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The beginnings of the American combat involvement in Southeast Asia brought home the realization that revolutionary warfare was all but completely foreign to American military experience. In developing an effective doctrine for the conduct of the war, American planners could have profited from the French experience articulated in "la guerre revolutionnaire"—the work of those who had fought the same war 10 years before and who had already suffered through the expensive process of trial and error that the Americans were to repeat.

LESSONS FROM THE FRENCH IN VIETNAM

An article

by

Dr. W. Scott Thompson

Last year at a conference on "The Military Lessons of the Vietnamese War," a discussion took place in which the relevant learning model for American counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam was debated.¹ One person noted that his commanders at the Pentagon had warned him to be wary in Saigon of the orchestrator of the British success in Malaysia, Sir Robert Thompson, who was serving then in Vietnam as head of the British Advisory Mission. The gentleman was happy to observe to Sir Robert, who also attended the conference, that he had not heeded the warning—and had subsequently benefited from Sir Robert's wise counsel. Nowhere in the discussion did anyone mention the French. Is it simply because the French lost? History backs winners, and it perhaps is not natural to study a loser for lessons. It does not follow logically that the techniques and approaches of the loser are irrelevant to

a successor in battle; defeat the first time may have flowed from wholly exogenous factors. Perhaps there is more to it, and it is the primary purpose of this essay to question the conventional wisdom surrounding the discussion in this country of the French role in Vietnam to see if lessons might have been learned.

My specific aims here are three. The first objective is to investigate the difference between Vietnam and other postwar colonial situations; by working comparatively we can partially isolate the "Vietnam problem." To learn lessons from the French experience we must first ask what lessons they themselves learned. My second aim is thus to discuss the tenets of the doctrine that derived from the French experience, *la guerre revolutionnaire*, in the context of

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the French collapse in Indochina. My third objective is to examine what we did in fact learn, and what we might have learned, from the French in Vietnam. One great virtue of examining a relatively remote dimension of an ongoing problem is that we have a chance to ask ourselves, with a sense of detachment, whether we missed some lessons two decades ago and whether there are some still to be applied in that theater or in others.

There is always something to be learned from a historical experience even though no two events, let alone two wars, are ever identical. As social scientists we try to disaggregate phenomena and compare the similar components for insight into the whole. The French experience in Vietnam, for example, offers all too much that was familiar to the American period; but because we neglected to think analytically and disaggregate, we overlooked the similarity of the various components and therefore failed to learn valuable lessons. Unfortunately, the trend continues. Today we find individuals who claim that there is little to be learned from the American war in Vietnam because it, like the French war, was so unique.

There were, of course, elements of the first Vietnamese war that were unique, far removed from what one might expect in the anticolonial, revolutionary atmosphere of the times. One significant example is the nature of the colony itself. Of all the territories of Africa and Asia, Vietnam was the most sophisticated at the time of colonization. Whereas many parts of Africa and Asia were populated by a variety of ethnic groups around or through which artificial lines were drawn on a map, Vietnam had a Confucian-mandarin administrative system of great complexity. When combined with the extensive brigandage and warlordism, the activities and multiethnic character of the hill country, it is easy to recognize

why it was particularly difficult for France to give the colony any real coherence in its 80 years of colonial domination. France was able to penetrate the elite and used it to rule the lowlands, and she made more progress in bringing the highlands into the state system than the Vietnamese had themselves done in a thousand years.

Yet, even with these accomplishments, France's governing machinery was inadequate to deal with the rampant anarchy prevalent in the immediate postwar period. The Vichy government that had existed during the war under the watchful eyes of the Japanese lost power when the Japanese decided to deny to the French what they themselves could not maintain and granted the colony a sham independence. Japan's surrender to the Allies came unexpectedly early, and European France was in no position to get back to Indochina in sufficient time and numbers to reestablish order. A famine in Tonkin complicated the situation, and to make matters even worse, there were intra-French scores being paid off, Western-Japanese scores, intra-Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese scores. As a North Vietnamese put it, the "flexible tactics of the Indochina Communist Party" could be used to aggravate the situation in order to "sow confusion in the enemy ranks."² France, quite apart from her feelings about her colonial tradition, was trying to restore her honor in this period and would never have imagined abandoning Vietnam to such confusion, whether or not the Vietminh were Communist and even if there had not been a fair number of French nationals present.

This leads me to my third point: nowhere in the colonial world did an independence movement have so strategically favorable a position, so secure rear bases, and so much help from outside. Ho Chi Minh's party and army had help from the start—first from the United States, then from the Soviet

Union, and, after 1949, from China who not only trained 40,000 Vietminh soldiers but provided 20,000 troops who were active in the siege of Dien Bien Phu. What was advantageous for the Vietminh was disadvantageous for the French. Vietnam was well-nigh indefensible, given the length of French supply lines and the limitation of French resources.

My final point regarding the unique characteristics of post-World War II Vietnam is that its purportedly nationalist movement adhered to communism. The argument was often made in France, and later in America, that in no other colonial territory was the nationalist movement also Communist. By its nature, as a "nationalist" movement, its legitimacy would be so great as to doom an opposition from the start. It was a historical phenomenon, and it was argued that we should bend to the lessons of history and let the nationalists rule as they did elsewhere. This argument usually concluded with a rejection of the domino theory, for since the movement was basically nationalistic—like that of the Vietminh and later the Vietcong—it would not have any effect beyond Vietnamese borders (as if so basic a change of regime in any country is ever incidental to the neighbors).

The very essence of this argument must be questioned. Were the Vietminh the "nationalists" in the sense that the TANU was the nationalist party in Tanganyika, the FLN in Algeria, or the Congress in India? Recall that the Indochina Communist Party was founded by the effort of the Comintern in 1930 and, unlike any other political group in Vietnam in that period, had support from outside the country. Although it still had, according to Ho Chi Minh, only 5,000 supporters in 1945, its strength was sufficient to take over much of the countryside during the period of anarchy.

Furthermore, what evidence do we

have that Vietnamese considered the Vietminh to be the true nationalists? One rather impressive datum is that between 20 and 80 thousand southerners went north after the 1954 accords, while well over a million evoted them with their feet and went south. Indeed, the amount of coercion which the regime in the north found it necessary to use suggests that Ho himself did not feel confident that his countrymen would consider his movement to be coterminous with "nationalism."

A final point can be drawn from what the Vietminh did with the competition, that is the nationalists found in other groups. In a recent paper, Stephen Young has reminded us that during the period of Vietminh ascendancy, immediately after the end of the World War, the opposition was literally killed off.³ Anyone with organizational ability, whether of the sects or of the VNQDD (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang), stood at risk. The late President Diem's brother was murdered as were thousands of others. By the time Ho was through, there was much less of an alternative to the Vietminh. The point to be made is that, precisely because of these very features differentiating the Vietminh from other "nationalist" movements, it was the one and only "independence" movement in the Third World that should have been opposed, and opposed with vigor.

In this country, from President Roosevelt down, perhaps the greatest criticism of the French was of their insistence on returning to Vietnam after the World War. Even assuming that the French felt responsible for saving their colonial subjects from anarchy, why did they not then do as we had done in the Philippines or as the British were doing in India? The answer lies in the French attitude toward colonialism.

The French were firmly committed to the *mission civilisatrice*—assimilation and association—and, indeed, such was

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the goal of much of the elite of the French colonial world.⁴ French sentiment is best expressed in the words of the colonial statesman Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Although his political party had been allied to the French Communists and he himself had been a minister of cabinet rank in the French Government, he had also opted against full independence when it was freely offered. As late as 1957 Houphouët-Boigny wrote that

[t]he presence of the French . . . has suppressed slavery . . . and has put an end to the quarrels which set different ethnic groups against one another; it has given its education to the masses and its culture to an elite; it has instituted sanitary and medical improvements without precedent . . . The seizure of power [from the French] has something exciting about it, we know. But the exercise of this power in a fashion consonant with national and human dignity is difficult.⁵

The French clearly considered that their contribution to Vietnam was of the essence and were unable to understand American antagonism. More important, the French believed that Roosevelt had sabotaged efforts to help them in Vietnam after World War II.⁶ These differences of attitude explain why, at the critical hour in 1954, there was so vast a gulf between the French and American positions as to the disposition of American assistance.

The French Army fought very hard in Vietnam. Thomas Thayer's data show that the expeditionary force's combat death rate was 6.17 percent, compared to America's 3.6 percent, and losing 21,000 men killed in action or dying of wounds overall is proportionate to an American loss of over 100,000 men.⁷ Yet in the end they failed largely because French policy in Vietnam was inconstant in purpose and lacked persistence. France, on the one hand, would

encourage the development of political associations and labor unions; then with the other hand harshly, even brutally, restrict their activities, seemingly at odds with their avowed policy. One finds this theme throughout the literature. As Lord David Cecil writes of Lord Melbourne, "Only too often have Governments of moderate change brought catastrophe on a nation by a weak, timid inability to control the disruptive forces which they themselves have let loose."⁸ There is a growing body of theoretical literature—systematic, empirical research on the causes of revolution—which is stressing a similar point: obedience to the law is often less a function of relative deprivation, the revolution of rising expectations, or any other such thing than it is a function of the quality of authority, the consistency of authority, and the consistency of expectations by a populace that a government will act in a predictable way.⁹

The French inconstancy of purpose can be explained in a context which relates to the disaster of World War II and the inadequacy of French political institutions. However, the most pertinent point is the immediate division on the two great issues of the time—communism and colonialism. France, in Alfred Grosser's words, was "the microcosm of world politics," politically divided on both issues for reasons external to France. "Almost all Frenchmen claim to be liberals," he writes.

But this double cleavage [communism vs. colonialism] rendered a fully liberal policy almost impossible, for to give liberty to colonial peoples, there was only a majority [in Parliament] with the communists; but to defend the liberties that the communists would destroy [in France], the only majority was with those who refused them to Asians and Africans.¹⁰

Of course the situation was never so simple as Grosser's elegant and much

quoted lines would suggest. Among other reasons, the Communist record on colonial independence was inconsistent until 1956, and the French Communist position on liberation only became explicit when Moscow suddenly realized what a good thing the independence of French and British colonies would be for Soviet interests. French liberalism was hardly without evidence; from the Brazzaville declaration of 1944 onwards, French policy largely developed in directions highly favorable to her colonies. But it was the ups and downs, the eddies, the inconsistencies that were fatal. Furthermore, the United States must also bear its share of blame, as we encouraged the French, after 1950, to "stand firm" in Vietnam.

Learning from the French Experience: *La Guerre Revolutionnaire*

While the political climate in France apparently impinged on the leadership's ability to learn lessons from the disaster, it fully registered on the officer corps. Unlike the Americans who have been trying to put the Vietnamese war out of their minds, the French were faced with a wholly new insurgency in Algeria not long after Dien Bien Phu was overrun. There existed an immediate incentive to sort out what were the most important lessons from Indochina, and the French soldiers, in developing a veritable ideology of "la guerre revolutionnaire" correctly captured its essence. This incredibly overlooked exercise constitutes one of the most serious efforts to learn from mistakes after a war with which I am familiar and begins with some hypotheses about the balance of forces in the world as it relates to revolution.

The World Balance and Revolutionary War. It is worth recalling that, in the 1950's, American strategic doctrine rested on the notion of massive retaliation,

a concept that was hardly applauded in Europe. From this point it is easy to see how the French military developed the tenet that nuclear war was unlikely, owing to the nuclear stalemate. Hence the contest for supremacy between the West and communism would be fought in revolutionary struggles. The gains or losses from revolutionary war would have more impact on the overall balance than the actual physical advantages of gaining or holding a given territory would indicate. For example, the principal challenge to the American position in this hemisphere resulted from an insurgency—the Cuban one—which galvanized our effort to gain a counterinsurgency capability. It was also a revolutionary war that drained Portugal's resources and made the Communist Party potentially the strongest force in the nation; and recall that almost all of the major political changes in Asia have occurred through revolutionary war—the Chinese revolution, the wars in Indochina, the creation of Bangladesh, and so forth. The first French principle was therefore essentially right, and Paris got the point at least 5 years before Washington did.

Psychological Conquest. The second point of the doctrine is that revolutionary war, unlike conventional war, has as its object not the military defeat of the enemy army but the psychological conquest of the population. The French also learned how very effective psychological tactics could be in a modern democracy—that democratic elites harbor strong reservations against many of the tactics necessary to defeat an insurgency. Americans largely disregarded the French example and fell victim to the same problem 14 years later.

The Role of International Communism. The third tenet was that revolutionary warfare was composed and directed by international communism, a

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natural conclusion to have come out of Indochina.

As part of a doctrine, however, this third point was less natural in Algerian soil. French writers saw the FLN in Algeria as a symptom of communism, when it could be more accurately described as a nationalist reaction to French excess, encouraged by worldwide anticolonialism. These same writers saw analogies with Munich and the move to appease nazism. Thus Nasser, the abettor, was a new Hitler, and France would have to strike at him in order to get at the rear base of the Algerian insurgency. One can quote the French writers and make them look silly, yet they had a relevant point.

The odd fact is the prolonged time it took the Russians to recognize their own advantage. Not until the 20th Party Congress in 1956 did they really begin to see the great dividend that the anticolonial movement offered. However, once they saw an opportunity, the Soviets lost little time exploiting it. By 1960 Khrushchev was pounding his shoe on the U.N. rostrum, spreading cash around the Congo, proclaiming Arab, Asian, and African leaders to be "heroes of the revolution," and within a few more years his armed forces were beginning to use Vietnam as a testing ground for weaponry.

Many loyal and thoughtful Americans considered it a natural reaction to colonial rule when the newly independent states tended to take the Soviet side on cold war issues. In the 1960's, after all, the West was just as pertinently freeing itself from the colonies as the colonies were freeing themselves of their masters. We were all "discovering" that we did not need colonies to be prosperous. However, we do need resources, and after the October 1973 war it became quite clear that our prosperity required a dependable source of a variety of imports—chiefly oil—from the Third World.

The French were not unrealistic in

their comparison of the leftist nationalism of the FLN with the Vietminh, and if they were wrong in thinking the ideology was the same, they were right in seeing whose interests—in the international arena—were being advanced. The fact is that the Mediterranean is now, along almost the entire length of its southern littoral, in unfriendly hands, or at least in hands that do not see their interests coinciding with those of the West. And with the positions of Portugal, Italy, and Greece problematical with respect to the Western alliance and with a massive buildup of Soviet arms in central Europe proceeding apace, one begins to appreciate the French foresight.

Fighting Fire with Fire. The fourth tenet was that, given the existence of an international *guerre revolutionnaire*, the West must respond in a manner designed to save itself; it must fight fire with fire. In Indochina the Vietminh had used totalitarian principles to organize its community; it had brooked nothing to win; and it did not bother about the fact that refugees poured out wherever they could. (Indeed, that saved the regime some work.) Clearly the West would have to organize similarly and would be required to use any techniques of counterinsurgency deemed necessary.

It is better that western political leaders accept in advance that counterinsurgency work is to be nasty and tough, and decide upon the very limits of these critical frontiers if they wish to avoid debilitating and debasing the very principles for which they are fighting. The fact that the French soldiers had some pretty gruesome notions of what had to be done does not discredit their last point, for the obvious lesson was that this kind of war would have to be gruesome or abandoned; in any event, it would not have been they, in a state whose civilian leaders were supreme, who would have established the critical frontiers.

In sum, it strikes me that the French, for the most part, drew the correct inferences about their experience in Vietnam. They were discredited largely by the fact that these were applied, in the wrong sphere, to a nationalist revolution close to home.

It appears that the French were ahead of the times, or at least ahead of the Americans, in their thinking about the colonial situation. But try to find a reference in the literature where the "New Frontier's" stress on the importance of counterinsurgency activity is analyzed and find a single positive reference to the French! Reading the ideologists of *la guerre revolutionnaire* is precisely like reading Professor Walt Rostow's lectures of the early 1960's. The irony is further heightened when one realizes that in our past experiences and successes—in the World Wars, in the rebuilding of Europe—there was nothing remotely useful in preparing us for the kind of war we were to fight in Vietnam; nothing in our experience, since the turn of the century, in the Philippines.

The American Phase

Perhaps the most striking point of the American phase of the war is that at the two most critical turning points we failed to place any importance on what the French had learned about Vietnam. The first time was, of course, 1954 when, after spending over a billion dollars on arms for the French Army, we failed, for relatively inconsequential reasons, to bail them out of the battle at Dien Bien Phu. To have done so would surely have been cheaper than trying to recoup losses later. The second time was almost a decade later, when the United States returned to Vietnam in force and never truly considered eliciting French advice.^{1 2}

To return to the substantive argument: although there was bad blood between Washington and Paris in 1954

on Vietnam, at least Washington got the major question right, namely, to try to prevent the takeover of South Vietnam by Hanoi. Indeed, the American Government was very shrewd in its policy chosen after Geneva. Inevitably, in discussions of America's role in Vietnam, we hear the charge that the United States sabotaged the Geneva agreements and, in general, showed bad faith in discharging her international obligations. We did buttress Diem in his determination not to honor the prescription for elections in 1956. However, the United States was not a signatory to the armistice at Geneva nor was the State of Vietnam, and neither was, as Dennis Duncanson points out, "in control of combat forces and consequently could not in logic have been parties to the cease-fire."^{1 3} The United States, in the final declaration, attached a caveat opposing the reunification of Vietnam by force subsequent to elections.

The Americans were by then well aware that the French had been dealt a diplomatic defeat out of all proportion to the actual military situation. We thus avoided being trapped at this point by the same agreements which the French had signed in their position of political weakness. Mao wrote in 1937 that "in guerrilla warfare there is no such thing as a decisive battle," and the Americans decided instinctively to heed this, as the French had not. We decided, in effect, to fight on with whatever we could—short of committing manpower. By disassociating itself as much as possible from the Geneva agreements, the U.S. Government made it that much easier to pick up where the French had left off, for it had realized the strategic importance of Vietnam.

But why, one might ask, would we not work with the French, and why would we refuse to learn anything from them after 1954 and 1964? For one thing, in the mid-1960's, French-American relations were more strained

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than ever. But clearly, the American problem in learning from the French has deeper roots. At one level it strikes at the American attitude toward colonialism, and at another it strikes at peculiar American conceits of the moment.

Colonialism, particularly a discussion of American-British or American-French differences in the matter of colonialism, is usually prefaced by noting that we fought a revolutionary war and had a revolutionary tradition. This argument is somewhat shallow, however, when one considers the United States during our period of "manifest destiny." Furthermore, the attitude of many Americans of the mid-1960's was compared by Professor Lowenthal to that in Wilhelmine, Germany.¹⁴ The conceit of the moment was of our invincibility. American officials recited comparisons of our supply of equipment, men, and aircraft with that of the French—often ending with the refrain that "the French haven't won a war since Napoleon."

Had we worked closely with the French throughout the 1960's and decoupled de Gaulle's opposition to us on the NATO front from that on the Vietnamese front, the gains on the diplomatic front as well as the battlefield would have been well worth the effort. French prestige in the Third World was enormous in this period despite the fact that France was the only major power defying the United Nations on arms supplies to South Africa, despite France's bonded relationship with her former colonies in West Africa, her atomic testing in the Sahara, and so forth. Our policy and our war in Vietnam were grist for the French mill in Damascus, Teheran, Algiers, Santiago, New Delhi. To have had French help, or at least neutrality, would have helped enormously to defuse the international pressures that reinforced our domestic opposition to the war.

Substantive French help in battle would have been costly in pride and

money—for the French would have made this help psychologically or strategically expensive—but we ended paying the most exorbitant costs ever. My foregoing assumptions rest on the evident fact that nations easily decouple policies and cooperate on one and oppose on another with the same ally. It was, for example, official American policy not to dicker with the French area of influence in Africa, even when this might have been good leverage on Paris at the height of our differences, because we knew that the French position was sustaining order, which was a general, not just a French, goal. No power of importance has blanket policies for all countries; policies are treated selectively as the individual policy affects a country's interests. Indicative of the situation is a comment by Thomas Thayer.

Their military attaché in Saigon in 1964 was handpicked by the French government because of his exceptional knowledge of the English language, distinguished records in Indochina and Algeria. He was told to help the Americans in whatever way he could. During the first 18 months of his assignment, the only American who visited him to ask about the war was an American defense contractor of French origin.¹⁵

A French official recently said that the French officers would have loved to help—they were envious, as he pointed out, of the American opportunity; by the time of Dien Bien Phu the French officer corps had a very sophisticated notion of what was needed to win the war, and they would have loved to have a chance to apply it.

The most remarkable clue comes from the battle of Khé Sanh—so similar in so many ways to its deathly forerunner of 14 years earlier—except in outcome. In 1968 as the battle of Khé Sanh was building up, the American Air Force reportedly rounded up every

French general still alive who had been involved in the defense of Dien Bien Phu. Permission was gained from senior French authorities and the entire group, including one in his 80's, was flown to Saigon and set up in quarters where they could go over the full range of anticipated enemy plans. By this account they revealed every mistake from the earlier battle and gave generously of their advice. Khé Sanh as a battle was won.

If we could not have cooperated more with the French, at least we could ourselves have studied their war. Not only was the cycle and pattern of battle the same for both wars, but the physical location of battle was often the same. If, at the operational level, officers and troops had known that they were in a historically troubled area, where intense battles were fought by the French 15 years earlier at the same time of year, then they would have been somewhat less surprised by an enemy offensive. But the information did not trickle down. Certainly we learned quickly that supplies build up in the dry season for a spring offensive, but we were late to learn that one had to correlate the given offensive with what could be expected, on the basis of past experience, for that time of year—was it greater or smaller, not than the events of the previous month, but of the same time in the cycle.

Numerous false perceptions led us into Vietnam but, collectively, our failure to learn from the French experience and to better cooperate with them was our most grievous error. Thus, John Foster Dulles cabled Ambassador Douglas Dillon in Paris on the night of 5 April 1954, it was not possible "for us to commit belligerent acts in Indochina without full political understanding with France and other countries."¹⁶ Because the French, who had been fighting

for 8 years, would not move over and grant us preeminence in their domain, we would, in the end, not support them—as if the stakes were only as big as the petty rivalries between French and American forces; as if the unwillingness of the French to produce a timetable for Indochinese development to our liking should justify our allowing the fate of a strategically important country to be determined by a strategically minor but psychologically important battle. For the first time in her history the United States, as Bernard Fall put it, "abandoned an ally to his fate while the ally was fighting a war that the United States had encouraged him to fight to a point far beyond his own political objectives and most certainly far beyond his own military means."¹⁷ It is worth asking if a great power ever so foolishly and cheaply lost the opportunity to prevent a major loss and a major power has ever had to pay so high a price for its lack of foresight. There appear, indeed, to be some important lessons to be learned from the French experience in Vietnam. We failed to learn them once, but our own experience will hopefully prevent us from the same mistakes a second time.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Professor W. Scott Thompson did his undergraduate work at Stanford University and earned his Ph.D. from Oxford University; he is presently on the faculty of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and has previously served on the faculties of the University of the Philippines and Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. Professor Thompson has authored *Ghana's Foreign Policy, 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State*, coedited with Colonel D. Frizzell *Vietnamese War* (forthcoming), and has written numerous articles for professional journals.

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NOTES

1. "The Military Lessons of the Vietnamese War," Conference sponsored by the International Security Studies Program, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Medford, Mass., 3-4 May 1974.

2. Truong Chinh, quoted in Dennis J. Duncanson's important study *Government and Revolution in Viet-Nam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 156.

3. Stephen Young, "Nationalism in Viet-Nam," mimeographed, 1974.

4. To be sure, the radical critic (Frantz Fanon, for example) would fault the French system all the more for demeaning the essence of the local spirit—culture by holding up an older, more developed, and more powerful one as the all-encompassing ideal for everyone.

5. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Black Africa and the French Union," Philip W. Quigg, ed., *Africa, a Foreign Affairs Reader* (New York: Praeger, 1964), pp. 270-271 (originally appearing in *Foreign Affairs*, July 1957).

6. See Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946).

7. Thomas Thayer, "Patterns of the French and American Experiences in Viet-Nam." (An insightful paper presented to an International Studies Program colloquium, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Medford, Mass., November 1973). The point is not that the French fought more valiantly, necessarily, than the Americans, who had vastly superior medical facilities, only that the French did fight very hard indeed.

8. Lord David Cecil, *Lord M* (London: Constable, 1954), p. 42.

9. Edward Muller, "A Test of a Partial Theory of Potential for Political Violence," *American Political Science Review*, September 1972.

10. Alfred Grosser, *La IV^e République et sa Politique Exterieur*e, 2d ed., p. 398.

11. See John S. Ambler's study, *The French Army in Politics 1945-62* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966) for background and analysis of the *guerre révolutionnaire* school.

12. At the presentation of an earlier version of this paper at the Naval War College in December 1974, one officer with experience in Vietnam objected to this point on the grounds that, in his own training period before being sent, he and his fellow officers were exposed to all the writings that were available from the earlier period, the problem being that most were in French. Random checking revealed that, as suspected, a rather superficial attempt was made in some training situations to familiarize soldiers with the previous French efforts in Vietnam. The evidence is insufficient to modify my original assertion, namely that we paid scarcely any substantive attention to the French period.

13. Duncanson, p. 9.

14. Oddly, in this very period Americans were coming, rightly or wrongly, to wonder whether their pressures on their British and French friends to decolonize in the immediate postwar period had been gratuitous and misplaced.

Thus the United States was coming full circle. It is worth asking what our anticolonialism gained us. Obviously a great deal of ill will in Britain and France, not to say all of Europe. In the Third World our "anticolonial" attitude was usually either taken to be just that—an attitude with no operational significance—as, in fact, our needs were on another level; or our attitude was taken to be gratuitous or hypocritical. Most often the accusation was that we were the "number one imperialist" country, so what difference did our position on European colonialism make—we had succeeded to their position, taking up where they had left off, or so it was seen.

15. Thayer.

16. *Pentagon Papers*, *The New York Times* ed. (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 40-41.

17. Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 461.

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