to the fact that the struggle is basically a political one. The enemy continues to symbolize the forces of nationalism. The regime which we support is a narrowly based military dictatorship.

The Cambodian venture, Clifford went on, was meaningless militarily. The enemy would stay beyond our reach no matter how long troops remained in the area. Once troops were withdrawn, the enemy would return to old haunts. Despite this inevitable result, ". . . a determined effort will be made to portray the entire adventure as a success, even though no major engagements will have taken place and the number of enemy casualties will be woefully small."

30. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., May 21, 1970.
31. Michael Hornsby, *The Times* (London), Saigon, May 12, 1970.

If military results were negligible, the action created a new set of political problems. More than ever, a political settlement was needed to end the war. Clifford offered a three-point program that called for total disengagement from combat by end of 1970 and total withdrawal by end of 1971.

The Nixon administration remained seemingly oblivious to this and other outspoken criticism. In early June, the President told the nation ". . . that the Cambodian intervention was the most successful operation of a long and difficult war."[32] This might well have been, but it still failed to count for much. Administration arguments that the operation had deprived the enemy of rice for three months and ammunition for nine months fell on tired ears—legislators and public had heard all this before. Nor were feelings mollified by an announcement that Cambodia was to receive $7.9 million worth of small arms—the Nixon doctrine for Asia had called for emphasis on economic, not military, aid.

Twist and wiggle as he did, Nixon could not evade the fact that he had enlarged the war without accomplishing the stated mission of eliminating enemy operational headquarters in Cambodia. MACV could talk all it wanted about weapons and rice. Since 1932, the Vietnamese had proved that they could go without either and still fight. Hanoi-watchers could discern crisis in Hanoi and point to a manpower shortage. But, considering gains in the South in particular and political reality in general, neither Moscow nor Peking would abandon Hanoi in the crunch: In June, diplomats in Moscow warned Washington that the drain on North Vietnam in Cambodia and Laos was again turning her toward China; to counter that, the U.S.S.R. agreed to furnish more weapons and material to the DRV, thus continuing the vicious circle of escalation.

Thus enemy strength in the South remained basically unaltered: about a hundred thousand North Vietnamese either in the border areas or in South Vietnam and perhaps a hundred thousand "regular" Viet Cong supported by sixty thousand provincial guerrillas and a civilian network of supporters and sympathizers. As General Abrams reportedly stressed to the President and his advisers, the real challenge remained in South Vietnam.[33] Abrams' worries were particularly well founded, for ARVN, of which he had spoken so optimistically, was beset with troubles. Colonel David Hackworth, an experienced ARVN adviser and heavily decorated combat officer quoted in a previous chapter, later wrote,

> . . . Vietnamization is a word which must be a product of Madison Avenue. It's a public-relations dream. I haven't seen an improvement in ARVN. . . .

32. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., June 4, 1970.
33. Henry Brandon, *The Sunday Times* (London), Washington, D.C., June 7, 1970.

Perhaps from a cosmetic viewpoint they look a little better in that they wear their helmets and keep their equipment on.[34]

Returning to the main challenge was not so easy. Once again, inept military strategy had created more problems than it had solved. Having supported Lon Nol's regime without being requested to do so, Nixon could not leave the country open to enemy vengeance. The Administration now veered to supporting a continued ARVN presence in Cambodia and even requested Congress to extend the deadline for American troop withdrawal.

Congress was having none of it. Not only did a Senate vote defeat the amendment, but, on June 24, the Senate formally repealed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in a belated attempt to curb the President's military powers.[35]

The Administration ignored the rebuff. American planes were already overflying "limits" stated by Nixon and were attacking Communist supply routes in western Cambodia. MACV quietly assured the Saigon government of continued support of its troops in Cambodia. When the last American troops headed for the border, in late June, ". . . leaving behind a lingering form of tear gas, blown bridges and damaged roads in an effort to slow communist reoccupation of the area," thirty thousand ARVN troops remained behind. The Administration continued to insist that it had gained an impressive victory. In late June, Fred Emery, of *The Times* (London), reported from Saigon that ". . . the Americans' conviction of the success of the Cambodian operation remains undiminished. The first seven weeks of the campaign are said to have produced 11,872 communist forces killed, 1,587 captured, 21,966 individual weapons seized, 1,640 crew-served weapons seized. American casualties are put at 323 killed, 1,446 wounded."[36]

But Louis Heren reported a gloomy assessment in Washington, where officials admitted that the enemy controlled one third of Cambodia, moved freely in another third, and was expected to reoccupy its old border sanctuaries within a few months.[37]

President Nixon completed the last act of a play within a play by appointing a new ambassador to the Paris peace talks, seventy-three-year-old David Bruce, and by again making a public appeal to Hanoi: ". . . We are prepared, by negotiation, to bring out all of our forces and have no forces at all in South Vietnam if the enemy . . . will withdraw theirs." The American Government attached only two conditions, the President continued: The South Vietnamese must remain free to determine their own future, and the United States would not impose a coalition government. What if the people chose a Communist government? Nixon would

34. *Newsweek*, July 5, 1971.
35. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., June 24, 1970.
36. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), Saigon, June 24, 1970.
37. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., June 29, 1970.

accept their judgment. He was sure that this would not happen: No Communist government had ever been freely elected. However, he would not hand South Vietnam to the Communists. The domino theory, the President insisted, was still valid:

> . . . Now I know there are those that say, "Well, the domino theory is obsolete." They haven't talked to the dominoes. They should talk to the Thais, Malaysians, to Singapore, to Indonesia, to the Philippines, to the Japanese, and the rest.
>
> And if the United States leaves Vietnam in a way that we are humiliated or defeated, not simply speaking in what are called jingoistic terms but in very practical terms, this will be immensely discouraging to the 300 million people from Japan clear round to Thailand and in free Asia.
>
> And even more important, it will be ominously encouraging to the leaders of Communist China and the Soviet Union who are supporting the North Vietnamese. It will encourage them in their expansionist policies in other areas. . . .[38]

So the presidential voice sounded on that first night in July 1970. It might have been Eisenhower in 1956, Kennedy in 1962, Johnson in 1966. The record was the same. After ten years, thirty-five thousand American lives, and perhaps $100 billion, the United States was returning to square one.

More of the same followed.

In early July, the American chief of the Vietnamization program in the Mekong Delta, John Paul Vann, personally reported to President Nixon that the enemy effort had been reduced to ". . . dispersed and dispirited units of five North Vietnamese regiments." Citing the NLF's latest directive, the report spoke of waning enemy confidence. The NLF now admitted the possibility of a cease-fire, in which case ". . . only continuing guerrilla warfare can achieve our purpose in the ensuing complicated situation."[39] The directive continued:

> . . . Strike now at only a few objectives over a wide area. Where necessary and so directed, local cells will go into retirement and await opportunity and orders.

Several developments tempered the optimism of Vann's report. One was increasing enemy activity inside South Vietnam. As early as June, MACV reported that, in the last two weeks of May, 221 Americans had been killed in South Vietnam, compared to 138 in Cambodia.[40] Two weeks after Vann had submitted his report, an American military

38. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., July 2, 1970.
39. Richard Hughes, *The Sunday Times* (London), Hong Kong, July 5, 1970.
40. Louis Heren, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., June 2, 1970; Vann, himself, would be killed in a helicopter crash in the central highlands, in June 1972.

spokesman warned of a pending Communist offensive in the central highlands. Five thousand ARVN troops and some fifteen hundred American marines pushed west from Da Nang in a search-and-destroy mission designed to disrupt the enemy build-up. While this action was occurring, enemy units attacked a 101st Airborne Division base camp eleven miles from the Laotian border, killing at least thirty-two Americans, wounding 148, and forcing evacuation of the area.[41] The action continued to build until, in mid-August, MACV launched one of the heaviest air interdiction efforts of the war: Nearly a hundred B-52 bombers, each carrying tons of bombs, struck ". . . North Vietnamese supply and staging areas on both sides of the Laotian border."[42] In early September, enemy reinforcements were coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, while local cadres were reoccupying old border bases in Cambodia.

Cambodia itself was proving a sink-hole. The $7.9 million in arms hastily authorized in May did not go very far. The Nixon administration slated $25 million for military aid in fiscal year 1970–71, but, in early July, several members of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board visited Phnom Penh to survey Cambodia's needs. A week later, proposed military expenditure for the fiscal year shot to $75 million. Discounting South Vietnamese troops in Cambodia (supported by the United States), this was virtually a unilateral program. Despite not-so-subtle hints from American officials, SEATO and other Asian nations proved reluctant to help erect a new Cambodian bulwark against communism. These were the "dominoes" to whom President Nixon had referred—the ones who stood in fear and trembling of the Communist threat: Domino Australia sent a little civil aid, dominoes New Zealand and Korea sent some medicines, and domino Thailand refused a request from Lon Nol to send troops. In late July, domino Cambodia, in the form of its prime minister, ". . . rejected the idea of Cambodian membership in SEATO. Reiterating his Government's policy of neutrality, he said Cambodia had no intention of taking arms against her enemies if they withdrew from Cambodian territory."[43]

Undeterred, Nixon continued generously to support Lon Nol. In late August, Vice-President Spiro Agnew said that it would be "impossible" to withdraw American troops from South Vietnam if Cambodia fell to the Communists: ". . . We are going to do everything we can to help the Lon Nol government."[44]

Southeast Asian leaders could not have received better news. In Bangkok, at month's end, Thailand's prime minister, Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, proposed to Agnew that the United States underwrite a "South-East Asianization" program—long-term United States economic,

41. *The Times* (London), AP, and Reuters, Saigon, July 23, 1970.
42. *The Times* (London) and AP, August 17, 1970.
43. *The Times* (London), Bangkok, July 23, 1970.
44. N. Y. Times News Service, *The Times* (London), August 23, 1970.

military, and financial assistance to build up Southeast Asian countries so that American ground forces will no longer be needed to fight in the area.[45] Though he did not achieve this goal, he did win Agnew's promise of substantial financial aid.

The Nixon administration fared no better on either the Saigon or the home front. Fighting in Cambodia had returned Vietnam to national and international front pages, and little escaped notice. In early July, the story of appalling conditions in South Vietnamese prisons—the inhuman "tiger cages"—broke. This led to a rash of survey stories, many of which openly criticized Thieu's increasingly authoritarian regime. If the war shifted into low gear, some observers remarked, Thieu's government, caught in rampant inflation and corruption, would probably flounder and fall. A vast black market flourished, as did profiteering, but beyond this was the seeming inability of Thieu and his lieutenants to control the shaky economy, which depended almost entirely on continued American aid.

Also in early July, a Congressional committee investigating the My Lai massacre concluded

> . . . that all details of the killings were covered up at the divisional level. There was, the investigation states in a report released tonight, "a concerted effort among military and State Department officers to suppress all evidence of the allegation and its investigation."
>
> It said that senior officers in both the American Division and the State Department were guilty of casting "a blanket of silence" over the massacres. . . .[46]

This adverse report further reduced Administration credibility, now at its perigee.

September brought more unfortunate news. Although the Senate rejected an amendment that would have forced the President to withdraw all American troops from Vietnam by end of 1971, stories broke on widespread use of marijuana by American troops. Then Vice-President Ky announced that he would visit the United States to speak at a right-wing rally—". . . my voice in the United States will be of one warrior to another, of one ally to another ally." After an uncomfortable seven weeks, in which he reiterated his plan several times, by means unknown he was persuaded to postpone the trip and finally to reduce considerably its dimensions.

Nor did progress enlighten the gloom of what, to many Americans, was becoming the Hundred Years' War. As James Reston noted in the New York *Times,*

> . . . the Nixon Administration finds itself in a familiar bind. What it calls its successes do not produce the results it expected. It keeps winning almost

45. *The Times* (London), Bangkok, August 20, 1970.
46. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., July 14, 1970.

every military battle, but ironically, the weaker the enemy gets, the less the enemy seems willing to negotiate. Hanoi now seems determined merely to carry on the war until a new situation is created by the withdrawal of the majority of the American troops.

In early October, Ramsey Clark argued against the Administration's continued reliance on force and violence to gain ". . . solutions of international problems." Vietnamization was one more demonstration of muscle, while the Cambodian incursion

> . . . manifests as clearly as does the continued and increasing bombing that American leadership still seeks to solve problems by violence. But while it may show we have a flexible and fierce striking power, it also demonstrates that we have no knockout punch. We can only go on fighting. It tells us American leadership has learned nothing from Vietnam. We want to walk out the victors by killing, by leaving a prolonged war in our wake. We cannot win that way.

Instead,

> . . . Our purpose in Vietnam now must be the end of violence. We should immediately act to remove our military presence. All bombing should halt. For Vietnamese who want sanctuary, it should be offered. The most ardent and relentless effort possible directed at Moscow, Peking, Paris and Hanoi should seek a political solution—a government reflecting the interests and needs of the people as comprehensively as possible. We should announce a firm, speedy schedule for complete military withdrawal and adhere strictly to it. Six months is ample. We should announce now that there will be no offensive, aggressive military action. We will return fire when fired upon and protect our evacuation by military action as necessary, but we will not initiate military engagements.
>
> Simultaneously, we should offer rehabilitation and development: billions for food, health, construction and economic assistance. . . .[47]

Meanwhile, in Paris, in mid-September, the Communist delegation put forward a new, eight-point peace plan, which David Bruce dismissed as new wine in old bottles.[48] In early October, with mid-term U.S. elections less than a month away, President Nixon offered what he fondly described as a "peace offensive." Addressing the nation on television from Savannah, Georgia, the President announced that his new initiative had been made possible by the remarkable success of the Vietnamization policy of the past eighteen months, and that it had won the concurrence of the South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia governments.[49] As for his plan, vintner Nixon was offering old wine in old bottles. He

47. Ramsey Clark, "On Violence, Peace and the Rule of Law," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1970.
48. (Editorial), "Documentation," *Survival*, December 1970.
49. Ibid.

was like the magician who promised to produce an elephant and came up with a mouse. His proposals were a diluted version of Henry Kissinger's plan outlined in *Foreign Affairs* in January 1969, a plan that itself remarkably resembled Robert Shaplen's plan presented as long ago as 1967. Nixon now called for a cease-fire in place, to be "effectively supervised" by international observers (a qualification Shaplen had realistically dismissed, a new international conference, negotiated troop withdrawals, and immediate release of all prisoners of war.[50]

Nixon's proposal won varied reception. *The Sunday Times* (London) noted that

> . . . in a sense the Nixon speech takes him back to where he was in May of last year [1969] when he first put forward some ambiguous offers that could have opened up the route to a compromise political settlement if Hanoi had been willing. Now he has added the ceasefire and, noticeably, omitted any reference to elections as the route to a settlement.[51]

The analyst then put his finger on the weakness of Nixon's stand: It supposed that the North was willing to negotiate the Americans out of South Vietnam:

> . . . Washington has persisted for years in thinking that such a day would come. But at present the Communists have opted for protracted war, both militarily and diplomatically, and it will be a big surprise to most of those who have lived through the Vietnam problem if they decide this is the time to switch.[52]

The Communist delegation in Paris shortly and sharply rejected a cease-fire in place—as Shaplen had said they would if inhibited by international supervision. In October 1967, he had warned:

> . . . It is the writer's opinion that almost any policing plan that would include such straight-jacketed mechanisms as the International Control Commission is doomed to failure. . . . What the Viet Nam situation desperately demands is a more free revolutionary expression of its own ethos, something which, during the long and tragic postwar period when the French refused to let go in the South, was denied it, and which, under Diem and since, has continued to be precluded. If the South is to rediscover its own revolutionary traditions, and to preserve or modify them in relation to the communist North, it must be as unmolested and even as unsupervised as possible. This naturally involves risk of communist domination or subversion, but the risks must be taken in a true revolutionary atmosphere and milieu, and not under the gaze of an ineffective international police element.
>
> This does not mean that the Americans and the Russians and possibly

50. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., October 9, 1970.
51. *The Sunday Times* (London), October 11, 1970.
52. Ibid.

other powers should not play a role, but in so far as possible the role should be of a "good offices" nature. . . .[53]

In Saigon, President Thieu made it known that he violently disagreed with President Nixon: He did not want a cease-fire; he would not accept neutrality; he wanted the Communists to leave his country and American troops to remain; and he would not release forty thousand Communist prisoners.[54] To some observers in the United States, the proposal seemed so politically inspired as to deserve contempt. As James Reston wrote in the New York *Times,*

. . . All governments operate on two levels—the moral and the political—but seldom in recent history has any administration matched the Nixon Administration's spectacular combination of priggish moralizing and political expediency.

One day it sounds like Billy Graham and the next it acts like Machiavelli. . . .[55]

Considering election results, Nixon failed to derive much political profit from his diplomatic ploy. Too many factors were operating against him. For some time, the momentous issue of Vietnam had been tearing Americans from normal loyalty. We saw the beginning of this process in the early sixties, when pro and anti sides steadily leaked classified information to suit their purposes (see Chapter 78). A certain amount of official leakage has always been a part of American Government—a case can be made for it as integral to the system of checks and balances. But major leakages—leakages of what are called "state secrets"—were now developing. For example, in May the CIA circulated a top-secret report on South Vietnam that contained devastating information. Concerned government officials took it upon themselves to inform the New York *Times* of this report. In mid-October, the New York *Times* broke the story by a veteran reporter we have earlier encountered, Neil Sheehan.

According to the CIA report, shortly after the Tet offensive of 1968 the Communists

. . . decided to shift their long-range strategy from intense military activity to political erosion. They stepped up their infiltration of secret agents into various branches of the South Vietnamese Government.

Most of the agents were natives of the southern part of divided Vietnam, and they were infiltrated into the armed forces, the police force and the South Vietnamese intelligence organizations whose task it was to eradicate the Vietcong and their North Vietnamese allies.

53. Shaplen ("Crisis"), *supra.*
54. *The Sunday Times* (London), October 11, 1970.
55. James Reston, N. Y. Times News Service, *The Times* (London), October 15, 1970.

The Communists had infiltrated over thirty thousand agents into the South Vietnamese Government ". . . in an apparatus that has been virtually impossible to destroy." Some twenty thousand of the agents operated in ARVN. According to the report,

> . . . the enemy network could not exist without the tacit complicity whether from fear, sympathy or apathy, of the majority of South Vietnamese soldiers and policemen and [the report] says that such feelings provide evidence that the Saigon government could not command the deep loyalty of the men on whom it depends to defend itself.

With virtually unlimited intelligence at its disposal, the enemy would have little trouble in surviving military pressures to emerge (and presumably take over control) once the United States had withdrawn her troops.[56]

White House officials downplayed the importance of the report. It was "overly pessimistic" and plainly contrary to present progress. President Thieu insisted that 98 per cent of South Vietnam's population was under government control, and if this figure contradicted an American official estimate of 75 per cent, no one could deny that progress was being made in pacification. American troops were daily withdrawing from actual combat—U.S. deaths were down to about forty a week. Over-all troop withdrawal was proceeding on schedule: Forty thousand more troops were to leave by year's end, and, by spring of 1971, all combat troops would be gone, leaving some 270,000 "support" troops in the area. President Thieu, Administration spokesmen insisted, was actively widening his political base for presidential elections scheduled for autumn of 1971. Thieu's seat already promised to be challenged by General Duong Van Minh, who reportedly would campaign on a "peace" ticket—if that wasn't democracy, then what was?

A pretty picture, but more blurs.

Ninety-eight per cent of the population under government control? 75 per cent? This was fine, except, as one correspondent noted, some qualified observers suggested that ". . . the indices upon which such assessments are based . . . [are] largely meaningless."[57] Until villages were properly policed, no one would know the depth of relationship between peasants and enemy who still controlled large areas of South Vietnam. So long as guerrilla units continued to strike, virtually at will, without peasants warning government authorities, government did not either command peasant support or control peasants. And what of White House silence following Sir Robert Thompson's *second* visit, in the autumn? What of New York *Times* reports ". . . asserting that Sir

56. Neil Sheehan, N. Y. Times News Service, *The Times* (London), October 19, 1970.

57. Michael Hornsby, *The Times* (London), Saigon, October 26, 1970.

Robert had reported on the continuing failure of the South Vietnamese to uproot the Viet Cong's underground political structure"?[58]

The Administration's definition of combat forces was also suspect. American aircraft ostensibly were interdicting Communist supply lines in Cambodia. In reality, they were also furnishing close air support to Cambodian forces. Although South Vietnam was building an air force, it had a long way to go: As of November, its helicopter fleet counted two hundred and fifty machines, compared to some four thousand American machines in the area. In early November, Secretary of the Air Force Robert Seamans admitted that U. S. Air Force units would have to remain in Indochina for years.[59] Plans to remove all combat forces also changed: Two combat divisions, the 101st Airborne in the north and the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) in the south, would now remain to provide security for bases such as Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay.

Nor did the Administration confine MACV entirely to a defensive posture. American deaths may have been reduced, but they did not cease. Installations suffered guerrilla attacks, and patrols suffered casualties. The enemy shot down an American reconnaissance plane in North Vietnam and, in late November, the President authorized bombing strikes—"protective reaction"—to resume south of the 19th parallel. At the same time, MACV launched a helicopter raid on an alleged prisoner-of-war camp near Hanoi. Ostensibly designed to free American prisoners of war, it also demonstrated American ability to penetrate North Vietnamese defenses. It failed on the first count, and in so doing, symbolized the over-all intelligence failure of American arms: No prisoners were in the camp. As for psychological effect, Hanoi already knew that American arms were capable of invading the North, just as her leaders knew that American atomic bombs could eliminate Hanoi. That wasn't the crux of the situation: Hanoi also knew that what happened subsequently might well end civilization.

Renewed bombing of the North was something else again. Besides retaliation for the lost reconnaissance plane, it undoubtedly was an attempt to influence intractable North Vietnamese negotiators in Paris. It brought general outcry from around the world. In defending it, indeed in threatening to resume it in earnest, Secretary of Defense Laird cited what he insisted was an "understanding" with the North when President Johnson stopped the bombing in November 1968. Hanoi predictably denied that any "understanding" existed. Laird should have read Kissinger's analysis of these negotiations in his celebrated *Foreign Affairs* article and respected the devastating effect of morbid linguistic behavior induced by the two countries' inability to identify with each other.

A more valid reason for threatening to resume bombing was embar-

58. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., January 17, 1971.
59. *The Times* (London) and AP, Saigon, November 5, 1970.

rassing: American intelligence was reporting indications of a build-up from the North that scarcely jibed either with Hanoi's alleged exhausted state or Administration claims of "victory" in Cambodia. An Institute for Strategic Studies analysis of the Cambodian incursion concluded:

> . . . The immediate effect was to reduce pressure on American forces in Vietnam and thus to ease the course of American withdrawal and "Vietnamization." But the North Vietnamese had not been crippled. Other supply routes, based not only on expanding the "Ho Chi-minh trail" but also on the Mekong and Sekong rivers, were developed with some speed to replace that through [the port of] Kompong Som. At the same time, military efforts in both southern Laos and eastern Cambodia were stepped up.[60]

The same analysis concluded that, in South Vietnam, ". . . the leadership in Hanoi had openly reverted to a policy of 'protracted struggle' by guerrilla forces and organised activity by major Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units was increasingly restricted to the sparsely populated fringes of the country. . . ." In mid-December, however, a Brazilian journalist, Louis Wiznitzer, reported from Hanoi in the *Christian Science Monitor* that the North Vietnamese were preparing ". . . a new and perhaps decisive round of fighting on the ground." He continued:

> . . . There is every evidence to the visitor here that, for all the reports out of Washington and Saigon and even Moscow that the Viet Cong are exhausted and the North Vietnamese over-extended, preparations are under way for another push.[61]

As the year drew to a close, the enemy was fighting hard in Laos and Cambodia and remained uncomfortably evident in South Vietnam. His negotiators in Paris showed little inclination to negotiate. In mid-December, Hanoi radio predicted "more complex" and "more violent" fighting throughout Indochina during 1971.

60. Institute for Strategic Studies, "Eastern Asia." In *Strategic Survey, 1970* (London: The Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971).

61. Henry Brandon, *The Sunday Times* (London), Washington, D.C., December 13, 1970.

Chapter 94

The Nixon administration's new strategy • Hanoi's position • The war in Cambodia • Opposition at home • ARVN invades Laos: "the golden opportunity" • Battlefield alchemy: disaster • Reasons why • Picking up the pieces • Flies in the Nixon ointment • The Calley case • Captain Daniels writes the President • Thieu and Ky fall out • The Pentagon Papers • South Vietnamese elections: Thieu versus Thieu leaves Thieu • Enemy gains • Nixon's new stand • Stalemate in Paris • Operation Rolling Thunder resumes • Giap's spring offensive • ARVN reverses • The war escalates • Nixon's new peace plan • ARVN's problems • Saigon's losses • No win, no victory

IN EARLY 1971, two voices sounded words as prophetic as those uttered by Shakespeare's witches dancing around another devil's brew. One belonged to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, who announced that the U.S. combat role in South Vietnam would end within twelve months. More time would be needed, however, for the South Vietnamese ". . . to replace Americans in air support, logistics and administration." By May, American strength in Vietnam would be reduced to 285,000 men.[1]

Laird's brave words continued Nixon's effort to close a political coffin before it claimed what rapidly was becoming an administrative corpse. Militarily, his statement was as flaccid as the rest of the Nixon doctrine. Primarily a political ploy designed to ease anti-Administration pressures within the United States, it also was intended to allow the Administration certain strategic and tactical flexibility within South Vietnam. By tying American troop withdrawals to the progress of Viet-

1. Patrick Brogan, *The Times* (London), Paris, January 6, 1971.

namization, it enabled the Administration to plead that overt military action against the enemy within South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam was necessary to save American lives, a dubious argument that perhaps favorably impressed duller elements of American society but adversely impressed the rest of the world. It also established the notion of a residual force remaining in South Vietnam after the bulk of American troops had left. Politically it was cheap, militarily it was unsatisfactory, diplomatically it was meaningless.

The other voice emanating from the devil's brew belonged to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, who, in Hanoi, announced that ". . . the Vietnamese people would insist on unconditional withdrawal by the Americans and that this point was not negotiable."[2] The prime minister reiterated that Hanoi would not give in, an intransigence reflected in Paris, where Ambassador David Bruce continued to report no progress in peace talks, and in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, where guerrillas and PAVN units continued brisk, if isolated, actions. Le Duan, first secretary of Hanoi's Communist Party, emphasized this stand by announcing that the North's ". . . strategic guideline is to fight a protracted war, gaining strength as one fights." ". . . To engage in military struggle under unfavorable circumstances," he said, echoing Sun Tzu, "is a serious mistake."

Le Duan's words seemed to some Western observers to be an admission of defeat, and in a sense they were. But they scarcely were tantamount to capitulation. Instead, they marked a shift in strategy, one predicated primarily on the realization that American public opinion was forcing disengagement. Where, two years earlier, Hanoi was ignoring internal damage in favor of prosecuting the war in the South, it now turned to repairing this damage as part of growing strong internally in order to carry on protracted warfare. A visiting Canadian journalist, Michael Maclear, found that the government had pulled all stops in the North. Not only were conscription-age men and women now assigned to labor brigades, but the government was even offering such incentives as cash bonuses and home-building loans to further its program of repairing war damage and rebuilding the economy.[3]

Internal stress did not end combat operations in the South. Despite U.S.-ARVN attacks of the previous spring, the Communist position in Cambodia remained strong. Supplies continued to flow south via the Ho Chi Minh Trail, in defiance of American air interdiction. In November, Communist units had occupied a strategic pass in Cambodia to cut Highway 4, the single road connection between Phnom Penh, the capital, and Kompong Som, the single deepwater port (see map, Chapter 93). The capital soon suffered a fuel shortage. Convoys carrying

2. Ibid.

3. Michael Maclear, *The Times* (London), January 19, 1971; see also Robert M. Shaplen, "We Have Always Survived," *The New Yorker*, April 15, 1972, who discusses developments in the North after Ho's death.

fuel from South Vietnam on the Mekong River fell victim to guerrilla ambushes. In early January, undoubtedly inspired by MACV planners, a combined Cambodian-ARVN task force, heavily supported by American planes, moved to reopen the highway. When ground attacks bogged down, American helicopter gunships joined the action. Although Cambodian troops captured the target pass, a few days later Viet Cong suicide squads attacked Phnom Penh's airport, virtually eliminated the fledgling Cambodian air force, and shelled the capital, sending morale plunging. The American Government responded with massive airlifts of barbed wire, sandbags, and more arms and ammunition to Phnom Penh. At the same time, North Vietnamese units knocked out a series of guerrilla outposts in southern Laos, in the important Bolovens Plateau area—outposts secretly organized by CIA personnel (see map, p. 1354).

The new action caused a furor in Congress, whose opposition members, including Republicans, interpreted it as violation of the Cooper-Church amendment, which prohibited the Administration from using funds for U.S. operations in Cambodia. Senator William Fulbright held that ". . . our actions in Cambodia are clearly inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the amendment. Whether they are technically and legally in violation is another matter."[4] Senator George McGovern stated that ". . . any Senator who talks about sending American forces into Cambodia should lead the charge himself. I'm fed up with old men sending young men out to die, particularly in stupid wars of this kind."[5] With that, he introduced another bill calling for a specific date for total withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam.

The Administration justified the action as necessary to protect American troops, as well as, in the words of Melvin Laird, ". . . to supplement the efforts and the armed forces of our friends and allies who are determined to resist aggression."[6] A British correspondent wrote from Saigon on January 21:

> . . . A military spokesman expressing it another way said any action is justified to prevent activities that might "ultimately endanger" the U.S. Vietnamization (withdrawal) program or the safety of U.S. troops remaining in Vietnam.
>
> American air strikes, an air force spokesman said, are technically limited to the tri-border area (where Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam come together), and the area east of the Mekong river including the Parrot's Beak and Angel's Wing.
>
> But it is safe to assume, officials said, that American planes will go wherever there are Communists in Cambodia. And, as was vividly demonstrated

4. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., January 25, 1971.
5. *Time,* February 8, 1971.
6. Ibid.

along Highway 7 in December, they will destroy towns and villages if it is felt necessary.[7]

In Washington, Secretary of State Rogers repeated the theme to an angry Senate Foreign Relations Committee and to a bewildered American public. The Administration, he said, was prepared to use air power in Indochina ". . . to the fullest possible extent necessary." The primary objective was to protect American forces: ". . . It is the least costly way to protect our men, and why shouldn't we?"[8]

Prior to this outburst, the Washington *Post* had expressed an attitude scarcely unique throughout the country. The prevailing crisis of confidence begins

> . . . with solemn pledges from the highest government officials which are not fulfilled. Then comes the fine print and fancy rhetoric and the political finagling which cannot quite be put down—and probably shouldn't be—as lies or even calculated deceit, but yet have that look. And so the value of the next pledge depreciates.[9]

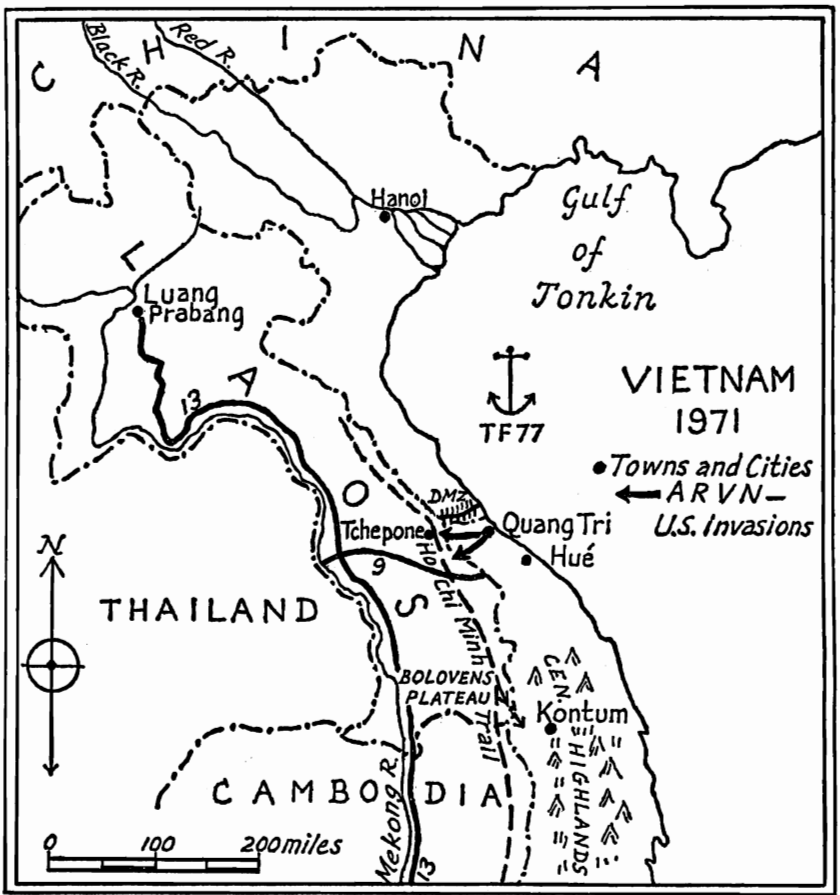
Commenting on the situation in *The Times* (London), Fred Emery sensibly wrote:

> . . . This could all have been avoided, and the use of American air power very probably accepted with minimal disquiet, had the Administration come clean and admitted that the situation had changed to require it.
>
> Instead, the American Government, like most, is reluctant to confess changes of policy, clings to the dubious insistence that the "Nixon doctrine" all along foresaw such developments. The suspicion is deep that the White House is simply gambling on the acquiescence of most Americans in bombing one's way out of South-East Asia—so long as American casualties are kept low.[10]

The powerful fumes of Congressional and public dissent had not yet dissipated when reports of another Nixon surprise began to reach Western readers. Despite a news blackout imposed by MACV and the White House, the public learned that some twenty thousand South Vietnamese soldiers, the elite of ARVN, were moving toward southern Laos. This task force, backed by an impressive armored task force of some ten thousand American troops, was said to be reoccupying once-familiar terrain in northwestern reaches of South Vietnam. A second ARVN task force was reportedly moving into eastern Cambodia.

On February 8, an uneasy world learned that South Vietnam had invaded the panhandle of southern Laos. American planes and artillery had prepared the way; American helicopters supported the action; an

7. Peter Osnos, *The Guardian,* Saigon, January 21, 1971.
8. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., January 29, 1971.
9. Fred Emery, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., January 28, 1971.
10. Ibid.



M.E.P.

American task force backed the effort but remained in South Vietnam. ARVN Operation Lam Son 719 and U. S. Operation Dewey Canyon II were designed to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail leading to Cambodia—still another "golden opportunity," according to advocates including Abrams, to eliminate enemy supply lines and shorten the war accordingly.[11] In Saigon, Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky told correspondents that ARVN forces would probably remain in Laos until the end of the dry season, in May, and would probably repeat the operation the next year.[12] It might be necessary, he said, to bomb North Vietnam in the

11. The operation was named after a Vietnamese victory over China in the seventeenth century, a belated attempt to profit psychologically as the North had been doing all along; Dewey Canyon was a misspelled code name.

12. Alvin Shuster, *The Times* (London), Saigon, February 10, 1971.

process. According to President Nixon, the operation was ". . . consistent with international law." It was as well that attorney Nixon did not have to debate the legal issue. Congressional opponents such as Senator Mansfield deplored the action as a ". . . deepening of the tragedy." The Royal Laotian Government condemned it; at United Nations headquarters, Secretary-General U Thant condemned it ". . . in strong terms."[13] In Washington, a columnist, Joseph Alsop, described the move as President Nixon's ". . . second great Southeast Asia gamble," which he hoped would prove "decisive." According to Mr. Alsop, President Nixon believed that the operation, by cutting Communist supply lines to the South, would force Hanoi ". . . to take the hardest kind of new look at their own situation and future prospects." Now that a precedent had been established, Alsop suggested, ARVN could cut the trail again next year.[14]

Speculation filled world newspapers, while front-line communiqués, as in the case of the Cambodian invasion the previous spring, told of slight resistance with impressive captures of food and ammunition. On February 15, Michael Hornsby of *The Times* (London) cabled from Quang Tri that, according to General Hoang Xuan Lam, ARVN commander of the invasion, ". . . the southward flow of North Vietnamese men and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh trail which is normally at its height during the last three months of the dry season—February to May—has been completely halted." The general claimed that his forces were deployed along Highway 9 fifteen to twenty miles inside Laos and that seven hundred fifty North Vietnamese had been killed at a cost of forty to fifty ARVN troops.[15]

Ugly rumors were already creeping into newsrooms, however. *Time* magazine noted that, in the first five days, twenty-nine thousand troops supported by ". . . 493 gunship attacks, 216 air cavalry missions, and 4,025 separate lifts of troops and supplies . . . destroyed two trucks, exploded one ammunition storage area and found one 57-mm. recoilless rifle, the mount for a mortar and a few dozen 105-mm. artillery shells."[16] Although MACV announced the loss of twelve helicopters, Michael Hornsby suggested that as many as fifty had been damaged or destroyed. If this was true, it followed that enemy resistance must be more than sporadic. Sure enough, two days later President Nixon repeated a report from General Abrams that although ARVN was fighting in ". . . a superior way," it had ". . . run into very heavy resistance."

Abrams' words preluded battlefield alchemy: In the harsh crucible of tactical reality, the "golden opportunity" was turning into base disaster; Operation Lam Son 719 was coming apart at the seams. Instead of vanishing, as early reports suggested, Communist forces had fallen

13. *The Times* (London), New York, February 8, 1971.
14. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., February 10, 1971.
15. Michael Hornsby, *The Times* (London), Quang Tri, February 15, 1971.
16. *Time,* February 15, 1971.

back only to snake around clanking ARVN armor columns to strike lines of communication—a tactic as old as the war. Once ARVN units occupied various positions, usually in battalion strength, VC and PAVN units joined to launch "suicide" attacks, exactly as they had done at Dien Bien Phu. And, as at Dien Bien Phu, they sprang a tactical surprise, this time in the form of tanks, old Russian PT-76s, whose presence had gone undetected by American fliers and planes (but was undoubtedly known to local peasants).

Washington attempted to break the truth as painlessly as possible. On February 22, the South Vietnamese Government, which earlier had spoken of minimum enemy forces in the area, now changed its tune: President Thieu said the invasion was to prevent a North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam's five northern provinces. While Secretary of Defense Laird, two days later, insisted that ARVN units were ". . . achieving their objective of major disruption of enemy supply routes," the enemy not only had shifted to western arteries beyond ARVN's reach but was overrunning ARVN positions in the vicinity of Highway 9. By February 25, the battle so wished for by MACV and ARVN was on. Once again, conflicting reports reached the outside world. For ten days, ARVN seemed to be holding its own and then some. On March 7, Saigon proudly announced the capture of Tchepone, a major Communist staging and supply area, and on that same day, Derek Wilson reported in *The Times* (London): ". . . The North and South Vietnamese now appear irretrievably committed to a decisive, full-scale showdown in Laos, each aiming at attrition of the other through mass-slaughter." Vice-President Ky, never at a loss for the dramatic, told correspondents that his government was looking for a ". . . Dien Bien Phu in reverse." A day later, General Lam claimed that his forces had cut ". . . the main portion" of the Ho Chi Minh Trail; Hanoi was taking casualties twenty times heavier than his own and had lost about six thousand killed and hundreds more by air strikes, as well as 112,000 tons of ammunition, 245 vehicles including seventy-four tanks, and thirteen hundred tons of food.[17] In a dramatic Pentagon press conference, Secretary of Defense Laird and Lieutenant General John Vogt, Jr., proudly displayed a piece of enemy pipeline used to bring down gasoline from the North—but failed to mention that it had been captured weeks earlier by a commando raid![18] But ARVN losses reportedly were heavy: In the week ending March 4, they amounted to 898 killed and over two thousand wounded; American deaths numbered sixty-nine; *Time* magazine reported that ". . . in three weeks, no less than five ARVN battalions had, for all practical purposes, been knocked out of action."[19] Derek Wilson reported fourteen helicopters shot down

17. Derek Wilson, *The Times* (London), Khe Sanh, March 8, 1971.
18. *Time,* March 15, 1971.
19. *Time,* March 8, 1971.

in one day; an American pilot had told him: ". . . We're being knocked off like flies."

ARVN still seemed to claim the upper hand, however, as it slogged into battered Tchepone, twenty-five miles inside Laos. President Nixon continued to insist that the operation was a success; according to General Abrams, the fighting proved that ARVN could "hack it" against top PAVN units. But suddenly, on March 11, General Lam began pulling units out of Tchepone only five days after they had occupied it. And now ARVN units began yielding artillery fire bases one after the other, often destroying guns and vehicles to prevent capture by the enemy, before being evacuated by helicopters—or killed. American efforts to save ARVN units reached frantic proportions: One day's operations cost thirty-seven out of forty helicopters engaged![20] By March 21, only four thousand of twenty-four thousand ARVN soldiers remained in Laos. A day after television viewers around the world had watched desperate ARVN soldiers clinging to helicopter skids in order to save themselves, Secretary of Defense Laird admitted that "withdrawal" was underway but that it was according to plan.[21] Three days later, ARVN had left Laos. A week later, enemy trucks were driving down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

But now Administration spokesmen began singing new tunes: Lam Son 719 was not alone designed to cut enemy supply lines; Lam Son 719 was designed to mass enemy troops and make them vulnerable to American air power: Official spokesmen claimed over eleven thousand enemy dead and ten PAVN battalions annihilated in an operation that also relieved enemy pressure on Cambodia!

Almost no one was listening to such arrant nonsense. The cost of Lam Son 719 was tremendous: The Saigon government admitted to five thousand ARVN casualties (some observers thought ten thousand more likely) plus seventy American lives, perhaps a hundred forty helicopters, thirty tanks, and scores of armored personnel carrier and artillery pieces lost. Even worse was the morale factor. Lam Son 719 forfeited meager gains extracted from the Cambodian invasion of the previous spring with little to show for the sacrifice. ARVN units never reached western arteries of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and scarcely had they left the area when trucks again began moving south.

What happened? Overconfidence played a major part. The earlier Cambodian invasion, which did not provide an accurate test of ARVN's tactical effectiveness, had misled military commanders and experts into once again painting dreams. Sir Robert Thompson, Nixon's paid consultant on counterinsurgency, had given ARVN high marks: ". . . The fact that you're able to keep withdrawing troops at the current rate, that U.S. casualties are down to well under fifty a week, that even South

20. *Time,* March 15, 1971.
21. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., March 22, 1971.

Vietnamese casualties are down—this is the measure of it." Thompson went on: ". . . The balance of power has shifted as between the enemy's capability and the South Vietnamese capability."[22] According to the same source, in Saigon ". . . Abrams likes to tell visiting firemen . . . that 70% of South Viet Nam's army is 'on a fighting par with U.S. troops.'" Abrams, Thompson, and a good many others were continuing to confuse quantity with quality, and were again ignoring General Gwynn's teaching that a lull in guerrilla warfare did not necessarily mean enemy weakness. ARVN found a flexibly organized enemy who was willing to yield a branch or two of the Ho Chi Minh Trail until the tactical position became clear. They found an enemy who had secretly brought down tanks and SAM missiles; an enemy that reinforced itself during battle with units from the DMZ; an enemy that skillfully employed guerrilla tactics to bewilder, slow, and isolate ARVN columns and outposts until they were ready for assault.

Divided command also apparently came into play, as noted by a particularly astute commentator, James Reston. ARVN and MACV together seem to have underestimated enemy strength—scarcely a new failing. Abrams allegedly urged Thieu to send in more forces than proposed, but Thieu refused: Thanks largely to U. S. Army indoctrination, ARVN commanders at this time held almost mystical belief in efficacy of air and artillery power, and this undoubtedly influenced Thieu's decision. Once opposition developed, Abrams is said to have again urged Thieu to commit more troops, but the South Vietnamese President, probably for domestic political reasons, refused and, instead, terminated the action.

Although Nixon and aides attempted to paint a satisfactory picture, the operation itself, let alone its obvious failure, brought heavy criticism from within the United States. Concurrent with its confused and contradictory course came a variety of other ills resulting from American involvement in Indochina. Despite reduction of American forces in the area and a claim that direct military expenditures in Indochina had decreased to $16 billion for the current fiscal year, over-all defense expenditures were to rise to $76 billion for Fiscal Year 1972. Even before the operation began, the American army reaped widespread opprobrium by dropping charges against Major General Samuel Koster for attempting to cover up the My Lai massacre: Koster was reduced in rank, given a letter of censure, and allowed to retire, the first of a series of mild punishments for major dereliction of duty.[23] The operation was only just underway when a heart attack felled the Cambodian prime minister, Lon Nol, to confuse that already confused situation further. Then the story of bribery and corruption in American military clubs

22. *Time*, February 15, 1971.

23. Seymour M. Hersh, "Coverup," *The New Yorker*, January 22 and January 29, 1972.

and post exchanges in Indochina (and elsewhere) broke; it would involve a brigadier general and the Sergeant Major of the Army.[24] The public was further disturbed by an almost constant chorus of dissent. Senator Edward Kennedy told an audience that ". . . Vietnamization means war and more war; it has nothing to do with an end to violence, it is a policy of violence." Senator McGovern accused President Nixon of ". . . flirting with World War Three." ARVN's most able general, Do Cao Tri, was killed in a helicopter crash along with veteran *Newsweek* correspondent, able François Sully; Larry Burrows, of *Life,* was killed in another one. On February 22, Lieutenant William Calley began a recital to a military court of his shocking actions at My Lai. A few days later, the army decided to court-martial his brigade commander, Colonel Oran K. Henderson. While fighting in Laos increased, four VC guerrillas blew up 75 per cent of Cambodia's oil-refinery system. The American people next learned that so zealous was its army as to keep card files on 25 million American citizens. Sounding more like a police-state official than an American public servant, Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Froehlke stated, on March 2, that

> . . . surveillance designed to cope with civil violence that might eventually require the use of army troops would continue.
>
> To protect people and property in an area of civil disturbance with the greatest effectiveness, he said, "military commanders must know all that can be learnt about that area and its inhabitants."[25]

Army agents might better have been employed studying their own establishment. While PX scandals mounted, the General Accounting Office accused American defense contractors of making wildly excessive profits. The public was also forcefully reminded that some soldiers in Vietnam, in addition to insubordination including refusal, on occasion, to fight, and drug addiction, had picked up the quaint habit of "fragging": eliminating overzealous officers with a hand grenade; in a word, murder. Writing of an army he had once considered ". . . the best Army the United States ever put into the field," Colonel Robert Heinl, a retired marine turned journalist, concluded, in May 1971, that the ". . . United States armed forces, wrenched by seemingly insurmountable problems within and without, appear to have reached their lowest point in this century in morale, discipline and battleworthiness." After citing numer-

24. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., March 3, 1971; see also Shaplen ("We Have Always Survived"), *supra:* ". . . a conservative estimate is that fifteen thousand Americans, in uniform or out, have been involved in this process of corruption. These Americans have encouraged the black-marketing of all sorts of goods, have encouraged pilferage for payoffs, have raked huge profits from the smuggling of drugs and other goods, from the illicit trade in dollars, from the operation of night clubs, from the importation of American call girls and so on. . . ."

25. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., March 2, 1971.

ous incidents within and without Vietnam, Heinl quoted General Matthew Ridgway: ". . . Not before in my lifetime . . . has the Army's public image fallen to such low esteem. . . ."[26] While army intelligence agents continued to cover public gatherings in the United States and record covertly the words of American citizens, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Herbert confirmed army practice in Vietnam of torturing prisoners. And at the end of March, a military court found William Calley guilty of callously murdering South Vietnamese civilians and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

The verdict set off still another internal domestic row. People had heard Calley describe the massacre at My Lai; yet some of them held that the young lieutenant was no more guilty than others. Bowing to pressures, President Nixon called the court to task and mitigated Calley's sentence to twenty years. Captain Aubrey Daniels, the twenty-nine-year-old army officer who had prosecuted, now wrote an open letter to his commander in chief. After expressing shock and dismay at the reaction of many people to the sentence, Daniels suggested that ". . . the war in Vietnam has brutalized us more than I care to believe" and that it must therefore cease. He continued:

> . . . But how much more appalling it is to see so many of the political leaders of the nation who have failed to see the moral issue or, having seen it, to compromise it for political motive in the face of apparent public displeasure with the verdict.

Mouse Daniels then took lion Nixon to task:

> . . . In view of your previous statements concerning this matter, I have been particularly shocked and dismayed at your decision to intervene in these proceedings in the midst of the public clamor. Your decision can only have been prompted by the response of a vocal segment of our population, who while no doubt acting in good faith, cannot be aware of the evidence which resulted in Lieutenant Calley's conviction.

Not only had the President ". . . damaged the military judicial system" and ". . . subjected a judicial system of this country to the criticism that it is subject to political influence," but

> . . . the image of Lieutenant Calley, a man convicted of the premeditated murder of at least 21 unarmed and unresisting people, as a national hero has been enhanced. . . .

And he concluded:

> . . . I would expect that the President of the United States, a man whom I believed should and would provide the moral leadership for this nation,

26. Robert D. Heinl, "The Armed Forces: Are they 'near collapse'?" Detroit *Sunday News*, May 23, 1971.

would stand fully behind the law of this land on a moral issue which is so clear and about which there can be no compromise.

For this nation to condone the acts of Lieutenant Calley is to make us no better than our enemies. . . .

These were difficult times for the Administration, but, as an experienced observer of the Washington scene, Henry Brandon, pointed out:

. . . In many ways the Nixon administration must assume responsibility for the credibility gap that now exists between the public and the Press, for anybody who has attended the background briefings given at the outset of the Laotian operation knows what its targets were and where high official expectations stood. Perhaps one of the most serious weaknesses of the administration—and it explains why it does not get the credit it should for some of its achievements—is that it suffers from a compulsive desire to oversell.[27]

To try to bolster waning popularity, the President, in early April, announced another large troop withdrawal, and began to hint at a new diplomatic offensive, which, by restoring ". . . the common purpose," would create ". . . a new national unity." The words sounded forlorn in view of massive anti-war demonstrations including those by Vietnam veterans who flung medals onto the White House lawn. Nor was the President's posture strengthened by Saigon, where Vice-President Ky broke openly with President Thieu and not only called for a political solution based on coexistence with North Vietnam but questioned Thieu's integrity and compared the country to a "sinking ship."[28] In the polemics that followed, he stated what all critics had been saying for years: ". . . There is no social justice [in South Vietnam] right now."[29]

Nor was military news any better. A benumbed American public was now informed that large numbers of American troops in South Vietnam were using drugs. Although units continued to leave the country, other units were still fighting in conjunction with ARVN forces. In late May, Viet Cong guerrillas attacked American installations only twenty-five miles from Saigon. At the same time, the enemy in Cambodia attacked ARVN's border force at Snuol and forced it to evacuate, a minor disaster that reportedly claimed a hundred ARVN killed and three hundred wounded and loss of eighty vehicles including tanks and armored personnel carriers.[30]

As if the situation were not sufficiently depressing, in mid-June the nation began reading extracts from theretofore-top-secret documents delivered to public media by a former Pentagon analyst and RAND em-

27. Henry Brandon, *The Sunday Times* (London), March 28, 1971.
28. Derek Wilson, *The Times* (London), Saigon, May 2, 1971.
29. Ibid., May 16, 1971.
30. Keyes Beech, Chicago *Daily News,* Saigon, June 7, 1971.

ployee, Daniel Ellsberg. These revelations of official dissembling, depressing in the extreme, were still rebounding when the General Accounting Office suggested that nearly two billion dollars budgeted for South Vietnam pacification from 1968 to 1970 could not be accounted for and listed ominously, among the problems, ". . . misappropriation of funds."[31]

Not surprisingly, the President's popularity had been steadily declining and he was in serious political trouble. His Administration had recorded a fiscal-year deficit of over $23 billion, the second-largest deficit since World War II and one estimated to increase in the current fiscal year. The balance of trade also measured an unhealthy deficit, which meant, among other things, that the dollar's value stood in jeopardy. No less an authority than former chief presidential economic adviser Gardner Ackley warned

> . . . that failure to act to stem inflation and unemployment "can threaten the stability of the social and political order." He said that inflation and unemployment were exaggerating the poverty problem to the point where current policies could provoke outright revolution.[32]

Although the Administration gained some relief from Henry Kissinger's secret mission to Peking, little encouraging news arrived from Indochina. As American, Thai, and Australian troop units continued to depart, President Thieu left no doubt that he headed a military dictatorship, a fact shortly emphasized when he alone ran for election. Prime Minister Lon Nol, in neighboring Cambodia, added to the authoritarian air in mid-October by declaring a state of emergency and appointing ". . . a new government to rule by 'ordinance' rather than by constitutional law. He said that he no longer would 'play the game of democracy and freedom' since it stood in the way of victory."[33] Less than a month later, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn overthrew Thailand's parliamentary government in favor of rule by revolutionary council.

Political issues seemed more clearly, if unhappily, settled than military issues. In Paris, the enemy, in early July, proposed a new, seven-point peace plan, a series of demands unacceptable to either Washington or Saigon.[34] As fighting receded inside South Vietnam, it continued to mount in Laos, where, according to Senator Stuart Symington, the American Government was secretly spending hundreds of millions in fighting a clandestine war.[35] In supporting a thirty-thousand-man irregular force supplemented by Thai mercenaries, the American Govern-

31. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., July 11, 1971.
32. Harlow Unger, *The Sunday Times* (London), August 1, 1971.
33. *Time,* October 21, 1972.
34. "Text of the North Vietnam Seven-Point Peace Plan," *Survival,* September 1971.
35. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., June 6, 1971.

ment spent over $230 million in fiscal year 1970.[36] In Cambodia, about thirty thousand PAVN troops supplemented by perhaps fifteen to twenty thousand Cambodian Communists, the Khmer Rouge, claimed control of about half the country, and, as 1971 drew to a close, guerrillas were bombarding the capital, Phnom Penh, a threat that caused Saigon to send some twenty-four thousand troops across the border to bolster ARVN units already in Cambodia.

Inside South Vietnam, the situation remained in flux. In September, a combined ARVN-U.S. task force hastily moved north against enemy activity in the demilitarized zone. Some two hundred American helicopters lifted thousands of ARVN troops to Quang Tri province, where three brigades, backed by about two thousand American troops, began a giant "sweep" of the area. Enemy forces inside Cambodia continued to contest the border area. In the Mekong Delta, about forty thousand VC continued active. In mid-October, VC guerrillas slipped into an American base eight miles from Saigon and blew up two helicopter gunships and damaged three others.[37]

The turbulent situation again brought dangerous Congressional antagonism. In late October, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved an amendment that limited ". . . all spending in Indo-China to the single goal of withdrawing American troops."[38] The Administration replied that it would continue operations necessary to protect American forces. In early November, waves of B-52 bombers supplemented by naval gunfire worked over enemy positions in the demilitarized zone. About the same time, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced, in Saigon, that American troops might still be fighting long after the bulk of American forces had been withdrawn. He told reporters that he found the progress of Vietnamization "most encouraging." ". . . He said that Saigon's position was militarily strong and the main problem facing South Vietnam was economic. It was one of strengthening and stabilizing the economy so that the country could support its armed forces."[39] President Thieu complemented this pretty speech by devaluing the piaster and once again promising "economic reforms."[40] A few days later, President Nixon announced that another forty-five thousand American troops would be withdrawn, ". . . and proclaimed the end of the U.S. offensive role in the war." His decision would cut American troop strength to 139,000 by February 1, 1972. Further withdrawals ". . . would be determined by the level of enemy infiltration and combat activity, the success of Vietnamization, progress in securing release of American prisoners in North Viet-Nam and obtaining an Indo-China cease-fire." If no progress resulted from the Paris talks, ". . . it will be

36. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., August 2, 1971.
37. *The Times* (London), Saigon, October 13, 1971.
38. *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., October 20, 1971.
39. Derek Wilson, *The Times* (London), Saigon, November 7, 1971.
40. Ibid., November 15, 1971.

necessary to maintain a residual force" of American troops in the country, he said.[41] ". . . Air power, of course, will continue to be used," the President told newsmen. "We will continue to use it in support of the South Vietnamese until there is a negotiated settlement or, looking farther down the road, until the South Vietnamese have developed the capability to handle the situation themselves." If the enemy increased infiltration, ". . . we will have to not only continue our air strikes; we will have to step them up."[42]

No progress resulted from the Paris talks, one reason probably being that General John Lavelle, commanding the U. S. Air Force in Vietnam, had taken it upon himself to open a secret air offensive against the North—in defiance of orders.[43]

With that avenue closed, the President had to play for time until overtures to Peking and Moscow came to fruition. With the approach of an election year, he could not renege on repeated promises to withdraw the bulk of American troops from South Vietnam. But neither could he risk collapse of Thieu's government. Instead, he chose a middle course: He would continue to use the American presence, particularly American air and naval power, to buttress ARVN until Vietnamization reached the point where Hanoi would see the light and come to the peace table.

The President was fishing deep in diplomatic waters. To help Hanoi make up its mind, he wished to demonstrate that bigger issues were at stake in the world: From December 26 to 30, 1971, American planes made over a thousand raids on North Vietnam—an act uncontested by either Peking or Moscow (but one that drew international opprobrium).

No matter the Chinese or Soviet attitude, no matter the raids, no matter severe air interdiction in all areas, the enemy continued operations in Laos and Cambodia while ARVN and U.S. commanders reported intense preparations for what appeared to be another Tet offensive.

Nixon put a brave face on failure to bring the enemy around. To demonstrate determination, he now recommenced bombing the North. His insistence on the progress of Vietnamization brought dissembling echoes from Administration officials; in late February 1972, for example, Secretary of Defense Laird, testifying before the House Appropriations Committee, assured congressmen

. . . that the other side had been forced to switch from main-force to low-level guerrilla activity because of the "buildup of the South Vietnamese

41. Ian McDonald, *The Times* (London), Washington, D.C., November 12, 1971.

42. *Time*, November 22, 1971.

43. *Time*, June 26, 1972: Lavelle's action, which, by disrupting peace talks, may well have prolonged the war and which, at the very least, lent credence to enemy charges of American dissembling, was severely punished: He was retired as a three-star general with a pension of $2,250 a month.

forces" and could not "conduct a large-scale military operation for a substantial period of time" because "they do not have the logistic support" or the "personnel."[44]

Five weeks later, Giap opened a spring offensive that involved elements of ten enemy divisions, or some 150,000 troops, whose armament included ". . . missiles, radar-guided anti-aircraft guns, MIG-21 aircraft, and wire-controlled, heat-seeking missiles for use against tanks and low-flying aircraft."[45] In the North, two divisions spilled through the DMZ to fragment a defending ARVN division and chase it from Quang Tri. Units of two more divisions pushed in from the Ho Chi Minh Trail toward Hué, while a fifth remained north of the DMZ in close reserve. In the central highlands, elements of three North Vietnamese divisions, already in control of the northern portion of II Corps area, began to push on Kontum. Another three divisions operated in III Corps area, besieging An Loc and controlling large areas north and west of Saigon.

The most serious threat existed in the northern part of the country. To defend Hué, President Thieu moved in his best units, while Washington rushed naval and air units to the area. Nixon was determined that the new offensive not succeed: If he had been withdrawing ground troops—there were only sixty-five thousand left in South Vietnam when Giap's drive started—he had simultaneously been building up peripheral strengths. Within five weeks of the beginning of the offensive, the U. S. Seventh Fleet was maintaining a task force in the Gulf of Tonkin that included six carriers, five cruisers, and forty destroyers, a task force manned by forty-one thousand men. While air armadas including B-52 bombers struck enemy units throughout South Vietnam, MACV hastened to repair Thieu's material losses and to assure him and the world of continuing American support. Nixon's answer seemed to produce a favorable result: At Moscow's urging, Henry Kissinger flew to Paris to meet with Hanoi's top negotiator, Le Duc Tho. When this attempt to find peace failed, Nixon decided on the risky but dramatic move of mining North Vietnam's ports and increasing air strikes on North Vietnamese targets. This was necessary, he told the American people, to protect remaining American troops in Vietnam. As for total withdrawal of those troops, this would be to admit ". . . an American defeat," which would ". . . encourage aggression all over the world. . . ." Sounding not unlike Lyndon Johnson at Baltimore seven years earlier, the President pointed to Hanoi's intransigence, which could only be surmounted by ". . . decisive military action to end the war." At the same time, he offered a new peace plan: total withdrawal of U.S. forces within four months in return for an internationally supervised cease-fire, return

44. I. F. Stone, "Why Nixon Won His Moscow Gamble," *The New York Review of Books,* June 15, 1972.

45. Robert M. Shaplen, "Letter from Vietnam," *The New Yorker,* May 13, 1972: As usual, Mr. Shaplen offers an excellent and detailed account of this action.

of American prisoners of war, and a political settlement negotiated between the Vietnamese themselves.

This was the sort of dramatic move that the Nixon-Kissinger psyche favored. As had past escalations, notably the Cambodian and Laotian excursions, it brought national and international recriminations. Politically it was far more meaningful than militarily, and politically it produced no real effect. Hanoi already had girded itself for resumption of bombing. Claiming decided military advantages, the Paris delegation spurned the President's latest proposals.

About all the escalation accomplished was to cheer a morose Saigon government. Gone was the early bravado. As reported by *Time* magazine,

> . . . Saigon's 492,000-man regular army is suffering from more than battered morale. There are fewer than 150,000 Communist soldiers committed to the invasion; nonetheless they have not only tied up all of ARVN's reserve strength but have also knocked out an ever-growing list of South Vietnamese units—one full infantry division, a third of another division, five infantry regiments, six armored regiments, three artillery battalions, nine ranger battalions, two airborne brigades and three battalions of marines, Saigon's best troops. The South Vietnamese have admitted to heavy casualties: 4,610 dead and 14,093 wounded. U.S. military men hope that, with unstinting American air support and Nixon's morale-boosting moves, ARVN can hold up at least through May, when monsoon rains are expected to dampen the action in the southern two-thirds of the country.[46]

To some observers, it seemed like Chiang Kai-shek and China all over again. Like General Lon Nol in Cambodia and Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn in Thailand, General Thieu now threw off the light cloak of Western-imposed democracy to declare martial law and ask the national assembly for emergency powers. Simultaneously, his new commander in the north, Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, started probing attacks toward Quang Tri.

Having focused allied eyes on Quang Tri and Hué, in late May Giap opened a new offensive against An Loc, in the south, a furious action that again isolated the town's six thousand ARVN defenders. When a relief force stalled some miles south of the town on Highway 13, a helicopter lift brought in two regiments to reinforce the battered garrison.

As battle slowed and partial lull claimed various areas, the American bombing effort intensified, with thousands of tons of television- and laser-guided bombs, "smart" bombs, dropping on North Vietnam, complemented by thousands of sorties that hammered enemy forces around Hué, Kontum, and An Loc.

As in the past, ranking American officers claimed enormous damage

46. *Time,* May 22, 1972.

to the enemy, who seemingly was expected to yield to American might. But hard facts scarcely justified optimism expressed by Washington and Saigon officials. If ARVN was holding, it was only because of American air and naval power. Giap's offensives had caused Saigon to strip the vital Mekong Delta of troops. Once again, the pacification effort virtually ceased, Viet Cong cadres appeared, and government control yielded throughout the vast area. By end of June, the offensives had generated over one and a half million refugees and had cost ARVN over seventy thousand casualties. Thieu's secret police had arrested thousands of "suspected Viet Cong sympathizers" and would continue to arrest some fourteen thousand a month. Thieu would continue to invoke emergency measures, and, in September, like Diem before him, would abolish hamlet elections, thereby returning South Vietnamese government to the stone age.

Still, his government had held together, and in July, ARVN units had begun the arduous task of reclaiming control of captured areas. In September, an ARVN task force finally reoccupied Quang Tri, a city of rubble evacuated by the enemy, who continued to hover nearby. Similarly, key cities and towns in center and south felt the hot breath of enemy, which controlled perhaps 50 per cent of South Vietnam and operated almost without opposition in Laos and Cambodia. Giap had taken heavy casualties, but he had achieved his primary goal of disrupting the highly vaunted Vietnamization and pacification of the South.

As President Nixon's first term drew to a close, thirty-nine thousand American troops remained in South Vietnam, with another hundred thousand based in peripheral areas. North of the DMZ, American planes, some of them allegedly pilotless, continued to hammer a country already flattened. But North Vietnam continued to receive arms, ammunition, and fuel, and to send them south. Air attacks, both ARVN and American, continued to pound suspected enemy positions throughout South Vietnam. While thousands of people fled contested areas to jam reception centers and hospitals, the enemy continued probing ARVN defenses and extending control in the countryside.

In Washington, Administration officials overlooked facts to point optimistically to heavy enemy casualties and to resumption of peace talks in Paris. To rumors of a supervised coalition government in the South in return for peace, President Thieu predictably responded: ". . . I severely warn the colonialists against interfering in the general affairs of the South Vietnamese people and providing comfort to the North Vietnamese invaders, either by words or deeds."[47] As he spoke, American intelligence reported that new PAVN units were moving south. Once again, the world watched an overlay pattern only too familiar to this cloth of impasse.

47. *Time*, October 9, 1972.

In late autumn 1972, a favorable end of war in Vietnam seemed almost as remote as when Richard Nixon became President. One thing only remained certain: No matter the end, neither side could justifiably use words like *win* and *victory*. There would be no win, no victory, in either the North or the South.

In attempting to claim what it believed it had won on the battlefield in 1954, the Hanoi government had subjected its peoples to over ten years of agrarian, economic, and military disasters that would scar at least two generations. Over half a million North Vietnamese soldiers had been killed in the South, with hundreds of thousands wounded; thousands of civilians in the North had been killed by bombing, and thousands had died from hunger and disease. The burgeoning industrial plant, once the pride of the North, lay in ruins. The government itself was beholden to Moscow and Peking and would remain so for at least a decade. No matter aid provided, no matter possible gains in the South, the North Vietnamese people would suffer a bleak existence, with uneasy independence as a traditional border satrapy.

In the South, similar disaster: half the area under Viet Cong domination, a government and army riddled with dissent, a torn countryside, a false and fragile economy, a military dictatorship as repressive as anything existing in the North. Nearly half a million South Vietnamese soldiers had died, probably a half million civilians had died, over a million people were living in refugee camps, millions more in urban slums where they breathed an air of hopeless xenophobia as American planes continued to plaster a defoliated landscape.

In the United States, similar disaster: To keep Thieu in power had cost some fifty thousand American lives, with 150,000 wounded, thousands of amputees, thousands of Negro soldiers dead (some of them those leaders so desperately needed at home), a financial expenditure so vast as to seriously damage the Western world economy, an internal quarrel so deep as to outlast a generation of Americans.

If fighting stopped tomorrow, no matter the terms: No win, no victory, but, rather, battered peoples and bleeding lands—a scene noted long ago by Tacitus, who said of the Romans in Britain: ". . . You have made this a desolation and you call it peace."

Chapter 95

The American failure • The public's role • Communications and education • Citizen apathy • New voices searching • The public trust • Official responsibility • Discretion versus dissembling • Commager on power • Galbraith on duplicity • The Department of State • Force versus diplomacy • Departmental problems • Reorganization and reform • The Department of Defense • Major deficiencies • The Tuchman message • Anomaly and autonomy • The Clearchos element • Interservice strife • Stab-in-the-back • Congress and the press • The tyranny of conformance • Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin

IF THE UNITED STATES is to avoid the shattering experience of another Vietnam and yet remain a leading international power, she must reshape her thinking, civil and military, toward a more mature and flexible philosophy. She emerged from World War II with enormous credits in the international bank of goodwill. She has slowly dissipated these until, today, she occupies a semi-isolated position vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Moreover, by thoughtless pursuit of frantic alarms and excursions, she has squandered a considerable portion of her own inheritance and, in so doing, has jeopardized that incalculable asset of government—the people's trust—to an alarming degree.

Much of the reason for what perhaps can be collectively described as the current American illness is the Vietnam experience, although it is symptomatic rather than causal. Deficiencies exposed in Vietnam existed, if only in incipient form, before Vietnam; the past unhappy decade has but raised them to prominence.

The major reason for American failure in Indochina is as old as his-

tory. Commencing with President Truman's original intervention on behalf of France, the American Government embarked on a course of action with nebulous ambition replacing specific (and limited) political and military goals. Never in the Indochina experience did an American administration chart an intelligent course through a tangled map of military crossroads imposed on political intersections; never did an administration formulate specific objectives or declare a policy compatible to the political-military force that it was able to apply (and retain) in the target area. Instead, under a blanket ambition, *stop communism,* five successive administrations contributed to a military attempt to "defeat" an enemy. One after the other encountered dilemmas that had confronted and confused nations throughout history; one after the other succumbed to forces as historically familiar as they were variable in influence. The experience, by no means ended, nonetheless indicts national leadership.[1]

National leadership is always an easy target until one remembers that, in a democracy, to indict national leadership is to indict a majority of the people. In a democracy, the electorate is demonstrably more responsible for governmental behavior than in a totalitarian form of government. The American electorate, for over twenty years, has continued to elect Presidents and legislators, too many of whom have refused to take a long, hard look at facts and act intelligently and courageously.

Reasons abound for this major aberration, but ignorance heads the list. The American public refused to study the issues of the Vietnam insurgency, an attitude partly due to a natural parochial outlook familiar to most nations and understandable considering America's size and location, and one partly due first to paucity of reliable analysis, then to surfeit of conflicting information on the area. These initial failures were due in large part to a communications deficiency—to a refusal of newspaper and television networks to assign a correct priority to Vietnam, a refusal in part occasioned by clandestine governmental activities, that is, official refusal to inform the public of the extent of national involvement and to allow it to share the burden. That ignorance continued to exist is an educational failure brought about by citizen apathy and fear but compounded by erroneous and distorted reporting, primarily on the part of responsible federal departments, but at times shared by correspondents, editors, and publishers who allowed personal animosities and political preferences to overcome professional objectivity.

The onus must fall primarily on citizen apathy, however. If a sufficient number of citizens demand objective, in-depth reporting, publishers will respond or go out of business, particularly if citizen consumer groups apply appropriate pressure on retail advertisers. Citizens similarly can

1. Henry Steele Commager, "A Limit to Presidential Power?" *The New Republic.* Quoted in *Survival,* July 1968.

influence Congressional representatives to demand communication reforms on the part of federal executive agencies, which will respond—or have budgets chopped. This is easy to suggest, difficult to accomplish. Citizen participation in government is always a difficult question. In some ways, citizen trust of elected leaders and representatives is comforting; in other ways, dangerous. If trust is borne out, then government is strengthened; if, as in the case of Vietnam, trust is misplaced, then government is weakened. Too often forgotten in a government of checks and balances is the fact that citizens must form the final check and the final balance.

In the case of Vietnam, which, despite the proportions of its disaster, is still only a ramification of a larger problem, a significant portion of American citizens, particularly the affluent and influential middle class, accepted a black-and-white analysis of what was and is an incredibly complex international scene. For good and forceful reasons, these generally well-meaning folk sincerely believed that the American way of life is superior, the only way of life that matters. Anything that helped other countries emulate such a way of life was GOOD, anything that carried countries from it was EVIL. Democracy was GOOD, communism was EVIL. The majority of American taxpayers willingly supported a foreign-aid program of unprecedented dimensions—but only so long as it respected this simplistic axiom.

Unfortunately, the axiom falls victim to major error. Such is the gulf between East and West that the average well-meaning American could not put himself in a peasant's position sufficiently to recognize a fundamental difference in outlook—no more than the average well-meaning Westerner today can realize that over five eighths of the world are hungry. To the Westerner, communism meant EVIL; to the peasant, it too often meant someone seeming to care about him for the first time in memory. To the Westerner, democracy meant GOOD; to the peasant, it too often meant continuation of appalling misery experienced originally under his own kings, then under colonial overlords.

Education may not be able to bridge this gap. It probably will not, so long as the Westerner of whom I speak refuses to question his own concept of democracy, indeed, his own notion of the American goal. One of the most odious phrases in history became current in the early 1960s when Americans, citizens and leaders, frequently referred to their country as "the richest, most powerful nation in the world." This arrogant, aggressive, and inaccurate phrase thankfully has grown tired. Increasing numbers of Americans are questioning the national course. Younger, educated citizens in particular are questioning lopsided federal priorities. These persons are asking themselves and are beginning to ask leaders and representatives how a country can be rich when many of its citizens, white and black, carry a second-class status? when millions of its peoples live financially and spiritually impoverished? when millions

want for gainful employment? when millions cannot afford proper medical and dental care? when millions lack adequate educational facilities? when jails bulge with prisoners living in degradation while awaiting long-overdue trial? when citizens are frightened to walk a city after dark or even in daylight? where prevalence of weapons and violence of thought and deed have bred an anti-culture whose germs daily incubate and grow from a television fare insulting to an adult mind? where what once was an arsenal of democracy has become an arsenal of violence? where dissenting protesters are arrested and sometimes shot? where air in large cities is dangerous to breathe? where streams, rivers, and lakes are daily poisoned with industrial waste?

Rich?

Powerful?

Is it even a civilized country?

In taking a new and critical look at their country, in admitting these and other faults, some Americans have gained refreshing humility. Some are beginning to believe that their government should stop trying to reshape other countries in the American image, at least until that image visibly brightens. Some citizens are heeding questioning voices from within—generally young voices of dissent, now a stream, but, when controlled and harnessed, able to power such civic dynamos as Ralph Nader. Held at one time to be only disruptive and thus inimical to established social order, these voices now are accepted by increasing numbers as searching for something lost from the American heritage.

The educational gap will not be bridged until influential citizens attempt to reorient existing values by asking themselves difficult questions. Those posed by philosophers from Plato to Marcuse—why is the human being on earth? what is the goal of government?—are still important. So is the difference between evolution and revolution—and the historical importance of dissent in human progress. In a sense, does not all progress result from dissatisfaction and dissent? Would the wheel otherwise have been invented? Does this not hold true politically? By permitting and even encouraging dissent, has the Western democratic tradition not freed the individual from a good many uncomfortable and harmful chains? Has it not enabled him to lead a fuller, more productive, and more rewarding, therefore a more meaningful, life? What is change? What are human aspirations today? What is pride and what is dignity? Why is rebellion different today from what it was in 1775? Why is the United States devoted to maintaining regional status quos so often incompatible to the needs of emergent nations? Why has she become the watchdog of reaction, when a troubled world demands change? What is a democracy? What is a citizen's proper function in a democratic form of government? If democracy is superior to communism, then why is a democratic nation reacting from fear as opposed to acting from belief? As Ramsey Clark has noted, ". . . In a world of such sweeping change,

causing greater differences in daily human experience in one generation than in all previous history, the old rules have limited relevance."[2]

If answers are not easy, and important answers rarely are, an attempt to find them at least suggests a reawakening of national consciousness, a welcome detour and perhaps even a new highway away from a tiresome road of conformity that has so discouraged healthy dissent and imaginative national leadership.

Fear of dissent, perhaps more than any other national characteristic, explains feckless American leadership. By blindly accepting, indeed worshiping, such sacred cows as "the Communist threat," the electorate has tended to place representatives in political strait jackets. A "Communist threat" exists—but so does an "excess-population threat," a "poverty threat," an "ecology threat," an "education threat." Never has man been free of "threats," but even the ancients, hidebound to susperstition and worship, did not continue to fear past storms in preference to those approaching. The paranoiac fear of a "threat" that has radically changed form in the past decade is only stultifying: Where need has existed for intelligent examination and appraisal of cloudy but vital international issues, the American electorate too often has refused to allow elected representatives this vital freedom to examine and appraise, on pain of political death.

This demand for conformity of thought, this insistence on bowing to nebulous fears, this rejection of democratic strengths and goals in favor of rule by force, has resulted in still another unfortunate trend: It has allowed ignorant but extremely positive voices within the executive branch of government an unnatural and unhealthy strength. Solution by diplomacy has always been more subtle and difficult (but never more expensive) than solution by force. Stilling voices of dissentient diplomats by threats of career purgatory has increased the power of those who are wedded to solution by force. American militarists, the hawks of Vietnam, have forged a weapon from a national demand for conformity (based on unanalyzed fear), and, so long as that demand exists, they will wield it with skill. Never has blackmail been so ennobled as in the past twenty years of executive performance at the highest levels of American government.

The shortcomings of the American electorate may mitigate faults of American leaders, representatives, and officials, but they do not absolve them. One of the most reprehensible national faults today is personal reluctance to accept responsibility, in this case for the public trust, without hedging the acceptance. Past-Administration figures are vying with each other to blame the Indochina disaster on anyone but themselves; Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has told us that ". . . it is not only

2. Ramsey Clark, op. cit.; see also J. William Fulbright, "In Thrall to Fear," *The New Yorker*, January 8, 1972.

idle but unfair to seek out guilty men. . . . The Vietnam story is a tragedy without villains. . . ."[3] Clark Clifford has written that ". . . I see no profit and no purpose in any divisive national debate about whether we were right or wrong initially to become involved in the struggle in Viet Nam. . . ."[4]

What abject nonsense!

A leader cannot abrogate responsibility of leadership, a fact accepted even by reactionary kings. After the battle of Tournay, Louis XV led the dauphin onto the field of slaughter and told him: ". . . Here behold victims sacrificed and political hatred, and the passions of our enemies. Preserve this in mind, that you may not sport with the lives of your subjects, and be prodigal of their blood in unjust wars."

Nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, a French writer, Voltaire, introduced his life of King Charles XII of Sweden with this sharp (and to himself dangerous) observation:

> . . . If any princes or ministers should find disagreeable truths in this work, let them remember that, being public men, they owe the public an account of their actions; that this is the price at which they buy their greatness; that history is a witness, not a flatterer; and that the only way to compel men to speak well of us, is to do good.[5]

Andrew Jackson put it more succinctly: Each President remains ". . . accountable at the bar of public opinion for every act of his administration." Thomas Jefferson warned that, if citizens ". . . became inattentive to the public affairs," the government ". . . shall all become wolves." Even President Nixon expected ". . . the American people to hold me accountable" for failure "to end this [Vietnam] war in a way that would increase our chances to win time and lasting peace in Vietnam, in the Pacific and in the world."

In a democracy, a candidate seeks office; he is neither born in nor driven to it. A cabinet member, an ambassador, a general: Each wants to hold his prestigious rank—no one has forced him so to serve. In theory, a public official's intelligence, education, qualifications, and experience have fitted him to hold the public trust in a manner more worthy and able than his fellows. In turn, the public supports him, enhances his position with privileges and perquisites, endows him with honors not offered to ordinary mortals. But, in return, the public is entitled to expect able performance. Part of able performance in a democracy, we should add, lies in instructing the public as honestly and forcefully and fully as possible on those issues of vital importance to the nation.

Not all issues can be so aired, and leaders must be allowed considerable discretion in conducting the nation's business. But discretion differs

3. Schlesinger (*Bitter*), *supra.*
4. Clifford, op. cit.
5. Theodore Besterman, *Voltaire* (London: Longmans, Green, 1969).

from dissembling, and if an official withholds information unnecessarily or distorts information intentionally, then, as Lord Mahon said of Narses, he is ". . . careless of the public cause."

But, in a democracy, this remains largely the fault of the public. In 1968, an American historian, Professor Henry Steele Commager, came to uncomfortable grips with basic facts:

. . . Abuse of power by Presidents is a reflection, and perhaps a consequence, of abuse of power by the American people and nation. For almost two decades now we have misused our vast power. We misused our economic power, not least in associating economic with military assistance and military with economic support, and in imposing economic sanctions against nations who did not see eye to eye with us about trade with our "enemies." We misused our political power by trying to force neutrals onto our side in the cold war and by bringing pressure on the nations of Latin America to support our shortsighted policy of excluding China from the United Nations. We have grossly misused our political power—if it may be called that —by planting the CIA in some 60 countries to carry on its work of subversion. We have misused our military power in forcing our weapons on scores of nations around the globe, maintaining military organizations and alliances like NATO and SEATO—the first of which has outlived its usefulness, the second of which never had any usefulness to begin with. And we are now engaged in a monstrous misuse of power in waging war on a distant people that does not accept our ideology. We have even misused our moral power, by bringing pressure on former allies and associates to join us in the cold war against the Soviet Union and China; and history may yet find the United States chiefly responsible for exacerbating the disunity of Germany and the division between East and West by exploiting Germany for cold war purposes. That seems to be the de Gaulle interpretation of our role in Europe, and de Gaulle is more often right than wrong.

As we have greater power than any other nation, so we should display greater moderation in using it and greater humility in justifying it. We display neither moderation nor humility, but immoderation and that arrogance of power which Senator Fulbright has so eloquently denounced.

In the long run, then, the abuse of the executive power cannot be separated from the abuse of national power. If we subvert world order and destroy world peace we must inevitably subvert and destroy our own political institutions first. This we are now in the process of doing.[6]

In 1971, John Galbraith added a warning exclamation point. Commenting on President Johnson's duplicity as revealed in the Pentagon Papers, he wrote:

. . . To the knowing, those of us who were making the speeches [for Johnson's re-election] were patsies serving usefully because of our ignorance. What we have learned is that a small group of professionally assured, morally

6. Commager, op. cit.

astigmatic and—a point to be emphasized—intellectually myopic men had undertaken deliberately to mislead the Congress, the public and the people of the world at large.

Galbraith concluded:

> . . . In these past years we have allowed soldiers and civilian strategists—the most bizarre of authorities to entrust with such a matter—to divert us with the doctrine that because the communist countries do not have public debate on public issues neither should we.
>
> Let us now accept the lesson. What may work for the communists may work disaster for us. The worst policy is one made in secrecy by the experts.
>
> Our safety lies, and lies exclusively, in making public decision subject to the test of public debate. What cannot survive public debate—as the experience of Vietnam shows—we must not do.[7]

President, Congress, and people aside, the tragedy of Vietnam stemmed primarily from inadequate performance by two executive departments: the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

As we have discussed (Chapter 53), the Department of State's authority in conducting foreign affairs has steadily eroded since 1940. This is not an exclusively American phenomenon. Throughout history, diplomat has competed with general; one need only glance at Alfred Vagts's excellent study *Defense and Diplomacy* to note that, where force has usurped the diplomatic function, nations have suffered—often needlessly. American history contains a number of such instances. So prevalent was fear of militarism in the eighteenth century, that our founding fathers attempted to erect barriers against what they rightly believed had brought untold suffering to European millions. James Madison noted that ". . . a standing force . . . is a dangerous, at the same time that it may be a necessary provision." George Washington believed that

> . . . Overgrown military establishments are under any form of government inauspicious to liberty, and are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republic liberty.

Samuel Adams held that a ". . . standing army, however necessary it may be at some times, is always dangerous to the liberties of the people. Soldiers are apt to consider themselves as a body distinct from the rest of the citizens. . . . Such a power should be watched with a jealous eye." Successive administrations generally heeded these words, and if, on occasion, the military establishment became "overgrown," it was to meet a particular challenge that diplomacy had failed to answer.

But the diplomatic function also posed problems to Presidents. An appointive tradition resulting from misplaced economy and a desire to reward political followers hindered effective growth and productive op-

7. Michael Leapman, *The Times* (London), New York, June 17, 1971.

erations of what eventually became the U. S. Department of State. Career diplomats, on the other hand, tended toward a generally conservative and unhealthy elitism that hindered objective reporting from foreign capitals. Secularism has often tainted American diplomacy, partly because some Secretaries of State have held personal political ambitions and have tended to compete with, rather than serve selflessly, President and nation, and partly because either inadequate knowledge of an area or personal political beliefs too often resulted in deductive reporting inimical to departmental objectivity.

A cumulative result has been a presidential tendency to circumvent the department, in higher reaches of diplomacy, by use of extradepartmental presidential "agents." Woodrow Wilson favored this system (which nearly precipitated war with Mexico). So did Franklin Roosevelt, who neither liked nor trusted diplomats. We have noted the questionable results of his personal diplomacy when he sent Pat Hurley to China in 1943. Roosevelt's antipathy to professional diplomacy continued in the 1940s: The war's global nature, the efficient performance of General George C. Marshall, the threat posed by German development of an atomic bomb, and presidential ego all combined to emphasize the importance of military operations at expense of State Department prestige. As allied conferences grew in size, as issues became more important, professional diplomats exercised less and less influence, a far from satisfactory development that helped to explain a good many postwar friction points.[8]

Ensuing cold war posed a unique threat to the diplomatic establishment. So long as the cold war was interpreted in primary terms of military threat, militarism remained dominant in American government councils. What many leaders unfortunately failed to realize is that history, in one sense, has been a prolonged cold war. Astute diplomacy has been necessary to minimize frictions and retain the chill. Application of force has yielded to friction to produce heat. Where force became a way of life, where a philosophy of militarism reigned, as during the Hundred Years' War and the Thirty Years' War and World Wars I and II, countries turned to wastelands—bloody, dreary soil suitable only for spawning more wars.

Since 1945, American leaders have allowed solution by force to assume precedent over solution by diplomacy, a trend perhaps understandable, considering the first decade of Soviet intransigence. But application of force, as history sadly demonstrates, is habit-forming. It always seems easier to fight than to negotiate. And the less efficacious the negotiations, the stronger becomes this illusion.

Unfortunately, the Department of State did not intelligently react to the military threat to its traditional hegemony in international affairs.

8. Kennan (*Memoirs*—Vols. 1 and 2), *supra,* offers a detailed and interesting discussion of this point.

It could have done so. The Foreign Service Act of 1946 recognized the need for, and indeed authorized, a single professional service to ". . . represent the United States abroad, a service responsive to the needs of all the agencies in foreign affairs, open to new ideas and talents, and self-improving."[9] A large part of the aberration stemmed from internal deficiencies that, for decades, have produced mediocre departmental leaders (always with some splendid exceptions) who have seemed unable to dominate military colleagues. Contributory reasons existed: The department took an awful pommeling in McCarthy days, and its aloof attitude has never endeared it to the public. That does not excuse internal failure exemplified in a promotion system that too often produces diplomats of studied mediocrity—and some not so studied.

The Vietnam experience has exposed this weakness to all eyes. Since 1950, the military has run roughshod over civil representation in Indochina. Part of this was due to a volatile international situation, but part was due also, as we discussed in Chapter 53, to ineffectual departmental understanding and representation. Military emphasis in Vietnamese affairs grew steadily through the 1950s and into the 1960s, the military voice always growing stronger—a volume increased by ineffectual State Department performance.

Almost everyone concerned with foreign affairs recognizes the problem. A staff officer in the department's executive secretariat, Lannon Walker, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* of January 1969: ". . . Recommendations for fundamental reforms in the organization and administration of foreign affairs have been made by high-level committees and task forces on the average of every two years since World War II. Despite the near unanimity of diagnosis, little has been done to deal with the serious problems uncovered; they are still with us, unsolved and debilitating."[10] A foreign-service officer, John Campbell, explored this problem further in a lengthy article in *Foreign Affairs* in October 1970.[11]

The major problem faced by the State Department then and now is lack of professional leadership in a professional day. If the American Government wants able diplomatic performance, its people and leaders must learn that a national interest does override a domestic political interest in the conduct of foreign affairs; as a British prime minister, Lord Palmerston, once cautioned: ". . . We have no perpetual allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are perpetual." It is not only unproductive, but also dangerous, to tolerate a bilateral foreign policy. Under the American system of government, the chief executive is entitled to appoint a Secretary of State as well as ambassadors. If effectual performance is to result, the political bias must diminish in favor of professional bias. Congress does retain an approval authority over

9. Lannon Walker, "Our Foreign Affairs Machinery: Time for an Overhaul," *Foreign Affairs,* January 1969.

10. Ibid.

11. John F. Campbell, op. cit.; see also Reischauer, op. cit.

presidential appointments, and if tradition dictates that these appointments receive courtesy approval—then we must challenge tradition.

Appointments aside, the department must be reorganized so that, while an appointive Secretary of State can contribute to its improvement, he cannot harm an essentially professional and objective performance of these most delicate duties. The Department of State must become apolitical to the greatest possible degree.

Part of any reform, a large part, will be dismissal of political patronage in form of ambassadorships. To place non-qualified persons in these seats of what should be awesome responsibility is tantamount to placing butchers in operating theaters. Not only do amateur diplomats fail to understand professional requirements; they cannot understand qualifications essential to persons who conduct positive diplomacy. Expense cannot enter into the argument: If the United States cannot afford to keep a career ambassador comfortably, it cannot afford to place a man on the moon.

Similarly, if a President or a Secretary of State does not trust a career ambassador, he must relieve him rather than circumvent his function. Along with abolition of amateur ambassadors must go the roving ambassador or superambassador or presidential agent—call him what you will. If the White House is not securing ambassadorial co-operation, if it is dissatisfied by a particular diplomatic activity, then it must change from within, not tread on from without. A brave American diplomat, Mr. John Alden Bovey, counselor in the American Embassy at The Hague, recently wrote that ". . . interfering ministers and high officials" have made "mail-boxes" out of ambassadors:

> . . . Telephone calls can be forgotten and telegrams filed but ministers and presidents pouncing out of the sky are not lightly dismissed. Most such visits are a waste of time. They disrupt the business of an embassy; they cheapen the image of prestige; they lead to fatigue, and often to serious misunderstanding or even hostility.

Diplomacy, Mr. Bovey suggests, is a private matter to be conducted by ". . . honest men, each of whom enjoys the confidence of the other and of his own government."[12] Mr. Bovey might have added that "honest" men should be young, bright, and imaginative, not old men, physically and mentally dulled, able only to indulge in "prostate diplomacy," where a more virile approach is necessary. It is very difficult to grow younger —which is why private companies under old, "traditional" management so frequently find themselves in trouble. An aging body too often means a moribund mind. Some people are capable of absorbing new, fresh notions that emanate from organic world growth—Justice Douglas and Senator Fulbright would be two. Most minds cannot so grow, particu-

12. *The Times* (London), November 9, 1971.

larly in an environment where it is professionally safer to be cautious than bold.

The department, on the other hand, in order to justify new responsibility, will have to institute major internal reforms. In many ways, the department is responsible for more-severe failings, despite shaky senior leadership provided by a series of non-professional Secretaries. Lannon Walker noted some major deficiencies:

> . . . One, related directly to the growth of competing services arising out of new ideas and new techniques, has been an overwhelming hostility to anything novel. The old ways, by definition, were the best. Another is that in a system threatened with irrelevance and in which the really good jobs are increasingly rare, the race goes to the loner who travels fast, who best manipulates the guild structure for personal ends, who has a friend who can get him out of the unpleasant job. And the collective well-being has gone glimmering: the old esprit de corps is still being invoked, but by the mid-1960s nobody was making a serious contribution to it.[13]

Other major faults exist. Department seniors have allowed increasing alienation to develop between the department and the rest of government, and between department and press and thus the public—too often forgetting that the department is to serve the nation and not itself. Department seniors have too long tolerated and even encouraged lackadaisical and inept performance; they have countenanced too many internal cabals and intrigues (indeed they have often headed them); they have for too long indulged subordinates in human failings that had no place in government. Demagogue Joseph McCarthy enlarged and exploited departmental failure—but the failure was there. Eisenhower's refusal to protect professional diplomats whose crime was accuracy allowed an era of fear to ensue and further corrode department performance. As John Campbell noted,

> . . . The purge was followed by the Wriston Program, which trebled the number of Foreign Service officers in 1954–56 by bringing in 2,500 new personnel at the middle grades. The atmosphere of that period is best recalled by the motto of Security Chief Scott McLeod: "An ounce of loyalty is worth more than a pound of brains." Most of State's senior career men today are veterans of that era; and if honesty and brilliance are in short supply, it is partly because honesty and brilliance were not rewarded in the fifties.[14]

Internal reform is primarily a matter of education, both general and specific. The above-mentioned diplomat, Mr. Bovey, cites a need for diplomats ". . . to resist the defamations of their own profession." Mr. Bovey suggests ". . . systems of recruitment, examination and promotion, which combine rigorous competition with strictest anonymity."

13. Lannon Walker, op. cit.
14. John F. Campbell, op. cit.

The department also needs ". . . a new code of government behavior in relations with press and public, based on rigorous honesty as well as discretion."

The department needs all this and more. In an attempt to reclaim traditional roles, missions, and prerogatives from other agencies, especially from the military, it has chosen a quantitative approach that has resulted in interdepartmental duplication and confusion (and waste), and thus contributed again to a decline in the effectiveness that it needs to regain stature. John Campbell, among others, has discussed the dangers of "gigantism" and suggested, along with other cures, "bureaucratic surgery" not alone for State Department personnel but for those ancillary organizations that too often feed from the diplomatic function, confusing and frequently neutralizing the work of professionals.

The size, function, and authority of these ancillary organizations, which frequently operate independently of an embassy, should be drastically curtailed and, in some cases, eliminated. They explain, in large part, the ludicrous size of American embassies around the world, a cumulative ostentation that frequently does more harm than good. According to John Campbell, over 80 per cent of our diplomatic staff are not State Department employees but, instead, work for the military or USIA or AID or CIA or dozens of other agencies. Lannon Walker has pointed out that there are ". . . 23 agencies crowded under the umbrella of the American Embassy in Paris, each persuaded that it represents the national interest, many often at cross-purposes with the activities of an agency down the hall. In mid-1968 there were reportedly 56 agencies represented at one or more posts abroad."

Internal conflicts produced by this quantitative approach necessarily dilute an ambassador's effectiveness and are further reducing ambassadorial authority, at a time when it has become dangerously weak at best. Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon concerned themselves with this problem, and each, in the case of South Vietnam, attempted to strengthen the ambassadorial hand.

These attempts failed for two reasons. The first was ambivalent presidential policy, which paid lip service to diplomacy while basically relying on force, that is, belief in and preference for military rather than political solution. A good example is Nixon's letter to Ambassador Leonard Unger, in Thailand, an embassy at the time, incidentally, second in size (one thousand people) only to the American embassy in Saigon (four thousand). On December 9, 1969, Nixon wrote Unger:

> . . . As Chief of the United States Diplomatic Mission, you have full responsibility to direct and coordinate the activities and operations of all of its elements. You will exercise this mandate not only by providing policy leadership and guidance, but also by assuring positive program direction to the end that all United States activities in Thailand are relevant to current realities, are efficiently and economically administered, and are effectively

interrelated so that they will make a maximum contribution to United States interests in that country as well as to our regional and international objectives.

So far, so good. But now Nixon added two Catch-22 paragraphs:

. . . I will reserve for myself, as Commander-in-Chief, direct authority over the military chain of command to United States military forces under the command of a United States area military commander, and over such other military activities as I elect, as Commander-in-Chief, to conduct through military channels.

However, I will expect you and the military commanders concerned to maintain close relations with each other, to keep each other currently informed on matters of mutual interest and in general to cooperate in carrying out our national policy. If differences of view not capable of resolution in the field should arise, I will expect you to keep me informed through the Secretary of State.

This effectively watered Unger's control, but was only part of the problem. As Unger's deputy for counterinsurgency, George Tanham, later wrote:

. . . With the best will in the world, it is difficult for an Ambassador to orchestrate the activities of the diverse agencies in his Mission. The confusion in the Nixon letter, already mentioned, is compounded by practical administrative problems. Each of the Mission elements has its own institutional loyalties, each of the parent agencies in Washington has its own goals and interests, and each has a congressional constituency to serve. Even when the Mission can speak with a single voice from the field, there is no single listener in Washington—there is a mixed audience which can respond only after a process of negotiation and compromise. Then too, Mission elements tend to build up client relationships with the various agencies of the host government; in time, this symbiotic relationship becomes very strong indeed. Of course, separate budgetary processes, outside ambassadorial control, contribute to all of this.[15]

Since this situation can be faulted by performance and results in a number of critical problem countries, it is going to have to be studied and reformed, particularly as regards unity of command, a deficiency that perhaps more than any other produced our national failure in Vietnam. But unity of command, as armies have discovered through the centuries, is useless if the commander is not up to the task.

To do his job properly, a modern-day ambassador, particularly in an insurgency situation, has got to be an extremely bright, efficient, forceful, and courageous executive, and it is this professional aspect in the Department of State that must be elevated by any reform. Diplomacy,

15. George K. Tanham, *Trial in Thailand, supra.*

in essence, is international political science, and so specialized has the discipline become that a general education no longer suffices. It probably never did: Even Napoleon attached the greatest importance to recruiting and training promising young men, the *auditeurs,* to hold high civil positions. Today a pragmatic approach is probably desirable: a solid liberal-arts degree with tested fluency in at least two foreign languages, followed by a specialized academic course to teach technical requirements and procedures and to instill in the future diplomat a pride in diplomacy; at some point in his early career, a year or two of cross-training in the military establishment would not be a bad idea, nor would a degree in business management be out of place. We train doctors, lawyers, and professors lavishly; surely international affairs, which bring us peace or war, deserve similar devotion.

Integral to the training process must be the inculcation of an inductive approach to diplomacy, particularly in analyzing and reporting an area situation. Objective reporting is imperative. This is professionalism, as opposed to particularism, and until the department can claim apolitical objectivity, it cannot claim superior professional performance. So difficult is this to achieve—and, without professional leadership at the top, it is impossible—that the transition period may have to employ various aids. One should be a modification of the Communist technique of parallel hierarchy—in this case, a devil's advocate trained to understand and present an opponent's position without fear of tainting his career.

Finally, the department itself is going to have to be decentralized to a greater degree than at present, in order to allow diplomats to concentrate on what is important. Perhaps the soundest advice ever given a diplomat was that offered by Secretary of State Marshall to George Kennan: "Avoid trivia." Diplomats should not have to worry about administrative details of running an embassy. On the other hand, no operational detail of that embassy should exist outside the ambassador's cognizance. The intelligence function, the military function, the aid function, the information function—each must remain subordinate to the diplomatic function. But that halcyon state of affairs will not result until reform has embraced the department, producing professional leadership able to accept and uphold the responsibility.

Able leadership, however, can emerge only with radical change in present philosophy and concept. As Lannon Walker has pointed out,

> . . . The system and the people will produce if the new President [Richard Nixon] understands that reform is not accomplished by the submission of reports, by comprehensive legislation or by delegations of authority. Real reform requires, first and foremost, the will to change and the commitment to clearly enunciated goals on the part of the President and his top appointees in foreign affairs. The President must appoint reformers if he wants reform—and he must fire them if they do not produce. The reformers already have available to them all the resources and legislative authority that they require.

The options are not the poles of unordered decentralization on the one hand and total integration on the other. The options, rather, are centered on the practical, yet revolutionary, middle ground of flexibility and innovation—of integrated planning and decentralized operations.

If internal deficiencies have eroded the Department of State's traditional authority, the Department of Defense has not failed to exploit the situation whenever possible. It is this department which, having made itself the primary executive instrument in Vietnam, must accept primary blame for the tragedy.

As suggested earlier, the major villain here has been arrogance of ignorance compounded by arrogance of power—for so long and to such an extent that far too many of our military men can, like Bohemund, be accused of acquiring ". . . perjury and treachery as a species of ancestral heritage." The problem is to cure ignorance and curb power without sacrificing necessary components of the defense machine. (It can be done, and Congress, in its present militant mood, may possess courage and determination necessary to clip the bellicose tail that, for too long, has been wagging the national dog. After abrogating their share of responsibility for the public trust by passing the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, ". . . in a moment, in a fit of passion," the nation's legislators seem to have awakened and even to have realized that, thanks to clever forefathers, executive operations depend, in the final analysis, on money authorized by Congress).

That would be the first step in a difficult process, but no real gain will result until, along with the American electorate, the armed forces become sufficiently educated to gain maturity and humility. In a dangerous age, they have not come of age. Despite manifold lessons of history, teachings of their own and other professionals, the recent examples of Korea and of insurgencies one after the other, Pentagon and service leaders refused to recognize a limited species in the genre of war, insisting, instead, on an all-out black-and-white performance remote from either national interest or technical problems of the challenge. As one army general recently concluded: ". . . We haven't learned how to wage that which will be the most likely form of war in the coming decades . . ."—what a British brigadier, Frank Kitson, has aptly termed low-intensity operations.[16]

Almost nothing good can be said about the American military performance in Vietnam except the sadly misplaced willingness of youngsters to fight and die while using obsolete tactics to pursue impossible strategy. Never did civil and military hawks offer an intelligible definition of Indochina's strategic importance, except to bleat on about dominoes and Red hordes in Hawaii. Never did civil and military hawks offer

16. Ward Just, *Military Men* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971); Frank Kitson, *Low-Intensity Operations* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971).

a plan of political-military containment that would have utilized limited resources and minimum force to accomplish particular goals within an established objective.

Instead, commencing in 1950, they demanded a military solution to a political problem. When this failed, they did not pause to ponder and reorient thinking to a different sort of strategic and tactical challenge—but one scarcely new. Instead, they organized, equipped, and trained a conventional army inadequate to cope with an internal challenge—indeed, under the special circumstances, one that could only exacerbate that challenge. As the problem grew and variously manifested itself, they continued to misread it and to report erroneously, until a disastrous course of action resulted. Napoleon once wrote: "A general should never paint pictures, it is the worst thing he can do." Our generals and admirals and civilian hawks were painting pictures; as mistakes became evident, as strategic poverty grew in proportion to inept tactics, they sought increasing refuge in dissembling, distorted reports designed solely to justify an escalating military role. While facing a fluid situation, American hawks became enslaved by the western-front syndrome of World War I, and, more than once, they nudged the possibility of atomic war. Thanks to presidential confusion, Congressional apathy, and State Department weakness, their voices assumed unwarranted volume, to the extent that they mistakenly believed themselves to be representing the national will. In time, they ceased acting as rational human beings; they became discordant gods beating out their own version of *Götterdämmerung*. They were the villains without whom, Schlesinger aside, a tragedy has never existed.

The dismal military performance in Vietnam stems from a permissiveness not only authorized, but encouraged, by a Congress bowing to importunate demands of a series of administrations. The nation's military leaders have played upon a national fear of a monolithic Communist threat to justify building, maintaining, and frequently expanding an armed plant whose consuming nature is as alarming as the rapacious tendencies it demonstrates. When this threat demonstrably turned out to consist of bits and pieces that enjoyed brief historical prosperity before fragmenting, the military continued to insist that the threat had not changed and continued to approach it with strategic and tactical thinking unblemished by realistic analysis.

This would have been all right in normal circumstances, if only because executive and legislative branches would have slapped military fingers from the jam of power and allowed the Department of State its traditional hegemony in foreign affairs. Unfortunately, a bellicose Stalin and a victorious Mao Tse-tung introduced panic into top American Government echelons at a time when, as we have discussed, the Department of State was in a weakened and confused condition. In those turbulent years, when American policy relied on force, the military could

not but grow and continue to establish itself as a major instrument of foreign policy.

The result has been anomalous and autonomous. Continued growth and influence in highest levels of government has changed a healthy and necessary national organism into a fear-producing and very wasteful specter remote from both American tradition and desire of a good many American citizens. As the Pulitzer prize-winning historian Barbara Tuchman recently and courageously told senior-officer students at the Army War College:

> . . . It is true that in America the military has never seriously challenged civilian rule, but in late years it hardly needs to. With a third of the national budget absorbed by military spending, with the cost of producing nuclear and other modern weapons having evidently no limits, with 22,000 defense contractors and 100,000 subcontractors operating in the United States, with defense plants or installations located in 363 out of 435 Congressional districts, the interlocking of military-industrial interests grips the economy and pervades every agency of government.
>
> The new budget of 83.4 billion for defense represents five times the amount for control of pollution (our Government having failed to notice that pollution by now is a graver threat to us than the Russians). It costs an annual average of about $10,000 to maintain each man in uniform compared to a national expenditure of $1,172.86 for each person in the United States, in other words the man in uniform absorbs ten times as much. The Pentagon, where lies the pulse of all this energy and activity, spends annually $140,000,000 on public relations *alone,* nearly twice as much as the entire budget of the National Endowment for Arts and Humanities. When military and military-connected interests penetrate government to that extent, the Government becomes more or less the prisoner of the Pentagon.[17]

Herein lies the anomaly. The American military establishment in 1974 occupies a more powerful position in the American Government than equivalent military plants in either China or the U.S.S.R. In fighting authoritative governments founded on force, the American Government is gradually succumbing to that form of government itself—and this is frightening. If the pursuit of international relations can be regarded historically as a carrot-and-stick proposition, those countries which have pursued the most successfully have used more carrot and less stick. But the American Government is increasingly using more stick and less car-

17. Barbara Tuchman, "Generalship." Speech delivered before the Army War College, April 1972; see also Donovan, op. cit.; George Thayer, *The War Business* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); Ralph E. Lapp, *Arms Beyond Doubt: The Tyranny of Weapons Technology* (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, 1970); William Proxmire, *Report from the Wasteland: America's Military-Industrial Complex* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1970); William McGaffin and Erwin Knoll, *Scandal in the Pentagon: A Challenge to Democracy* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1969); Alain C. Enthoven, and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

rot. An increasing reliance on force as the major instrument of diplomacy has brought about a series of confused commitments any one of which can be used to justify military action. As two able analysts have pointed out:

> . . . Our commitments are, in fact, a series of legal and historical abstractions obligating us, in often obscure phraseology, to come to the defense of over forty nations. But the trouble with our foreign commitments is that they have acquired an independent life transcending the US security interest that brought them into being. Collectively, our commitments remain what they have tended to become: an undifferentiated mass which defies discriminating analysis for defense planning purposes. . . .
>
> As a basis both for avoiding senseless confrontations and for sound defense planning, the cardinal need today is a searching analysis of what these commitments should commit us to in the light of our genuine national interests.
>
> The propensity to regard our commitments as 40-odd blank checks has contributed not to our security but to a defense budget disproportionate both to the military threats we face and to the domestic problems we cannot avoid. Our defense forces have achieved a size and versatility that far exceed the limited opportunities for their effective use. . . .[18]

This would perhaps be acceptable, providing that military leaders accept the trend of international affairs and tailor the military plant to a realistic appraisal of what military challenges are likely to affect American security.

But there enters the factor of autonomy. Once a body considers itself independent of a corporate state, it must ensure survival by continued growth. When one limb becomes useless, another grows. Thus, when national sentiment forces reduction of manpower, other instruments grow in importance: $30 billion worth of fighter-bombers for long-range interdiction; billions more for thirteen attack aircraft carriers that could not survive twenty-four hours of warfare; new, bewildering, and terribly expensive weapons, extensions of those systems which failed in Vietnam; finally, Westmoreland's supreme folly (which is saying a lot)—a non-man army of body-smelling sensors costing only a few billions (to start with) for use in a war that will never happen if civilization is to survive. Concomitant to the process is interservice rivalry, which can only continue to result in wasteful duplication. Many Americans do not realize the intensity of competitive feeling between the services. In Vietnam, army, navy, marines, and air force not only pursued separate and frequently unco-ordinated courses, but often contradicted theater policy, both military and civil, to further slow and confuse overall effort. In spring of 1968, senior Marine Corps officers were called

18. Paul Warnke and Leslie Gelb, "Security or Confrontation," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1970–71.

together in secret session to hear a speech by Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, who was about to retire. Far from imparting wisdom on waging insurgency warfare, Krulak's major thesis was the necessity of thenceforth proving marine tactics in Vietnam correct, thus blunting the army's efforts to put marines out of business!

From these two factors, anomaly and autonomy, comes a spin-off of justification that could prove disastrous if it goes unchecked. Where bellicose ambitions of past American leaders were usually thwarted by limited means, the combination of Congressional indulgence, diplomatic impotency, and enemy intransigence has opened the door to a militaristic philosophy only too familiar to the ancients, as noted by wise Xenophon:

> . . . Clearchos was a true soldier and war was his passion. . . . When he could have kept at peace without shame or damage, he chose war; when he could have been idle, he wished for hard work that he might have war; when he could have kept wealth without danger, he chose to make it less by making war; there was a man who spent upon war as if it were a darling lover, or some other pleasure.

Most armies have suffered a Clearchos element, and those governments and nations which have survived through history have successfully dampened its aspirations. Unfortunately, the Clearchos element in the American military grew steadily stronger in the 1950s, finally to erupt in Vietnam. Like the Clearchos element of old, the latter-day version was characterized by bellicose ambition stemming from political ignorance. The American military had not been trained to understand political subtleties, which is primarily why, in international affairs, it should follow, not lead. During and since World War II, the military has had its way for so long that it has grown used to making blanket assertions without having to justify them. The strategic necessity of Vietnam and the concomitant domino theory are prime examples of superficial thinking. So is the insistence on awarding priority to North Vietnam as the enemy in order to support a World War I strategy in a 1965 world. Presidential, Congressional, and public neglect to demand justification of military reasoning and performance further spoiled military minds, to the extent that, in time, they believed their own illogic.

When strategy and tactics failed, when the American armada was forced to come about and make for home, the Clearchos element turned to the task of justifying its actions. Not only did it refuse to admit severe shortcomings in respective services and an over-all failure of strategy and tactics in Vietnam, but it attempted to claim "victory" by indirection. Scarcely had the flesh of reputation been stripped from ranking bodies, when bones started knocking like a stork's knees. Older Germans recognized what was happening, because they had been through it all with Kaiser Wilhelm and Field Marshal Hindenburg and General

von Ludendorff, whose 1918 tale had the German army winning but the home front surrendering. Beginning in 1967, the American President, American generals, and lesser fry went stumping about the country with a similar refrain.

The United States can and has survived Presidents and generals, but, unfortunately, in the Johnson and Nixon eras these have aided and abetted an intolerance within the armed forces, particularly among career officers, that too often approaches sedition and even mutinous intent. Only recently, the writer listened to an air force regular, a lieutenant colonel, condemn Congress in the most savage terms, concluding with, ". . . as for that stupid son of a bitch Fulbright. . . ." Only recently, the writer received a letter from a young marine officer, an Annapolis graduate and Vietnam veteran, who vociferously complained of the press role in Vietnam and ominously added, ". . . other traitorous acts by the press in and out of Vietnam has [sic] resulted in some dangerous talk. I have heard numerous rumblings among several officers that the biggest casualties in the next war will be reporters. Most young officers are very suspicious of [members of] the press and consider them an overt threat. . . ."[19] Hundreds and perhaps thousands of similar examples doubtless exist. Fortunately, so do compensating factors. Aside from lawful machinery of government, which must force internal military reforms if only by cutting appropriations, each service contains thousands of courageous and meritorious officers and noncommissioned officers anxious for legitimate reforms but heretofore powerless to effect them.

As in the State Department, this impotency probably represents the most severe internal deficiency. The armed forces have each embraced a doctrinaire philosophy that disallows public interservice dissent, particularly because a solid front is believed essential to maintaining a strong position vis-à-vis other services and thus the defense budget. Each service selects and trains officers as one would fit bread dough into a standard mold. Dissentient voices are not only not invited, but soon find themselves beyond the pale, shunted to unimportant billets, passed over for promotion and subsequently retired. If conformance has become a feature of American middle-class life, then it is the *sine qua non* of the American military profession.

As one result, we have bred a generation of conformist generals and admirals, few of whom had either the professional knowledge or the moral courage to dissent when it became obvious that the Administration was about to embark on a catastrophic course of military action. A few men who recognized and condemned this course of action thenceforth found themselves in limbo; the men who encouraged it won promotions and honors. Conformance thus continued to breed personal

19. Private information in the author's files.

rewards while sacrificing national assets in a strategic-tactical orgy unbelievable except that it happened.

In discussing the army's refusal to adapt tactics as desired by General Abrams, a RAND analyst pointed out various reasons. One was ". . . the belief held by many that the change recommended simply would not work or that they would not work better, or that they would work but at the expense of victory which would be exchanged for an economical stalemate."[20] A more important reason was

> . . . the conviction that what we are doing now is successful. It *is* successful —according to criteria that the institution itself has established. And the only way that this "success" can be challenged is by challenging the criteria. By that I mean that it is possible to measure winning as a continuing process, but it is not possible to measure progress toward an ultimate victory because that goal has never been clearly defined. *The operations are the strategy.* In the absence of a goal or a strategy to reach that goal if we had one, the operational criteria remain valid by default and by those criteria, we are winning. One does not change a winning strategy.

Another reason was ". . . the belief that what was needed was simply more of the same, bolstered by the view, at least until recently, that Washington really would supply more." Still another reason was

> . . . the wide-held myth that organizational changes cannot be made in the midst of a war. Military planners are prepared to think and talk about new concepts of strategy, tactics, and operations as long as this does not entail organizational changes. I found this true even in the "radical" Long Range Planning Group. . . . In rejecting changes in organization, the institution has thereby rejected changes in its operations since *the operations are what the organization is.*

Related to this reason was another, ". . . the feeling among many [army officers] that the war in Vietnam is irrelevant to the institution." (Or, as a senior army officer put it to the author of this book in 1971, ". . . Thank God we are leaving Vietnam. Now we can get back to the type of warfare we know how to fight.")

These reasons help explain the disastrous relationship that has developed between military and press. Like the State Department, the military has been its own worst enemy. Unwilling or unable to repair administrative and operational deficiencies, particularly in Vietnam, it has attempted to transfer blame to an outside agency, the press, which it frequently criticizes for distorted reporting.

The present military rank structure will not permit this philosophy to change voluntarily. American generals and admirals are so insulated as to be living in an unreal world. Command egos have to be experienced to be believed. The difference between the rank of colonel and brigadier

20. Jenkins, op. cit.

general is immense and perhaps is the gravest deficiency in the present rank structure. One of our most able marine generals once described the transition, to this writer, as going from a land of knowing to a land of dreaming. One day an ordinary mortal, the next a demigod who rates free servants, private limousines, special aircraft—all the paraphernalia formerly reserved for heads of state. A traditional argument for increasing military pay and perquisites has been to attract top men to top jobs. Are the services developing top leaders by continuing to demand sacrifice of independent thought, and frequently of integrity, in subordinates?

As part of returning military men to their world, service academies must review present curricula to enlarge the humanities program. The career officer must be encouraged in non-military reading, to a degree that promotion examinations cover this category. The promotion system for each service must be exhaustively examined and provision made for dissentient voices to be heard without prejudice to promotion. Such is the present strangulating personnel policy of both Defense and State departments that an extraneous promotion-review board must be established along lines similar to a civil appeals court.

These measures are going to have to be forced on the services. It is unfortunate that this is the case, but such are the issues, such the Vietnam record, that the nation must now challenge the policy-making abilities of executive departments.

If the United States continues to function internationally along present lines, disaster will probably result. Then it will benefit no one to believe that Vietnam was "a tragedy without villains." It will benefit no one to understand the meaning of arrogance of ignorance. It will prove only of academic interest to archaeologists, who, ages and ages hence, uncover burned and buckled Pentagon walls, there to find words once written in a Chaldean temple:

Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.

Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.

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NOTE: *"Postwar" refers to post World War II.*