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# ARMY JOURNAL

*A periodical review of military literature*

**No. 311, April 1975**

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*(Australian War Memorial)*



# THE AMIENS GUN



## *Australia's Largest First War Relic*

SINCE 1923 one of Canberra's landmarks has been the mottled barrel of an unusually large gun, now reposing on the lawns adjacent to the Australian War Memorial. Officially its title is 'The Amiens Gun', but it has been known by a variety of names, and many people are still of the erroneous opinion that it is the fabulous 'Big Bertha' of World War I fame. Due to its association as a landmark in the growing capital it could almost be called 'The Canberra Gun' or, to localise it further, 'The Causeway Gun'.

The failure of the great German offensive of March-July, 1918, on the Western Front, was the death-blow to Germany's hopes of capturing Paris. This did not mean the Germans had lost all heart to continue the war; in fact, General Ludendorff began to plan his winter positions with the view to launching another onslaught in the spring and summer of 1919. However, with the knowledge that hundreds of thousands of American troops were being trained for introduction to the fighting and that their prospective entry in support of the hard-pressed British and French would constitute a most formidable threat, every effort was made by the Germans to increase the alarm and despondency of the French civilian population. The long-range bombardment of Paris and aeroplane raids on that city were meant to break the morale of a people so very tired after four years of war.

Amiens, one of France's greatest provincial cities, was subjected to an intense long-range bombardment. Destruction of this city would have an adverse effect on French morale, but this was secondary in importance to the fact that it was a great railway and road centre and as a target its shelling was entirely justified.

On the afternoon of 11 April, 1918, elements of the 1st Australian Division, which had arrived a few days earlier from Flanders, were entraining at Amiens for rapid movement to Hazebrouck to defend that city, threatened by a new German advance, in Flanders. At 7.30

p.m. a German long-range gun began to shell the Amiens railway station. One shell whizzed over the engine and exploded fairly among the men assembled on the platform. At the same time German aeroplanes arrived overhead and began to drop their bombs close by. Lieutenant C. V. McCulloch of the 2nd Battalion was killed and thirteen others hit. The shelling continued, and in the goods shed at the rear of the train some forty men of the loading parties were killed or wounded, including Regimental-Quartermaster Sergeant C. G. Brown and sixteen others of the 7th Battalion. Further shelling of Amiens by this gun continued throughout the remainder of April.

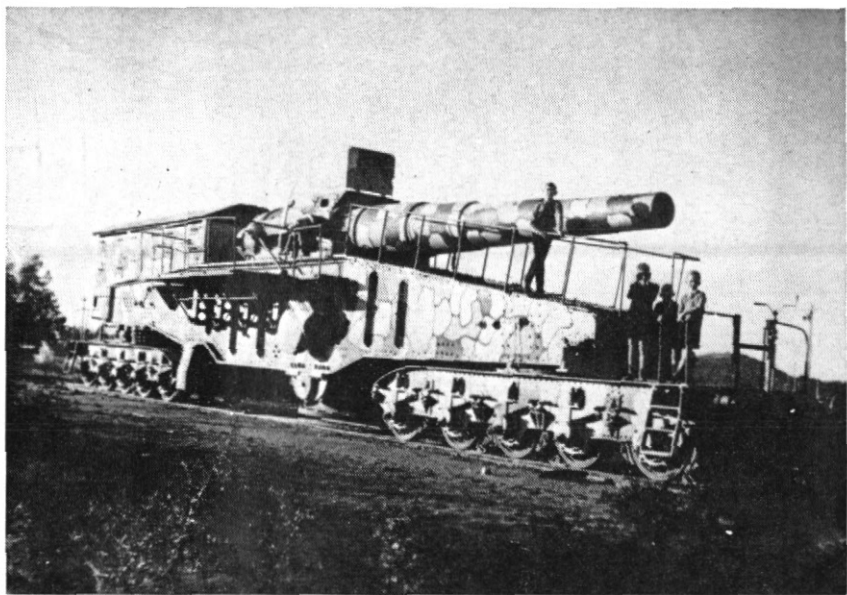
During the months of May, June and July, German high-velocity guns continued to harass our troops on the Villers-Bretonneux front, but their presence became known after firing a few rounds and they were neutralised by British 6-inch and 60-pounders. Their practice became one of firing a few rounds and retiring when engaged by our artillery. The 28-cm. railway gun, which had a range of 26,000 yards, was easily within the limit of that range when firing on Amiens, 23,000 to 24,000 yards distant. An even larger gun began to make its presence felt early in June, 1918, when it started throwing 14-inch shells into Amiens. This naval gun had a range of 46,000 yards and was firing from a specially prepared position in Arcy Wood near Chuignes, a distance of about 35,000 yards. To prevent its capture by the Australians it was destroyed on the morning of 8th August, the barrel being blown off. Although men of the 3rd Australian Battalion captured this gun, it was inert when seized and its value as a war relic never evoked the interest shown in the 28-cm. railway gun, which was in action when captured.

The Germans refer to 8th August, 1918, as *Der Schwarze Tag* — 'The Black Day'. On this day began an Allied offensive that hastened the end of the war three months later. Ludendorff himself said of that day:

The 8th of August put the decline of that [German] fighting power beyond all doubt, and in such a condition as regards reserves I had no hope of finding a strategic expedient whereby to turn the situation to our advantage.

On that morning four Australian, four Canadian and two British divisions, supported by three British cavalry divisions, 430 British fighting tanks, and the air force, with five French divisions attacking on their right, broke the German front before Amiens. When, later that day, the Australian Corps stopped to consolidate the capture of its first and second objectives, the troops marvelled at the success of the

day's fighting. A sweeping advance — a great step in the war — had clearly been completed. Tanks, armoured cars, aeroplanes, cavalry and infantry had combined magnificently, and the casualties were lighter than ever before suffered in such an action on the Western Front. For the Germans it was catastrophic; the whole German garrison opposite the British Fourth Army — front line, support, immediate reserves and artillery — had been captured or destroyed. South of the Australian front the Canadian and French divisions also had outstanding success.



*(Australian War Memorial)*

The gun on its mounting near the Canberra railway station.

The C.O. of the 31st Australian Infantry Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Neil Freeman (of Geelong), in a report to the headquarters of his brigade, described how, whilst in action at Wiencourt near Harbonnieres, he saw a railway train steaming up and down, and that on reaching a point about 800 yards from the line, a large gun was fired from one of the trucks. He also reported an attack on the train by one of our aeroplanes. The capture of this 11.2 inch high-velocity gun on 8th August was a joint British effort. The Royal Air Force staked a claim for the British on the grounds that they immobilised the gun.



The Sopwith Camel which attacked the train dropped four bombs close to the engine, causing it to emit a dense cloud of steam. The plane then circled round the train again and dropped a bomb on one of the rear trucks causing a large explosion. British and Canadian cavalry were very active during the attack as they were scouring the country around and beyond the gun. The French greatly coveted this magnificent weapon as a war trophy and claimed it by reason of the fact that it was captured on French soil and for the further reason that it had done very material damage to Albert, Amiens and other towns in the forward areas.

It was subsequently decided after much discussion that the 31st Battalion should be awarded the trophy, Colonel Freeman having conclusively proved that the gun, while still firing, had come under the machine-gun and rifle fire of his unit. The German crew climbed out and tried to run for Vauvillers, but the nearest parties of cavalry (2nd Dragoon Guards) raced up. All the men who were trying to escape from it were captured. A German official monograph of the incident states that the commander of the gun, in spite of advice from passing officers, insisted on firing three or four shots 'into space' before he moved. The 8th Field Company, 5th Australian Divisional Engineers, attached to the 31st Battalion, also participated in the capture. Lieutenant George Burrows (of Sydney), attached to the field company, already the holder of a Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry, was awarded a bar to the award for his part in the capture of the gun, the citation reading:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack. He was in charge of a section of sappers accompanying one of the assaulting battalions and on reaching the final objective he saw a long-range gun, an engine, and some ammunition coaches which were on fire on a siding some 200 yards beyond the front line. He immediately took two sappers forward under heavy machine-gun fire, raised steam on the engine, and shunted the burning waggons to another siding and brought the gun back well within his lines. His determined courage and initiative resulted in the capture of a very valuable gun.

The two sappers, L. J. Strahan (of Arrino, W. Aust.) and J. H. Palmer (Booval, Q'land) were both awarded the Military Medal for their part in the capture. The diarist of the 31st Battalion is quite unequivocal in his account of the capture. The unit diary of the 8th August relates that:

The 28-cm. railway gun is the most important capture as it is probable that this is about the first occasion in this war in which a railway gun has been captured from the enemy. The Battalion is extremely proud of itself inasmuch as it has such an interesting trophy to its credit. As there seems to be some doubt as to

the claim of this Battalion to its capture, it is only right to say here that the airman who dropped the bomb on the train was instrumental in its capture as well as the cavalry. The actual taking possession of the gun was carried out by an officer of this Battalion.

Captain G. H. Wilson (of South Brisbane), 31st Battalion, was even more to the point. Writing to the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Major J. L. Treloar, in March, 1932, he said:

I was in command of the front line company which captured the gun. The actual capture was as follows: An aeroplane fired tracer bullets into the train which was carrying a good deal of petrol and set it on fire. Almost immediately afterwards the cavalry advanced and captured the train's crew. Our advance followed on the heels of the cavalry. The train was practically spread across the front of my objective. I searched for an engine driver but did not have a man suitable. Later in the day Captain Burrows of the 8th Brigade Engineers came up with a sergeant and a sapper and with the assistance of my men got up steam and took the train to the rear. This took place about 4 p.m. in the afternoon, the front then being very quiet. The sappers removed the train. Captain (or Lieutenant) Burrows, I think, stood at the time in conversation with me at the railway junction . . . There is on record a photograph of the gun taken by the official photographer with Paddy McAleer, one of my men, sitting on the barrel.

The 8th Field Company war diary entry reads:

On reaching the *Blue Line* Lieutenant Burrows and two sappers went forward to the railway siding in front of the final objective to where a 11.2 in. German railway gun, two ammunition waggons, two armoured coaches and other carriages abandoned by the enemy were standing; the carriages at the end of the train were on fire, these were disconnected and shunted clear. Steam was raised, and railway gun complete, two waggons of ammunition and two armoured coaches were brought behind our lines to a point on the line about W.5 central where the rails had been broken by shell fire.

An appendix to this war diary is a recommendation for the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal in respect of Sappers Strahan and Palmer — but as mentioned above, they each received the Military Medal.

When it was captured, someone from the 31st Battalion attached to the gun a small description label, about four inches long. (These labels were supplied by the Australian War Records Section for attachment to trophies and relics. This action was equalled only by the man who, in an excess of zeal, attached a few of the same labels to German prisoners!)

After capture, the gun was removed to Paris and exhibited in the Champs De Mars where it attracted a tremendous amount of interest. It was the latest type of German artillery, with several novel appliances, and an exceedingly small recoil. Subsequently the gun was moved to England by the Channel ferry. After certain minor structural alterations had been made with the object of enabling it to move over the English

railways it was moved to Woolwich Arsenal for detailed examination and test by British naval and military experts and, finally, to Chatham dockyard. In the first instance the inscription read 'Captured by the 31st Battalion, A.I.F.', but this was altered to 'Captured by the British IVth Army.' On arrival in Australia the caption reverted to the original.

The transport of this magnificent relic to Australia was a formidable task. The total weight — mounting, barrel, undercarriage and bogies — was 185 tons, the gun alone weighing 45 tons. On several occasions, after full preparations had been made to ship the gun, at the last moment the arrangements were cancelled. The masters of several vessels made no secret of the fact that it was a risky job to stow such a bulky, awkward and weighty cargo in any ship likely to encounter rough seas. Eventually, however, Captain Waldron, a well-known sea captain, who in pre-war days had commanded the *Ferret* between Albany and Esperance in Western Australia, and at this time was captain of *Dongarra*, was approached. He readily assented and stated that he regarded the task as a great privilege. Admiral Goodenough, son of the well-known naval officer who took a prominent part in the survey of the Australian coast in the early days, was at this period Admiral Superintendent at Chatham. He also entered most enthusiastically into the scheme and made all arrangements to load the trophy into the *Dongarra* at Chatham dockyard, provided the Woolwich Arsenal authorities placed it under the big crane at The Basin. He had The Basin cleared of all shipping to facilitate the movement of the *Dongarra* and permit of loading being effected at flood tide.

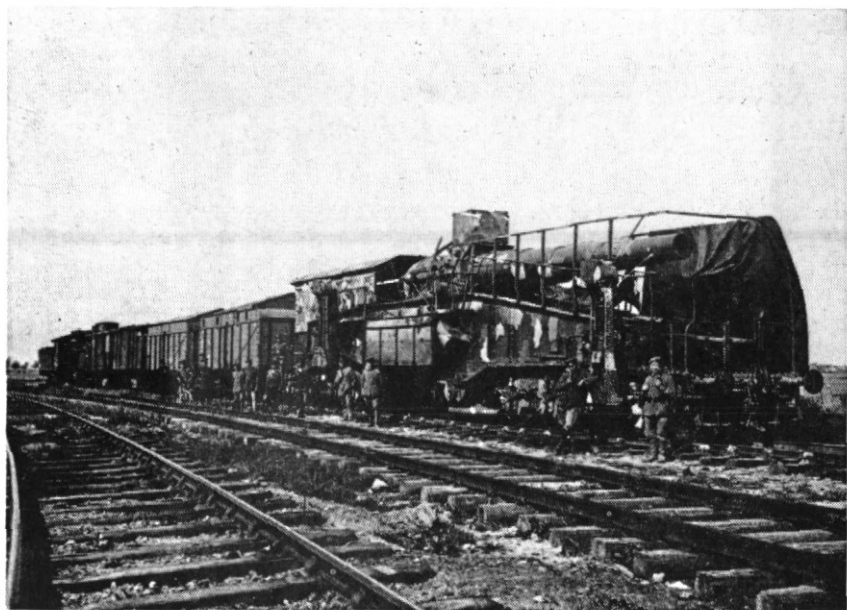
A model in wood had been made of the undercarriage of the gun and of the hatch of the *Dongarra* to test whether this huge structure would dip correctly into the hatch; and in due course the whole of the parts of the actual trophy were safely loaded without mishap. In London two important factors had to be considered prior to finalising arrangements; first, the question of the railway gauge at the port of disembarkation and, secondly, the availability of a suitable crane to take the huge weights from ship to rail. It was obvious that the port of disembarkation must be in New South Wales.

The General Manager of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company (Mr G. D. Delprat) happened to be in London at the time and offered to place all the company's facilities and skilled personnel at Newcastle at the Government's disposal. Mr Shellshear, Consulting Engineer of the



N.S.W. Railways in London, gave valuable advice on the matter of axle loads on the Hawkesbury Bridge. The axle load of the whole trophy complete was eighteen tons, which would have exceeded the safe load for the bridge.

With the gun removed, the axle load was eleven tons only, and it was therefore arranged for the gun to travel on two flat trucks as a separate unit. Just at this time, however, information was received in



(*Australian War Memorial*)

The gun and railway train with its German crew. From a photograph taken from a German officer at Harbonnieres, August 1918.

London that the naval floating crane *Titan* was available in Sydney and was capable of handling weights up to 200 tons. This solved the problem, and the bogies, central pivot, undercarriage and gun were unloaded in Sydney direct on to the rails. This was done at Jones Bay, Darling Harbour. The N.S.W. railway workshops at Eveleigh, with the assistance of Lieutenant Pockett, A.A.O.C., assembled all fittings and parts.

The Premier (Mr W. A. Holman) had been asked from London to have an existing railway track at Central Station extended to Eddy Avenue and to have a ramp constructed for the trophy to rest on. This the Premier agreed to do and when the parts had been assembled at the workshops the complete trophy was pushed down by an engine on to the ramp. Owing to the great weight the lines sank slightly immediately under the two bogies and the gun and mounting were drawn back by the engine to allow two plates to be inserted under the lines to strengthen them. When pushing the trophy back to its newly strengthened bed the brakes failed to act and one bogie ran off the end of the ramp, portion of the undercarriage being in mid-air for some days. By the use of powerful jacks railway engineers skilfully replaced the trophy in its correct position.

Arrangements were made with the Australian General Electric Company to floodlight the trophy by night for some weeks prior to and during the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who inspected and greatly admired it. Thousands of people passing by day and night viewed the trophy until it was eventually moved to Canberra in 1923.

In 1927, just prior to the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of York to open the Federal Parliament, the Amiens gun was moved from its obscure position on a railway siding near the power house and set in a position on a concrete base at the Canberra railway station. Under the direction of the N.S.W. southern area railway commissioner (Mr Reid), a special spur line of 100 yards was constructed and forty men were engaged under the Federal Capital Commission's chief engineer (Colonel P. T. Owen) in the herculean task. The cost of the removal was £500.

Here the gun remained until the outbreak of the 1939-45 war. In 1942 the Army began to display an interest in the gun. The Inspector-General of Munitions, in a request for the transfer of the gun, pointed out that a mounting in which heavy British guns and ammunition could be fired was badly needed as the stresses involved at such firings made our own coast defence mountings unsuitable. It was desired to install the mounting at the artillery proof range, Port Wakefield, in South Australia. Army gave an assurance that the gun would be restored at the end of the war to its present condition and that all expenditure in connection therewith would be met by the Department of the Army. As it was pointed out that the mounting was indispensable to the war

effort, the chairman of the War Memorial Board of Management gave approval to making the equipment available. Mr Rettinger, of the Department of the Interior, and Lieutenant Colonel Warren McDonald, Royal Australian Engineers, well-known resident of Canberra, were given the task of dismantling the gun and sending away the mounting. Colonel McDonald brought to Canberra a party of engineers from Kapooka Camp, Wagga Wagga, to work under Mr Rettinger. Thus the mounting went to Port Wakefield, and for the bogies the most convenient and safe site for storing, 1 Central Ordnance Depot, Bandiana, in Victoria, was chosen.

After the conclusion of the war in 1945 the War Memorial made enquiries with the view to having the mounting and bogies returned. The Inspector-General of Munitions in 1948 requested, however, that approval be given by the War Memorial for the retention of the mounting, on loan, for an indefinite period. In view of its requirement for defence purposes the War Memorial Board acceded to the request.

Included in the War Memorial Library is a very important German handbook on the gun, and its acquisition by the Memorial is in itself an interesting story. In 1920 a returned soldier approached Victoria Barracks in Sydney offering for sale a German War Office Manual titled *Beschreibung der 28-cm. S. K. L/40 in Eisenbahn-und Bettungsschiessgerust*; a fairly literal translation of which is 'Description of 28-cm. German Railway Gun on Railway Mounting.' As the handbook was invaluable to Australia's records a sum of £5 was paid for it. Twenty years later Canon W. J. Edwards (then Headmaster of the Church of England Boys' Grammar School in Canberra, and later Rector of St James, King Street, Sydney), visited the Memorial with the view to checking that the handbook it held was the same one that he had picked up at Wiencourt in 1918. At that time he was a Y.M.C.A. representative with the 14th Infantry Brigade (5th Division), and had arrived on the scene shortly after the gun was captured. Somehow the book had 'disappeared' from his kit-bag. He was pleased and amused to establish that this book and that from the German gun-crew were one and the same.

The object of much admiration, particularly by small boys, the gun now basks in the sun next to its 1939-45 counterpart (as the largest relic from that war) — the Japanese midget submarine. Its mottled barrel inevitably bears the signatures and initials of those



thwarted people who seek publicity in the only way open to them, but this it does not mind.

The gun has now entered a period of quiescence. Fifty-six years ago it was a different story; belching defiance, it then hurled its 665-pound shell fifteen miles into the vitally important railway centre of Amiens. The presence of this menace was always a worrying factor and it is a matter of great pride that the Australians, in the most important battle operation ever undertaken by the Australian Corps in 1914-18, should have captured and removed the menace. ✂

—C.F.C.

#### A NEW ANZAC CORPS

Twenty-six years before, in April 1915, an Australian and New Zealand Army Corps had landed on Gallipoli, where, in eight months of bitter and costly fighting, Australian and New Zealand soldiers had established an enduring military tradition. Several of the senior leaders of the force now in Greece, including Blamey, Mackay and Freyberg, had served at the landing. In this April, twenty-six years later, Australian and New Zealand brigades were again fighting side by side on a battlefield in the Levant, and old memories were stirred. In the early morning of the 12th Blamey sent the following message to his divisional commanders:

"As from 1800 hrs 12 Apr 1 Aust Corps will be designated ANZAC CORPS. In making this announcement the GOC ANZAC CORPS desires to say that the reunion of the Australian and New Zealand Divisions gives all ranks the greatest uplift. The task ahead though difficult is not nearly so desperate as that which our fathers faced in April twenty-six years ago. We go to it together with stout hearts and certainty of success."

From *Greece, Crete and Syria* by Gavin Long.

# **Uncertainties Associated with CLOUD-SEEDING for military purposes**

*Flight Lieutenant A. K. Wills*

CAPTAIN K. D. Nelson has performed a useful service in introducing to a wide military audience the subject of weather modification, and specifically cloud-seeding, as a military tool; at the same time, putting forward a number of ideas as to its tactical application.<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes the need for more research and greater expertise as there are still many unanswered questions.

It is the latter point which this paper expands on, the aim being to bring readers closer to present day realities. It starts by discussing the Vietnam rainmaking operations. It then highlights the waste associated with largely uninformed quick decisions under political pressure, and suggests an approach to objective decision making under the fluid and uncertain circumstances typical of a weather modification operation. The paper concludes with suggested means of using weather modification in the defence of Australia.

## **Weather Modification Operations in Indo-China**

The military use of weather modification has been consistently reported by Shapley<sup>2, 3</sup> since the practice was first confirmed on the release of the 'Pentagon Papers'. Initially, information was not forthcoming from the American Department of Defense. Shapley's 1972 article was a collation of fragmentary reports and statements, pointing to the probability that the US Air Force had carried out cloud-seeding

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operations in the war zone but giving little indication of the dimensions of the program. It also discussed the ethics of using weather modification technology for military purposes, suggesting that international co-operation in atmospheric research could be adversely affected.

The 1974 article was written at the conclusion of a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing which yielded considerably more information.

The area of operations covered mainly the Laos 'panhandle' but also parts of North Vietnam, Cambodia and South Vietnam. The intention was to increase rainfall and extend the normal rainy season, so that poor traffic conditions such as softening of road surfaces, landslides and washed out river crossings lasted for a prolonged period. Operations started in 1966-67 and ended in 1972, after press reports on the topic began to appear. A table showing trends in seeding activity is reproduced below:

*Table 1: South East Asia Cloud-Seeding Efforts.*

The data were supplied by the Department of Defence.

YEAR	SORTIES FLOWN	UNITS* EXPENDED
1967	591	6,570
1968	734	7,420
1969	528	9,457
1970	277	8,312
1971	333	11,288
1972 (till 5 July)	139	4,362
TOTALS	2,602	47,409

(after Shapley, 1974)

\* Pyrotechnic cartridges.

A number of statements regarding the success of rainmaking tests and operations are quoted and Shapley quite correctly points out that none of the claims would be considered valid in the civilian, scientific

<sup>1</sup> *Army Journal*, No. 302, July 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Shapley, D., 'Rainmaking: rumored use over Laos alarms arms experts, scientists', *Science*, 176, 1216-1220, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Shapley, D., 'Weather Warfare: Pentagon concedes 7-year Vietnam effort', *Science*, 184, 1059-1061, 1974.

environment. It was virtually impossible to carry out objectively based scientific experiments in a hostile target area and, in the absence of statistically acceptable results, military decision makers just assumed that cloud-seeding would do what it was supposed to do. The outcome was a massive weather modification project, probably the biggest ever, with no ascertainable result. Nelson<sup>4</sup> states that 'in cases of urgent military necessity, a calculated risk might be justified with our current limited knowledge' and this appears to have been the reasoning adopted in the decision to cloud-seed in Indo-China.

The decision would have been satisfactory if there had been reasonable certainty that:

(a) occasions where rainfall was decreased were significantly outnumbered by occasions where rainfall was increased, and

(b) the effects of cloud-seeding were confined to the target area.

However, research in the last decade or so has indicated that considerably more situations arise, where atmospheric conditions produce nil or a decreased rainfall response to seeding, than were apparent in the early years of weather modification. This applies particularly to tropical and sub-tropical regions. Secondly, evidence of downwind and persistent effects of seeding have been noted in different parts of the world.<sup>5, 6</sup> There is therefore no reason to suppose that cloud-seeding in Indo-China assisted the Allied cause in any way, and it could just as easily have hindered it.

### **Decision Making in Weather Modification Operations**

Unless military research is far in advance of civilian research into weather modification, and there is no documented indication of this, the decision to cloud-seed in Indo-China was made on very shaky grounds. Considering the pressures involved it was understandable and the decision was, in fact, no different from a number made by civilian organisations throughout the world over the past quarter century.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Adderley, E. E., 1968, 'Rainfall increases downwind from cloud seeding in Australia', Proc. 1st Nat. Conf. on Weather Modification, American Met. Soc., pp. 42-6.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, K. J. and Elliott, R. D., 1968, 'Large scale dynamic effects of cloud seeding', Proc. 1st Nat. Conf. on Weather Modification, American Met. Soc., pp. 16-25.



Examples are numerous but the typical situation, close to home, is that of the government of an Australian State affected by drought. Droughts do not happen suddenly and their economic impact is usually tied in with, and therefore masked by, the effects of other economic influences. It is only when farms and rural businesses start to collapse that the typical State Government of the day starts to take notice and, if the public pressure is great enough, may embark on a cloud-seeding operation. Meteorologically, the peak of a drought is the worst time to try cloud-seeding and governments are usually aware of this. Yet operations have been launched purely on the outside chance that suitable clouds may occur. The return of natural rainy conditions usually means that seeding operations are cut back or terminated, despite the fact that at this stage, opportunities are much more prevalent and seeding can make a significant contribution to the replenishment of soil moisture and surface water storages.

For 'drought', read 'urgent military necessity' and we are back at the Vietnam situation. The point to be made is that, no matter how severe the crisis, cloud-seeding should not be employed unless there is clear evidence that it can alleviate the situation and, especially, that it will not aggravate it. Weather modification techniques can be used effectively in crisis situations only if they have been evaluated previously under non-crisis conditions. This implies a thorough foreknowledge of an area's climatic characteristics, weather systems which affect it and details of its cloud development characteristics related to rainfall. These then form the background for an experiment which should reveal the effects of weather modification, particularly the extent to which the desired effects are attained and their associated degree of reliability. There are few parts of the world for which this depth of data is available.

Despite this gloomy conclusion, scientific knowledge is continually expanding and there must come a time when decisions can be made with enhanced confidence. For such an eventuality, there is already a considerable amount of background research which has been done into the study of decision making under conditions of uncertainty. Economics, sociology, business management, marketing and, of course, military strategy are all fields in which decision making processes are analysed. The writer is no expert in this field and intends only to quote from an actual study into the decision on whether or not to seed

hurricanes; and, in the process, to outline some of the problems involved in attempting to reach a rational and objective decision.

Research into the seeding of Atlantic hurricanes in the 1960s showed that there was a chance that these destructive storms could be seeded with silver iodide to cause reduction of wind speeds. As winds are the single most destructive component of hurricanes, it became obvious that improvements in seeding technology would eventually provide a means of reducing the devastating impact of these storms. This has stimulated a number of economic, social and legal studies aimed at evaluating the pros and cons of using this new knowledge. One such investigation focused on the decision problems inherent in hurricane modification and is briefly discussed below.<sup>7</sup>

Workers at Stanford Research Institute, using the single characteristic of maximum sustained surface wind speed to describe the model storm, concluded that the policy decision to seed would be preferable to that not to seed, with property damage reduced by 10-30%. Their first task was to compare a probability distribution of wind speed changes in an unseeded hurricane with that for a seeded hurricane. The latter was then split up according to three hypotheses which covered all possibilities without overlapping each other:

- 'beneficial' — maximum winds reduced
- 'null' — no effect
- 'detrimental' — maximum wind increased.

Probabilities were assigned to each of these outcomes from data supplied by meteorologists. As an example of this, it was determined that the probability of wind intensifying by 10% or more is 0.18 (i.e., approximately 1 in 5) if a hurricane is seeded and 0.26 (approximately 1 in 4) if it is unseeded. This type of information was then taken a step further by introducing calculated \$ values of damage caused at different levels of maximum sustained wind speed. The complete picture was then presented in the form of a 'decision tree' which showed probabilities assigned to outcomes against a selected range of changes in maximum sustained wind and property damage loss. The outcome in this case was estimated at \$116 million damage without seeding and \$94 million damage with seeding.

<sup>7</sup> Howard, R. A., Matheson, J. E. and North, D. W., 'The decision to seed hurricanes', *Science*, 176 pp. 1191-1202.

In their conclusion, the researchers point out the need for responsible decision making and the appointment of a decision making authority. They also emphasize the dynamic nature of decision analysis in this field, controlled as it is by the variable nature of each hurricane threat and the increase in scientific knowledge. Their concluding remark bears careful consideration:

For any complex decision that may affect the lives of millions, a decision analysis showing explicitly the uncertainties and decision criteria can and should be carried out.

A report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration outlines the decision making problem in broad terms and summarises the type of conflict often encountered in civilian operations to change the weather:

Weather modification has, as its long-range goal, environmental management that provides substantial benefits to society. Usually these gains are looked upon in terms of favourable economic outcome; i.e., the weather modification project constitutes a cost-effective technique for achieving desired results. It is not always possible, however, to guarantee that the project results will please all the residents of the area in which the weather modification was practised. For example, the artificially increased rainfall contracted for by growers of one type of crop may interfere with the harvesting of a different adjacent crop, resulting in economic losses to the growers of the second type of crop.<sup>8</sup>

The military analogy could be one in which rainmaking bogged enemy vehicles but provided the enemy with additional fresh water.

The need for top quality decision making in the case of hurricane modification is very clear, since there is so much potential for human and material loss. The need should be equally clear for valid decisions in the more commonly encountered operations to stimulate rainfall. The need for a high standard of decision making in any military application of cloud-seeding should also be obvious. Present weather modification technology is identical for both civil and military purposes and one need only exchange the civilian's benefits and costs for the gains and losses of the military planner.

### **Weather Modification in the Defence of Australia**

It is very unlikely in the foreseeable future, that weather modification can be used in short-term, tactical military situations. The techno-

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<sup>8</sup> Summary Report, WEATHER MODIFICATION, Fiscal Year 1972, US Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Environmental Monitoring and Prediction, Rockville, Md., November 1973, p. 139.

logy depends on the pre-existence of suitable weather conditions, which may then be modified. The consequent lack of precision, in timing and location, virtually rules it out as a weapon available to commanders in the field.

On the other hand, should Northern Australia ever be occupied by invading forces, a Vietnam-style rainmaking programme would probably be warranted. In the first place, such action in a nation's self defence could not be construed as unethical use of scientific knowledge. Secondly, by the time such an event occurred, more technical background data would be available and thus a more predictable result assured. Thirdly, Australia's outback roads, under natural conditions, are notoriously prone to wet season disruption and incremental rain would therefore be more certain of significantly hindering enemy movement.

The second and third points can be assigned probabilities by technical and military experts, and these would appear on the *seed* side of the decision tree. On the *do not seed* side, would have to be included factors such as:

- possible adverse effects on friendly forces
- relief of possible water shortages for enemy forces
- competing requirements for aircraft on missions with more tangible results
- air power balance and likely high attrition rate in long duration sorties through hostile air.

The decision would be a difficult one, the critical element being the confidence level of attaining an adequate success to outweigh the adverse factors listed above. This would have to derive from previously conducted research.

In the case of hurricanes (tropical cyclones), the same sort of analysis as discussed earlier would have to be superimposed on a range of conditions similar to those just listed. There have been suggestions that hurricanes may be 'steered' by weather modification and one assumes that, when the hurricane is fully understood, science will be able to intensify as well as ameliorate them. The possession of this type of knowledge would be a significant addition to a nation's armoury, on sea as well as land.

It is a matter of personal opinion at the moment whether man will ever be able to control the weather in this way. One can only guess at how much the decision analyst and weather modifier might be able to contribute to the success of Armageddon, and whether they will be invited to take part. ✕

### STEAM CHARIOTS OF WAR

Sir,—The opinion seems to be gaining ground, that, in the event of another war, an important modification of our naval tactics will result from a general use of armed steam-vessels. *Mr Perkins, I believe, some years ago, exhibited the imposing effects of steam applied to the projection of small iron balls or bullets, in vast numbers and with considerable impetus, from a stationary engine, such as might be used in the defence of a fortress; but I do not recollect to have seen any proposal for the employment of this powerful agent in the field of battle.* Steam has been employed with surprising success on railways, for the conveyance of goods and passengers, and there is little doubt that it will in a short time be made equally serviceable on the common roads of the country; but one of its principal advantages appears to have been scarcely noticed. We all know that in former times chariots of war were highly esteemed for their destructive operation, yet they were found objectionable, and ultimately they were disused on one account, viz.—the great difficulty of managing the horses when frightened or wounded, and the impossibility of impelling them on the pikes of a formidable phalanx. This objection would have a double weight with the modern use of fire arms. An elephant, too, in modern warfare, as an object of annoyance, would be ridiculous. The great *forte* of steam is its passiveness. Secure the boiler and the machinery from the stroke of a cannonball, and you might drive a steam-chariot triumphantly through a regiment. Imagine three or four of these machines driven at a galloping speed through a square of infantry; the director might be seated in perfect safety in the rear of the engine, and a body of cavalry, about fifty yards in rear, would enter the furrows ploughed by these formidable chariots, and give the *coup-de-grâce* to the unfortunate infantry. The chariots might be armed with scythes, both in front and flank; and, if the first shock were avoided by the men opening their ranks, they might easily be made sufficiently manageable to wheel round and return on any part of the square which stood firm.

It may have happened as I am far from the great centre of civilization and invention, that this idea may have already been communicated to you; but, as I have not seen the proposal, and it appears to me that, if carried into execution, it might produce important results, I take the liberty of bringing it to your notice.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A CONSTANT READER.

Bombay, 23rd July, 1832.

Extracted from Colburn's *United Services Magazine*.)



# URBAN GUERRILLAS

*Lieutenant Colonel C. C. M. Peters  
Australian Intelligence Corps*

**This is the central nucleus, not the bureaucrats and opportunists hidden in the organizational structure, not the empty conferees, the cliched writers of resolutions that remain on paper, but rather the men who fight.**

—Carlos Marighela<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE term 'urban guerrilla' is of recent vintage. The Australian Army has had considerable experience of rural guerrillas over the past twenty-five years, and the methods of various rural guerrilla movements have been analysed and discussed at length. The urban terrorist is a common figure in history, but the term 'urban guerrilla' suggests motivation and methods which are more balanced and reasoned than those of a mere terrorist. It would be of interest to identify the more common methods employed by urban guerrilla movements, and to see if any general assessment can be made as to their effectiveness. The aim of this article is to evaluate some of the methods used by urban guerrillas.

Brian Crozier lists some eighteen countries in which urban armed revolutionary groups are active. These groups range from relatively ineffective extremists, to guerrilla movements in Latin America and Ireland which are reported on extensively every week.<sup>2</sup> In this article, examples will be drawn primarily from the activities of some of the

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better-known and more effective urban guerrilla movements, with occasional reference to others.

### URBAN GUERRILLA OBJECTIVES

To judge the effectiveness of methods, it is necessary first to identify what those methods were meant to achieve. Régis Debray, a French Marxist<sup>3</sup> who has inspired many Latin American revolutionaries, wrote 'Any line which claims to be revolutionary must give a concrete answer to the question: How to overthrow the power of the capitalist state?'<sup>4</sup> Carlos Marighela, the leader of the urban guerrilla National Liberation Alliance (ALN), which fought against the Brazilian military leadership, declared 'The revolutionaries' struggle has nothing to do with replacing military by civil rule . . . . We aim to destroy the power of the ruling classes';<sup>5</sup> and that a principal task of the urban guerrilla was 'to . . . destroy the wealth . . . of the North Americans, the foreign managers and the Brazilian upper class'.<sup>6</sup> Both wings of the IRA seek to remove the power of the most influential social groups in Northern Ireland: the Officials as a step towards Marxist revolution in Ireland, and the Provisionals for the creation of a united, socialist Ireland.



Régis Debray

These attitudes suggest some similarity concerning objectives. However it is common for urban guerrilla movements to refuse to

<sup>1</sup> C. Marighela, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*, published with Adelphi Paper Number 79, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, August 1971, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> B. Crozier, *The Study of Conflict*, Conflict Study Number 7, October 1970, pp. 14-22.

<sup>3</sup> Most urban guerrilla movements are not Communist, although they are often Marxist. They are often in fact opposed by local Communist parties.

<sup>4</sup> R. Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, Penguin, London, 1972, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> C. Marighela, *For the Liberation of Brazil*, Pelican, London 1971, p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> Marighela, *Minimanual*, p. 20.

commit themselves to precise strategic aims. The Tupamaro<sup>7</sup> guerrillas of Uruguay have proved one of the more effective urban guerrilla movements in Latin America. They have usually refused to commit themselves to a long-term programme. In 1968 the Tupamaros stated their chief aim as 'To possess an armed group'<sup>8</sup> This apparent uncertainty about long-term objectives may arise from the fact that their membership, as with most other Latin American urban guerrilla movements, draws heavily upon alienated 'New Left' intellectuals, principally students, whose dissent is emotional and ideological rather than stemming from economic deprivation. The economic bases for the 'new society' are therefore often not carefully thought out. In 1972, 52.2% of Tupamaros were students or university graduates;<sup>9</sup> 56% of 500 men imprisoned in Brazil for terrorist and political activities were students or recent graduates.<sup>10</sup>

However, even the Tupamaros eventually described their objectives, stating these to be nationalisation, land re-distribution, 'workers control' in factories, and 'student control' in the universities.<sup>11</sup> These accord generally with the objectives of other urban guerrilla movements, which can be broadly stated as 'to remove the power of the ruling class'; that is, to change the existing structure of society, which the guerrillas see as being dominated by a 'ruling class'. How?

## POLARIZATION

### Brazil

'The basic principle . . . is to unleash . . . a volume of revolutionary activity which will oblige the enemy to transform the country's political situation into a military one. Then discontent will spread . . . and the military will be held exclusively responsible for failures' says Marighela.<sup>12</sup> Marighela stated no scheme for governing a Brazil of the future, but seemed content to emphasize ways in which urban guerrillas

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<sup>7</sup> The Tupamaros name themselves after an Indian chief who led a rebellion against Spanish colonists in Peru in the eighteenth century. (A. Labrousse, *The Tupamaros*, Penguin, England 1973, p. 15).

<sup>8</sup> Labrousse, pp. 136, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Colonel Sergio L. d'Oliveira, 'Uruguay and the Tupamaro Myth', in *Military Review*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, April 1973, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> R. Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, Alister Taylor, London, 1972, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrilla*, p. 218.

<sup>12</sup> Marighela, *Liberation*, p. 46.

could bring down the present order. One important method was to provoke the government into becoming more repressive and violent, in order to stimulate criticism of it. In this, Marighela's ALN was partly successful. In September 1969 at a time in which a new liberal constitution was anticipated, the ALN kidnapped Burke Elbrick, the United States ambassador; the government released fifteen political prisoners in exchange for him. These publicly alleged that torture was used in the prisons. A new president now took office; no doubt in response to the kidnapping, he re-introduced the death penalty, and increased other penalties for terrorism. The police issued instructions that persons must report on their neighbours, and right wing terrorist groups emerged such as the *Escudrao da Morte* (Death Squad).<sup>13</sup> The level of 'polarization' had been raised.

However the Brazilian army and police, now thoroughly aroused, became particularly effective, and despite the guerrillas' efforts, no mass militant opposition to the government developed. Marighela himself was killed in 1969. Just before his death he admitted that several thousands of his comrades were in prison.<sup>14</sup> The young middle class intellectuals who made up the bulk of the urban guerrilla movement proved unable to communicate with the masses which they aspired to lead. One American observer is reported to have explained 'If one of these strange-talking kids moved into a *favela* (urban slum) the gossip would run through the place like fire. The cops would be on him in no time'.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, repressive measures by the government, and the mass interrogations, including the alleged use of torture, which accompanied the army's operations during its six street battles with guerrillas in Rio and Sao Paulo in the last quarter of 1970, alienated some important elements of public opinion, and this serves the guerrillas' interests.<sup>16</sup>

### Uruguay

In neighbouring Uruguay, the Tupamaro guerrillas also sought to spread discontent, heightening the violence between government forces and revolutionaries, in the hope that the government would be held to

<sup>13</sup> R. Clutterbuck, *Protest and the Urban Guerrilla*, Cassell, London, 1973, pp. 231-2.

<sup>14</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrilla*, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> *Time*, 24th April 1972, pp. 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> R. Moss, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, Adelphi Paper Number 79, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London 1971, p. 14.

blame for the worsened economic condition of the people. The Tupamaros stated that their aim was 'to create an undeniable state of revolutionary war... polarizing politics between the guerrillas and the regime'.<sup>17</sup> In their aim, the guerrillas were helped by the economic situation. Uruguay had possessed one of the highest standards of living on the continent, and a tradition of democracy. But a severe drop in world meat prices and other outside pressures upon the Uruguayan economy, combined with the considerable cost of the country's extensive social services, led to the development of one of the highest inflation rates in the world (consumer prices rose by 130% in 1968-69).<sup>18</sup> The Tupamaros set about aggravating these economic problems. By sending threatening letters to Argentine tourists, they helped to reduce the tourist inflow in the first half of 1971 by nearly half.<sup>19</sup>

Tupamaro terrorism was not able to be handled at first by the relatively weak security forces. The government began to resort to repression. Police methods came under criticism and press censorship was introduced.<sup>20</sup> A Brazilian-style right wing 'Death Squad' began a private battle with the Tupamaros.<sup>21</sup>

The combination of a worsening economic situation, increased government repression applied to the population, and growing guerrilla capability seemed to accord with the Tupamaros' plan to 'polarize' and 'militarize' conditions in Uruguay.

However in 1971 the Tupamaros decided to reduce their scale of operations, in order to support a left-wing 'Broad Front' which sought the presidency by constitutional means, encouraged by the success of the Marxist Salvador Allende in Chile the previous year. In this election, voters showed that, even if the political situation in Uruguay had been 'militarized' to some degree by Tupamaro violence, the guerrillas had greatly over-estimated the degree of popular support which might have flowed to them as a result: the 'Broad Front' was emphatically rejected, receiving only 18.3% of the vote. The Tupamaro reaction was to provoke an all-out street war with the army. This increase in the level of violence was designed to 'polarize' the situation

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<sup>17</sup> Labrousse, p. 130.

<sup>18</sup> Clutterbuck, p. 221.

<sup>19</sup> W. Teller, 'What's Happening in Uruguay?' in *Saturday Evening Post*, Winter 1971, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Labrousse, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> 'Crisis in Uruguay', in *Christian Century*, Chicago, 13 September 1972, p. 889.

further, but in fact allowed the new president, equipped with a formidable mandate from the recent election, to appeal to the Congress for wider powers. The president was able to declare a 'state of internal war', the first in Uruguay's history, confident that the election showed that the people preferred firm government action to unchecked Tupamaro violence. In the ensuing operations the Army gained the ascendancy over the urban guerrillas for the first time.<sup>22</sup>

### Northern Ireland

'It is time that every Northern Ireland citizen realised that we are now very close to a terrible civil war', declared the Northern Ireland Minister for Community Relations in 1971.<sup>23</sup> Civil war did not eventuate, but before two years had passed nearly 800 people had died violently in the province since 1969; and IRA violence had led to the emergence of armed loyalist groups whose members numbered several thousands, and to the introduction of many thousands of British troops in an attempt to keep order.<sup>24</sup> British troops who had at first been welcomed by Catholics as protectors, were by July 1970 viewed with hostility by many Catholics. Protestants and Catholics had forcibly evicted many families who were not co-religionists, from their respective residential areas. The Provisional IRA, responsible for most of the violence, had succeeded to a large extent in 'militarizing' the situation and 'polarizing' attitude.

Major General Richard Clutterbuck writes 'The Provisionals... calculated that violence and terror would induce clamour for repressive counter-measures which would bear hardest on the Catholic ghettos on which they (the Provisionals) were based; so that, amongst the people in these ghettos, the fear of the IRA gunman would be mingled with respect for him as their protector and a growing hostility towards the soldiers and the police who would act as the cutting edge of the repression.' This is a strategy of 'polarization', which seeks to induce the same attitudes on the part of the common people towards the security forces, as the Tupamaros tried to engender in Uruguay. General Clutterbuck says that the Provisionals believed that the British public

<sup>22</sup> D. Reed, 'Tupamaros — the Terrorists Who Lost', in *Readers Digest*, Australian Edition, December 1972, pp. 83-7.

<sup>23</sup> Iain Hamilton, 'From Liberalism to Extremism', in *The Spreading Irish Conflict*, Conflict Study Number 17, November 1971, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ulster: Politics and Terrorism*, Conflict Studies Number 36, June 1973, pp. 7, 19, 20.

could be brought to jettison Northern Ireland, if both Protestants and Catholics could be made to view the British as their common enemy. A first step was to worsen the violence to the stage that direct rule from Westminster was imposed, in the hope that angry Protestants would attack the British troops who were enforcing this direct rule.

Direct rule was imposed in March 1972, and the Provisionals succeeded in provoking the repression they sought, in that internment without trial, with its necessary arrests at dead of night, was introduced. Some protest was later raised about British interrogation methods. However the considerable upsurge in violence which the IRA unleashed in order to capitalize on the issue of internment<sup>25</sup> signalled to the British the requirement to 'de-fuse' the situation: three-quarters of the one thousand internees were released.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the emergency, British troops have behaved with restraint, and have so avoided, where possible, assisting the IRA in its strategy of 'polarization'.<sup>27</sup>

### Algiers

The battles in Algiers 1956-62 provide an example of polarization. 'Torture is to be condemned, but we would like a precise answer as to where torture begins', asked General Jacques Massu, who commanded the Tenth Parachute Division in the city in 1957. It has been claimed that Massu's 'paras' may have interrogated almost forty per cent of the 80,000 population of the Muslim casbah, some undoubtedly by harsh means, in a two month operation which put to rout the Muslim terrorist National Liberation Front (FLN) organization in Algiers. Massu had been given 'full police authority' to defeat the FLN, following a four month FLN terror campaign aimed at both French 'colons' and Muslims, in which there had been 100 terrorist incidents a month; the FLN aim had been to polarize the two communities in an atmosphere of fear and distrust, capitalizing on harsh French police reactions against the Muslims. In the course of their short, successful campaign against the FLN city organization, the paratroopers used mass interrogation and intimidation, broke strikes by force, and made private citizens accountable for the behaviour of their relatives and neighbours. An FLN leader lamented that, as a result: 'The organization that we so painfully

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<sup>25</sup> Clutterbuck, pp. 91-103, 137-8.

<sup>26</sup> P. O'Farrell, 'Ireland', in *Current Affairs Bulletin*, May 1973, p. 363.

<sup>27</sup> Clutterbuck, p. 117.



succeeded in building up has been destroyed.<sup>28</sup> Yet the methods used by the paratroopers had caused fierce controversy in Paris. Later, with the emergence of the right wing French terrorist 'Secret Army' (OAS), the FLN achieved the ultimate in polarization — a three-sided conflict in Algiers between the FLN, the Army and the OAS; in the face of the polarization which had been created, the decision in Paris to dispense with the Algerian problem seems to have been inevitable.<sup>29</sup>

### Summary

The history of recent urban guerrilla movements shows that a prime method used towards removing the power of 'the ruling class' (that is, changing the structure of the society), is to 'militarize' the political situation by increasing the level of violence and drawing the security forces into the conflict, and therefore attempting to 'polarize' political attitudes to extremes. It is then hoped that frustrations generated by anxiety or economic pressures will result in extensive changes to the political system. Few urban guerrilla movements have more detailed strategies than this. This strategy of polarization has been moderately successful, although in very few cases only has it been conclusive. In Northern Ireland, and to a much lesser extent in Uruguay, it has been handicapped by the refusal of the security forces to be provoked into reaction without constitutional sanctions. Some measures in Brazil have resembled French paratroop methods in Algiers, and have helped the strategy of 'polarization'. The strategy appears to bear full fruit when the government forces react with a severity beyond the normal acceptance of public opinion, as in Algiers; and as in Guatamala, where 'white terror' rivalling the terror of the left, has been justified on the grounds that 'the terrorism of the guerrillas . . . has forced the government to adopt a plan of complete illegality, but this has brought results'.<sup>30</sup>

## ARMED ACTION IN PREFERENCE TO ORGANIZATION

### Guevara and Debray

*'Our need now is for a . . . vanguard organization built for sustained daily revolutionary action and not for interminable arguments and*

<sup>28</sup> Robert J. Kee, 'Algiers 1957: An Approach to Urban Counter-Insurgency', in *Military Review*, April 1974, pp. 73-84.

<sup>29</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, pp. 57-63.

<sup>30</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 181.

meetings', urged Marighela.<sup>31</sup> The ALN, the Tupamaros, and most other urban guerrilla movements in Latin America, have rejected the methodical organization-building methods of traditional left wing groups, such as the Communists. Marighela dismissed the Communist Party as 'that faculty of fine arts'.<sup>32</sup> The Tupamaros complain that most other left wing organizations seem to 'rely on theoretical discussions... they do not understand that revolutionary situations are created by revolutionary actions'.<sup>33</sup> The ALN and the Tupamaros drew much of their inspiration from the example of the Cuban revolution, and from the writings of Che Guevara and of his protege, Regis Debray. Guevara had stated that one of the 'fundamental conclusions' from Cuba had been that 'One does not necessarily have to wait for a revolutionary situation to arise; it can be created'.<sup>34</sup> Debray's principal conclusion was that a revolutionary situation can be created by means of the guerrilla force taking regular and direct revolutionary action; this example of action will stimulate others to take up arms and join the movement.



Che Guevara

Debray describes the main guerrilla force as a *foco*, or 'centre' of military operations. 'By going over to the counter-attack... [the guerrilla force] catalyses the people's energy and transforms the *foco* into a pole of attraction for the whole country'. The *foco* will win recruits if it uses armed action to challenge 'the idea of unassailability' surrounding the landowner and policeman. If the *foco* takes the initiative against the government army, the people, freed from their 'old obsession' that 'revolutionary awareness and organization must... precede revolutionary action' will join the guerrilla 'mobile strategic force'. Eventually the whole country will be in arms. The *foco* must not concern itself with establishing guerrilla bases for the time being, and should not allow itself to become over-dependent upon the civilian

<sup>31</sup> Marighela, *Liberation*, p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Labrousse, p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, Cassell, London 1963, p. 111.

population. Contrary to the method used by Chinese and Vietnamese guerrillas, a revolutionary force in Latin America should be built 'from the apex down — the permanent forces first [the *foco*] . . . and lastly the militia'. The Vietnamese method of subordinating the military to the political is rejected, since the two 'form one organic whole', the *foco* being the 'party in embryo'. Since the rural population in Latin America tends to be dispersed and sparse, claims Debray, Vietnamese-style methods of organization-building prior to armed action cannot be attempted, as strangers in an area will always be noticed. Nevertheless, the revolution must be pursued in the countryside, rather than the cities because, as Fidel says 'The city is a cemetery of revolutionaries and resources'. Above all, the guerrillas must take the course of direct armed action, rather than organization tasks and speech-making: 'The destruction of a troop transport truck or the public execution of a police torturer is more effective propaganda . . . than a hundred speeches . . . . During two years of warfare, Fidel did not hold a single political rally in his zone of operations.'<sup>35</sup>

In summary, Debray's theory, supposedly based upon Guevara's Cuban experience, is that a revolutionary movement need not, as orthodox Communists suggest, start by developing a strong organization and wide popular support. It is better to take armed action. The masses, inspired by this example, will join the movement against the reactionary regime, and the revolutionary situation will have been created. The *foco* has been likened to a tiny swarm of bees; they have only to buzz for others to buzz in sympathy. The *foco* eludes the government's lunges against it, and eventually the air is alive with bees.<sup>36</sup>

Many rural guerrilla movements in Latin America tried to employ the *foco* theory during the 1960s. None met with real success. Guevara himself was killed while applying his methods, unsuccessfully, in Bolivia. Many movements now attempted a variation — to try these methods in the cities.

### **The Tupamaros**

'What is the fundamental principle on which [your] activities . . . have been based?' asked an interviewer of a Tupamaro spokesman in 1968. 'The idea that revolutionary action in itself, the very act of taking up arms . . . creates a revolutionary consciousness, organization

<sup>35</sup> Debray, pp. 22, 24, 41-5, 50-4, 64, 67, 82, 105.

<sup>36</sup> Clutterbuck, p. 167.

and conditions', was the reply.<sup>37</sup> 'It is not by carefully elaborating political programmes that one makes the revolution. The basic principles... have been established... in Cuba. It is enough to... follow the way of armed struggle...,' said another spokesman.<sup>38</sup> The



Raul Sendic

Tupamaros acknowledged the need to form support groups in the unions, where they have been in conflict with the Communists, but nevertheless quote Fidel Castro in stressing 'With a party or without a party the revolution cannot wait'.<sup>39</sup> Having apparently usurped the local Communists' role in leading the revolutionary struggle, the Tupamaros drew angry Russian criticism as 'rollicking, loud-mouthed thugs', pursuing 'gangster tactics'.

By organizing loosely into 'combat columns' of 50 to 300 members and 'fire groups' of three to five, various Tupamaro

elements seemed to have possessed enough local initiative to carry on unimpaired, even with the temporary capture of their leader, Raul Sendic, in 1970.<sup>40</sup>

Emphasis upon armed action or a Debrayist disdain for 'base areas', did not deter the Tupamaros from constructing an elaborate system of underground refuges, hospitals and supply dumps in Montevideo. The Tupamaros hired apartments all over the city and built hides underneath them. Tunnels were burrowed, connecting the hides with the sewer systems, which provided a get-away. The entry points from the houses were then sealed and the houses vacated.<sup>41</sup> One of these houses, opposite a major prison, was utilized again in September 1971, when a Tupamaro group re-occupied the house at gun-point, holding the family hostage. An entry point was re-opened, and 106 Tupamaros emerged from a tunnel which had been dug under a

<sup>37</sup> Labrousse, p. 133.

<sup>38</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 218.

<sup>39</sup> Labrousse, p. 138.

<sup>40</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, pp. 222, 237; Clutterbuck, p. 227; J. Mallin, 'The Military Vs Urban Guerrillas', in *Marine Corps Gazette*, Quantico, Virginia, January 1973, pp. 22-3.

neighbouring street to connect with a prison cell. Tupamaro membership also included tailors, furniture-makers and panel beaters who operated from legitimate businesses, but made Tupamaro disguises and panels for entries to hides, and disguised stolen cars for the guerrillas.<sup>42</sup>

However, despite many guerrilla successes, the rejection of the 'Broad Front' in 1971 and Army successes which followed, showed that Tupamaro armed action had not succeeded in gaining widespread support for the guerrillas, as prescribed in the *foco* theory. The middle-class *foco*, which the Tupamaros represented, did not seem to have made sufficient contact with the urban working class masses. Facing a decline in the city, the Tupamaros, apparently trying to follow Guevara and Debray, took their movement back into the countryside in 1972. The result was disastrous: the sparse Uruguayan rural population, which makes up only 26% of the total, gave the guerrillas no significant support; the terrain, which is over 70% flat grazing land, provided insufficient cover; and the city-bred guerrillas, unskilled in rural survival, were no match for the Army, which was now operating in favourable terrain.<sup>43</sup> Abraham Guillen, a Marxist who has been described as 'the intellectual mentor of the Tupamaros', and whose writings have been discovered in Tupamaro hides, castigated the movement for making legends of Castro and Guevara, and therefore going into the countryside 'without revising mistaken strategies'. Guillen complained that the middle-class Tupamaros had not been able to recruit workers and peasants, and that the guerrillas had become 'isolated from the urban masses'.<sup>44</sup>

### Marighela

Marighela was another advocate of continuous armed action in preference to organization-building. 'The urban guerrilla's reason for existence, the basic condition in which he acts and survives, is to shoot,' he wrote. 'The basic thing... is not to call futile meetings on generalized bureaucratic topics but to dedicate oneself systematically to planning and executing every possible kind of revolutionary activity'. Marighela, although his view was 'firmly fixed on the Cuban revolution',

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<sup>41</sup> Mallin, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Reed, pp. 84-6.

<sup>43</sup> d'Oliveira, pp. 33-4.

<sup>44</sup> Donald C. Hodges, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla: the Revolutionary Writings of Abraham Guillen*, William Morrow, New York, 1973, pp. 268-9.

claimed to have rejected the idea of the rural *foco*, no doubt influenced by the Bolivian experience. However, he saw his city operations as constituting only the tactical part of his plan; the 'decisive struggle', in time, was to occur in the rural areas, but by establishing a guerrilla infrastructure rather than by *foco* methods.<sup>45</sup>



Carlos Marighela

Despite his reluctance to identify his plans for urban operations with those of the *foco*, Marighela's attitudes to armed action and to organization are often 'Debrayist' in character. 'The masses coalesce around this firepower as it emerges and expands, build their unity around it and march on to power', he explains, although stressing that the firepower should be accompanied by political work. As with Debray, 'Our principal activity was not the construction of a party, but to launch revolutionary action'.<sup>46</sup>

As a means to achieve continuous armed action, in a method very similar to that of the *foco*, Marighela placed great emphasis upon decisive action by guerrilla groups, and upon independent local initiative. His 'strategic command' laid down a priority of objectives, but his four or five man groups were then required to act with maximum initiative, freedom and decisiveness. 'No firing group can remain inactive waiting for orders from above. Its obligation is to act'.<sup>47</sup> Declaring 'The backbone of our organization are the revolutionary groups which possess qualities of combativeness and initiative', he denounced, in Debrayist manner, complex chains of command and large cumbersome organizations as 'the death of revolutionary initiative'.<sup>48</sup> Marighela's enterprising, independent and combative 'firing groups' helped create serious security problems in Brazil's cities, but they did not lead to a 'coalescing' of mass support around ALN firepower as predicted. They led, in fact, to Marighela's own death and to the elimination of many of his guerrilla groups.

<sup>45</sup> Marighela, *Minimanual*, pp. 23, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Marighela, *Liberation*, pp. 29, 38-40, 47, 59-60, 128.

<sup>47</sup> Marighela, *Minimanual*, p. 24.

<sup>48</sup> Marighela, *Liberation*, pp. 57-8, 130.



### Quebec Liberation Front

'We are learning more how to kill than how to mobilize popular movements' said two members of the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ) to a pressman at a guerrilla camp in Jordan in 1970. From its inception in 1963, the FLQ was dedicated to violence, without ever showing a particular concern for organization. Various FLQ elements planted bombs on an average of one every ten days from 1963 to 1970, and carried out armed robberies.<sup>49</sup> There were proven links with Cuba, and from these will have flowed encouragement for the course of armed action: one of the FLQ's leading personalities,<sup>50</sup> and some of its lesser members, are reported to have studied guerrilla warfare in Cuba. When James Cross, a British trade commissioner, was kidnapped by the FLQ in 1970, Cuba became the refuge for the FLQ kidnappers.<sup>51</sup>

Many FLQ actions seemed aimed at polarizing the English and French communities, but there is no evidence that FLQ violence resulted in an increase in French support for the FLQ. On the contrary, the result of the FLQ's most important action, the kidnapping and murder in 1970 of Pierre Laporte, the Quebec Minister for Labour, was that the Canadian government was able to gain massive support for the introduction of a *War Measures Act* outlawing the FLQ. A public opinion poll in Montreal, a primarily French city, showed a 72% favourable view of the strong government measures against the FLQ. Finally, the effect of the murder of Laporte was that the government security forces began an operation which resulted in severe set-backs for the FLQ.<sup>52</sup>

### 'Symbionese Liberation Army'

The 'Symbionese Liberation Army' (SLA), six of whose twelve known members died in a gun-battle with police in Los Angeles on 17 May 1974, is dedicated to violent action against, 'enemies of the people', and to expropriating the 'capitalist class'. It was formed when the present group separated from a larger element following a dispute over tactics. The SLA members maintained that the time for revolutionary action was the present, while those who refused to join them argued

<sup>49</sup> *Quebec: The Challenge from Within*, Conflict Study Number 20, February 1972, pp. 6-7, 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 118.

<sup>51</sup> *Quebec*, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, pp. 121-9.

that revolution could not occur until the masses were properly motivated. The SLA is reported to have targeted Huey Newton, the Black Panther leader, for death for his abandonment of violence as a tactic. From the sketchy information available on the SLA, the members are believed to have attempted to model their movement on Latin American groups such as the Tupamaros. Certainly, as with Latin American movements, the SLA membership consists of young middle class students and ex-students, including a high proportion of women. Patricia Hearst has taken (or been given) the name 'Tania', for the German-Argentine mistress of Che Guevara, and Regis Debray has sent her a letter asking for assurance that she has freely chosen to follow the original 'Tania's' example.<sup>53</sup>

The apparent SLA devotion to Guevara; the connection with Debray; the age, background and motivation of SLA members; and their dedication to revolutionary action without waiting for revolutionary conditions to emerge, suggest very strongly that the SLA sees itself as a revolutionary *foco* in Guevarist tradition. It is very likely, therefore, that the SLA believes its actions will result in the group's acting as a catalyst to galvanize other possible revolutionaries into similar action. However, despite the spectacular and smoothly-conducted bank raid in San Francisco in April 1974, the main result of the SLA's revolutionary action has been the elimination of half of its strength. It is not yet known whether another *foco* will emerge, but it is certain that Guevarist-style revolutionary activity in the United States, as in Canada in the case of the FLQ, will meet with very considerable public backing for the strongest government counter-measures: public opinion polls in the US consistently show that the overwhelming majority of the white community, at least, favours strong government measures in defence of public order.

### Summary

Many urban guerrilla movements, especially those in Latin America, emphasize continuous armed action, with only secondary effort being devoted to developing a strong organization and wide popular support. They believe that the example which they provide to the

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<sup>53</sup> *Time*, 29 April 1974, pp. 23-31; *Time*, 27 May 1974, pp. 28-30; *The Age*, Saturday Review, 27 July 1974, p. 11.

people by confronting the regime with violence will result in the masses 'coalescing' around their firepower. More and more 'oppressed' people will be encouraged to take violent action themselves. In this manner, a revolutionary situation can be created, if not properly developed initially. In time, these methods will generate enough revolutionary violence to overthrow 'the ruling class'. Movements which follow this strategy tend to be disdainful of 'old left' groups such as the Communists, whom they regard as committed to empty words rather than real revolutionary action. Guevara and Debray, through their interpretation of events in the Cuban revolution, provide the stimulus for these views.

There is little evidence to show that these methods have been successful. In Cuba itself, the success of Castro's revolution may have been due as much to pressures placed upon the regime in Havana, where half of the government's army became tied down, as to Castro's and Guevara's technique.<sup>54</sup> Neither the Tupamaros nor Marighela's ALN succeeded in winning enough support by means of their policies of armed action, even to retain the initiative in the struggle against the security forces. Far from provoking mass participation in their policy of armed confrontation, both movements have been criticized for failing to make adequate contact with the working classes. The apparent failure of the Guevarist belief that a revolutionary situation can be 'created' by means of armed action, leads one to conclude that the Communist critics of revolutionary movements such as the Tupamaros, may be on firmer ground. Lenin had insisted that although the revolutionary struggle could be led by an elite 'vanguard', 'a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation'. The elements of a revolutionary situation included the requirement for the suffering of the oppressed classes to have grown more acute than usual, and for a 'crisis' among the 'upper classes'. It was not possible to create this revolutionary situation when it had not yet developed, since the changes necessary were 'independent of the will, not only of individual groups and parties, but even of individual classes'.<sup>55</sup> Whether or not Guevara's programme is more suitable for revolution than is Lenin's, the record shows that urban guerrillas following Guevara's methods of armed action in preference to organization-building, have not achieved their objective of removing the power of 'the ruling class'.

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<sup>54</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, pp. 76, 143.

<sup>55</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 21, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1964, pp. 213-4.

## URBAN GUERRILLA TECHNIQUES

### 'Expropriation'

The armed struggle of urban guerrillas, says Marighela, 'points towards two essential objectives:

- The physical liquidation of the chiefs... of the armed forces and of the police;
- The expropriation of government resources and those belonging to the big capitalists, latifundists (land-owners) and imperialists'.

Guerrilla attacks upon the security forces will be discussed later; but Marighela saw 'expropriation' — armed robbery of money, arms and supplies — as 'the most telling blows' against 'capitalism's nerve system'. He urged 'systematic attacks upon the banking network'.<sup>56</sup> In 1968 Brazilian urban guerrillas stole more than \$US800,000 from over 50 bank branches in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.<sup>57</sup> The Tupamaros carried out even more successful bank raids. It has been estimated that at the height of their activity the Tupamaros required over \$100,000 per month to support their multifarious operations; they were able to take all of this at gun-point.<sup>58</sup> They may have stolen as much as \$10 million, which included the theft of over \$6 million in gems in one spectacular operation in December 1970.<sup>59</sup> The Tupamaros also stole many arms, and benefited in this regard by the fact that the police did not clearly identify them as a political organization for the first two years of their existence.<sup>60</sup> Marighela claims that the ALN had a year's head-start over the police in Brazil for the same reason.<sup>61</sup>

The Tupamaros gained more fruits from 'expropriation' than simply to fill their coffers with money with which to finance their operations, including bribery of policemen and jailers. The guerrillas managed to turn many of their robberies into propaganda 'coups'. Apparently using excellent information which came from inside the bank, they stole money and also confidential account books from the Financiera Monty bank in 1969. The Tupamaros publicized names taken from these

<sup>56</sup> Marighela, *Minimanual*, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup> R. Gott, in Marighela *Liberation*, p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> Reed, p. 85.

<sup>59</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 225.

<sup>60</sup> Labrousse, pp. 35-7.

<sup>61</sup> Marighela, *Liberation*, p. 112.

account books, claiming that they provided evidence of corruption. The minister for agriculture was forced to resign because of the scandal which followed. Following a Tupamaro exposure as a result of another robbery, a businessman was ordered by a court to pay a record fine. 'Popular' expropriations of this type helped give the Tupamaros a 'Robin Hood' image, which later became tarnished.<sup>62</sup>

The 'Symbionese Liberation Army' members seemed to have modelled their propaganda technique upon the Tupamaros when they robbed a San Francisco bank in April 1974. Patricia Hearst was carefully positioned before the bank television cameras, which the SLA did not shoot out. 'This is "Tania" Hearst', they called out. The raid seemed to have the hall-marks of a 'publicity stunt', capitalizing upon the nation-wide exposure which the Patricia Hearst case was then being given.<sup>63</sup> 'Expropriation' is clearly a very effective urban guerrilla technique. If a guerrilla movement can gain a headstart in arms expropriation, by avoiding identification by the police for some time as has occurred in Latin America, so much the better for them. However, despite the vast amounts of money which urban guerrillas have 'expropriated', the real advantage to be gained by guerrillas from this technique arises from the propaganda gain to them, and resultant loss to the government's prestige, as evidenced by Tupamaro operations.

### Hijacking

Since late 1969 Arab guerrillas have hijacked or attacked more than a dozen passenger aircraft in attempts to place pressure upon Israel. Several passengers have been killed, and at least a dozen have been wounded. One of the most spectacular and grisly acts of terrorism in recent years, the massacre of 24 airline passengers at Lydda airport in May 1972 by three Japanese on behalf of Arab guerrillas, although not a hijacking, is associated closely with the Arab hijackings and has contributed to their psychological impact. 'Our purpose was to kill as many people as possible at the airport... we were sure that 90 to 95 per cent... would be Israelis or people of direct loyalty to Israel', said a spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). 'Hijacking is one of the operational aspects of our war against Zionism, and all those who support it, including the United States', explained Leila Khaled.

<sup>62</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 225.

<sup>63</sup> *Time*, 29 April 1974, p. 23.

Hijacking was obviously intended to seize the interest of the media, and so to draw attention to the plight of Palestinian Arabs. With five spectacular hijacking operations in four days in September 1970, and the subsequent blowing up of three of these aircraft at the guerrilla-held Dawsons Field in Jordan, relayed around the world by television, Palestine terrorists succeeded in grasping the attention of the media to the maximum extent; 'The headlines have shown that our cause is now clearly publicized' boasted the PFLP, in justification for its actions.

There is no doubt that the Dawsons Field hijackings caused greater discussion of the problem of Palestinian Arabs, and also resulted in the release from custody of seven imprisoned former hijackers. But the hijackings also led to revulsion, because of the risk caused to innocent passengers, including children. Even the semi-official Cairo newspaper, *Al Ahrām*, has commented in reference to hijacking,

that a goal of the conflict with Israel must be 'to gain world opinion on the side of the Palestinian struggle and not to lose it'.<sup>64</sup> Following criticism of Arab guerrillas after the Dawsons Field hijackings, Jordan turned its military strength upon the Palestine guerrilla movement inside Jordan, causing it serious losses. Hijacking has shown itself to be a spectacular technique able to seize headlines, and so has proved a good vehicle by which guerrillas can focus attention upon their arguments. But it is a method which can rebound, as was demonstrated by popular revulsion against the dangers caused to victims of the Dawsons Field hijackings, and Jordan's military action against the guerrillas.



Leila Khaled

### Kidnapping

Political kidnapping, as a technique, also has some drawbacks for urban guerrillas. In September 1972 'Black September' Arab terrorists, so named because of the losses suffered by the Arab guerrilla

<sup>64</sup> J. A. Arey, *The Sky Pirates*, Ian Allen, London 1973, pp. 29, 44, 290, 329, 341-414.

movement at the hands of the Jordanian army in September 1970, kidnapped nine Israeli athletes from the Munich Olympic village, killing two others. The terrorists demanded the release of 200 Arab guerrillas held by Israel. The Germans flew the guerrillas and their hostages by helicopter to a military airfield, and there tried to stage an ambush of the terrorists. The ambush failed, resulting in the death of all the Israeli hostages, five of the eight terrorists, and a German policeman. The West German government, in the glare of television cameras, suffered a measure of embarrassment over the death of the hostages, which was ascribed by some pressmen to mis-management of the ambush. In addition, some pressmen argued that the Munich tragedy might not have occurred if the Germans had not shown 'weakness' the previous February by paying \$5 million ransom to the Black September organization following the hijacking of a Lufthansa jet. For their part, many Germans claimed that the tragedy would not have reached its climax if Israel had been prepared to negotiate with the Arabs in their demand for the release of prisoners. The result of the Munich kidnappings was further extensive press coverage for Arab guerrillas, accompanied by revulsion for Black September methods.

The Munich tragedy illustrates the dilemma which political kidnapping creates for governments, and some of the advantages and disadvantages of this technique for guerrillas. A government may choose not to compromise with kidnapers; an Israeli official is reported to have said: 'We believe blackmail leads only to more blackmail. If we release 250 prisoners today, that will only encourage the terrorists to demand more.' Adopting this approach, the Argentine government would not allow Fiat to bargain with urban guerrillas who had kidnapped the manager of Fiat in Buenos Aires in March 1972 — he was killed. Six months later the Argentine government showed it had changed its view, allowing a reported \$500,000 to be paid for the release of the local manager of Phillips.<sup>65</sup> Of 20 cases of diplomatic kidnappings in various countries from 1968-71, no concession was offered by governments on nine occasions; on four of those nine occasions the hostage was killed. On the eleven occasions on which the government compromised, the hostage was freed each time.<sup>66</sup> However governments which pursue the 'softer' line with kidnapers pay no less of a price in terms of 'inflation' in the demands of the guerrillas. The Brazilian government

<sup>65</sup> *Time*, 18 September 1972, pp. 14-15.

<sup>66</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 245.



released 15 political prisoners in exchange for the kidnapped US ambassador in September 1969. This presumably encouraged the ALN to kidnap the West German ambassador; the government released 40 prisoners. In 1971, seventy prisoners were demanded and released in exchange for the Swiss ambassador. The released prisoners provided lengthy accounts to the press of alleged torture methods in Brazilian prisons.

The Tupamaros struck serious blows at the prestige of the Uruguayan government by means of kidnappings between 1968 and 1971. Their many kidnap victims included the attorney general, a former minister for agriculture, a judge, the British ambassador, the Brazilian consul, and many other well-known persons. The victims were held underground in Tupamaro hides known as 'people's prisons'. Some of these kidnappings won prestige for the guerrillas, such as the abduction of a leading banker at the time of a major bank employees strike.<sup>67</sup> However in 1970 the guerrillas kidnapped Dias Gomide, the Brazilian consul, and Dan Mitrione, an American police adviser. Dias Gomide's wife won much public sympathy as a result of several emotional television appeals, as she sought to raise the necessary ransom money. Abraham Guillen, a supporter of the Tupamaros, complained that the guerrillas should never have allowed the situation to have developed in which the consul's wife was to 'appear as an international heroine of love and marital fidelity'.<sup>68</sup> The guerrillas demanded the release of 150 political prisoners for Mitrione.<sup>69</sup> When the government refused this price, Mitrione was 'executed'. Mitrione became the only kidnap victim who was murdered by the Tupamaros. This murder, and the subsequent murder of policemen and soldiers, rebounded against the Tupamaros in public opinion.

As with hijacking, kidnapping has the advantage for urban guerrillas of attracting widespread press attention to the movement, and therefore to the arguments which it offers. A further advantage is the uncertainty which governments often display in dealing with kidnap situations; this tends to cause loss of public confidence in a government, especially when it can be charged that the government is unable to protect the foreign diplomats in its midst. The disadvantage of kidnapping as a method lies in the danger of the guerrillas overplaying their

<sup>67</sup> Clutterbuck, pp. 228-232.

<sup>68</sup> Hodges, p. 271.

<sup>69</sup> Labrousse, p. 101.

hands: if many hostages die in dramatic circumstances, as at Munich, general revulsion follows; if widespread sympathy is allowed to develop for a kidnap victim, as in the case of Gomide, public opinion swells against the guerrillas; and if too high a ransom is asked, as with Mitriane, the guerrillas may feel required to risk a murder, in order to save face, which could prove disastrous in public relations terms.

### Attacking the Morale of Security Forces

Lenin claimed that 'Unless the revolution assumes a mass character and affects the troops, there can be no question of a serious struggle'.<sup>70</sup> The Comintern, from its experience in attempting to foment revolt in the 1920s, also concluded that the armed forces must be subverted and demoralized as a precondition for a successful urban uprising.<sup>71</sup> Brazilian urban guerrillas have been moderately successful in recruiting members of the armed forces. It has been said that some 20% of urban guerrillas in Brazil are ex-military.<sup>72</sup> Carlos Lamarca, one of the foremost Brazilian urban guerrilla leaders, was an army deserter.<sup>73</sup>

The Uruguayan army has not seen external war for over a hundred years. Given Uruguay's relatively peaceful evolution since gaining its independence from Spain, neither the army nor the police were equipped psychologically to cope with the Tupamaro threat when it emerged in the 1960s. The Tupamaros believed the government to possess 'one of the weakest organizations for repression in Latin America'. The armed forces numbered only 12,000 in 1968. There were 22,000 in the police force, 6,000 of them in Montevideo, but neither army nor police had undertaken any training in counter-insurgency techniques. At first the Tupamaros restricted their attack against the security forces to infiltration aimed at sapping morale. But from 1968 the guerrillas began a programme of selective assassination against the security forces, principally against the police, aimed at destroying morale. This terror campaign caused soldiers and policemen to request permission to work in civilian clothes to avoid being targeted. Morale crises such as this caused the government to detain 66 policemen in June 1970 on charges of insubord-

<sup>70</sup> V. I. Lenin, in *Collected Works*, Moscow 1967, Volume 2, p. 174.

<sup>71</sup> Lenin, Volume 21, p. 213.

<sup>72</sup> Shaun M. Darragh, 'The Urban Guerrilla of Carlos Marighela', in *Infantry*, Fort Benning, Georgia, July-August 1973, p. 25.

<sup>73</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 204.

ination.<sup>74</sup> 'Check my bullets, I have not fired', one policeman is believed to have told a Tupamaro contact by telephone, following a gun battle with guerrillas; judges also were known to have been intimidated, being fearful to pass severe sentences upon Tupamaros.<sup>75</sup> Two mass gaol escapes of 144 Tupamaros in September 1971 emphasized the low capability of the security forces.

On 14 April 1972 the Tupamaros murdered three service officers and a civilian. The 'Robin Hood' image of the guerrillas had begun to fade with the murder of Mittrione, and the rejection of the Broad Front in the election of late 1971 suggested that public opinion had begun to swing against the Tupamaros. Then, on 18 May 1972, the guerrillas murdered four soldiers who were on guard duty in front of the home of the commander-in-chief. The Tupamaros' claim to be the protector of humble people was in tatters, and the army became provoked.

The armed forces were placed in control of all operations, with the police in an auxiliary role. Under the 'state of internal war' now declared by Congress, the police were no longer required to bring captured Tupamaros before the courts within 24 hours, to face judges who were often intimidated; instead, they could be questioned at length, and then appear before a military judge. As a result, the confidence of many Tupamaro prisoners evaporated, and many provided information, which led to more arrests. The evidence of the armed forces' success led to an increase in information from civilian sources. The discovery of underground 'peoples prisons' with their 6-foot by 4-foot wire cages and emaciated inmates, led to a growing public disgust with the guerrillas which aided military operations.<sup>76</sup> By September 1972 only 4% of people thought that the Tupamaros were motivated by a search for social justice, compared with 59% in the previous year.<sup>77</sup> When the guerrillas made their ill-advised decision to take to the countryside, the advantages of terrain, the rural background of the armed forces, and the conservatism of the rural population lay with the armed forces. The armed forces' retrieval of their morale became complete.

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<sup>74</sup> R. Moss, *Urban Guerrillas in Latin America*, Conflict Study Number 8, October 1970, p. 14.

<sup>75</sup> Reed, p. 84.

<sup>76</sup> Mallin, pp. 18-25; d'Oliveira, pp. 25-36.

<sup>77</sup> Clutterbuck, p. 230.

The logic of Lenin's and the Comintern's conclusions about security forces is inescapable: a guerrilla force alone can frustrate, but cannot hope to defeat the firepower of an army, unless by subversion; this excludes the case of 'colonial' situations, in which the guerrilla's best hope of countering the threat posed by the non-indigenous army is to create the political factors which might lead to the army's removal. Few modern urban guerrilla movements are Leninist, but most seem to subscribe to the view that the guerrillas must attack the morale of the armed forces. The Uruguayan experience shows that a guerrilla force can be very successful in this for some time. But if the guerrillas have not judged accurately the temper of public opinion in which the armed forces operate, and if the guerrillas become too unsubtle in their methods, they run the risk of provoking a backlash from the armed forces, backed by new-found public support, which may result in a campaign leading to army recovery and the eventual demoralization, not of the armed forces, but of the guerrillas themselves.

### **Terrorism**

On Friday, 21 July 1972 ('Bloody Friday') the Provisional IRA detonated nineteen bombs in an hour in central Belfast, killing nine persons and injuring 130. Seventy-seven of the victims were women or girls. The attackers had made no effort to discriminate between Catholics and Protestants, and their aim had clearly been to cause the maximum number of casualties while achieving the widest publicity. Marighela, whose writings the Provisionals had studied, wrote 'Terrorism is an arm the revolutionary can never relinquish'.<sup>78</sup> Since the introduction of direct rule in March 1972 there had been a strong swing of opinion in Catholic areas in favour of ending the violence, and this had been resented by the Provisionals. The IRA purpose, presumably, was to maintain or increase the level of violence, perhaps leading eventually to the development of a 'psychology of withdrawal' in the UK, as had been planned during the Cyprus campaign by General Grivas, another inspirational source for the IRA.<sup>79</sup> 'Bloody Friday' led, however, to disgust amongst both Catholics and Protestants for IRA methods, and provided the army with the opportunity to invade and occupy the IRA 'no-go' areas, leading to intelligence breakthroughs and further army

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<sup>78</sup> Marighela, *Minimanual*, p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 46.

success. Revulsion in the South against the bombings allowed the Republic to introduce strong legislation against the IRA.<sup>80</sup>

The FLN terrorists in Algiers also hoped to create a 'psychology of withdrawal' among the French. By means of terror the FLN provoked counter-terror, which included explosions in Paris which took the life of a four-year-old girl.<sup>81</sup> The example of Algiers and Cyprus suggests that in a colonial situation, terrorism may be an effective method by which urban guerrillas can pursue a strategy of 'polarization'. In addition, the vast press coverage given to the Munich tragedy and to other acts of terrorism by Arab extremists, shows that terrorism is effective in drawing the world's attention to guerrillas and their aims. On the other hand, the reaction in Belfast to 'Bloody Friday', in Canada to the murder of Laporte, and in Jordan to the Dawsons Field hijackings, indicates that terror can cause a revulsion in public opinion which will permit security forces to take drastic and effective action against the guerrillas.

### Propaganda

Virtually all of the methods undertaken by the urban guerrilla can be classed as propaganda activity, since all are carried out as much for their psychological as for their physical effect. It is the psychological effect of guerrilla operations on a society which brings about 'polarization'. 'The activity of the urban guerrilla consists in waging guerrilla warfare and psychological warfare', says Marighela, indicating the priority which he accords to propaganda.<sup>82</sup>

The Tupamaros proved particularly adept with propaganda, initially. By techniques such as publicizing account books indicating corruption, which they had stolen in a bank raid, they succeeded in making the raid itself seem acceptable. Their first operation was to steal a laden food truck from an expensive department store, and distribute the food, with a message, to poor people as a Christmas present. They adopted theatrical, romantic disguises for many of their operations, arriving at the town of Pando for their planned raids there, in the guise of a funeral procession. They took charge of crowded cinemas and canteens to deliver propaganda messages which were

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<sup>80</sup> Clutterbuck, pp. 94, 130, 138.

<sup>81</sup> Moss, *Urban Guerrillas*, p. 61.

<sup>82</sup> Marighela, *Minimanual*, p. 25.

intelligent and appealing; and once 'took over' the air waves before the kick-off of an America Cup football final, thus being able to appeal to a vast audience.<sup>83</sup> The Tupamaros used pirate radio stations, and financed a social service programme of their own from bank raids. Ordinary people chuckled when they exposed corruption in high places.<sup>84</sup> However the Tupamaros made a propaganda error in the Gomide case, and more particularly in the murder of Mitrione. They compounded these errors by beginning a campaign of assassinations against the armed forces, apparently misjudging likely public reactions. The government saw its opportunity to take a stronger line with public support. When the details of Tupamaro 'peoples prisons' became known, the popularity of the guerrillas began to plummet; the propaganda war was lost. With public support gone, the movement itself became bankrupt.

On Sunday 30 January 1972 ('Bloody Sunday'), British soldiers killed 13 Catholic residents of 'no go' areas of Londonderry. The IRA in Dublin quickly issued an account which portrayed the soldiers as having been in the wrong. The British government refused to comment for eleven weeks, during which many anti-British versions of the incident stood inadequately challenged. The emotions aroused by 'Bloody Sunday' tended to polarize attitudes in the province, which was to the advantage of the IRA. Several months later, in a gesture of conciliation, the British Army ceased patrolling into the 'no go' areas. The IRA quickly seized the opportunity to summon press and TV to observe 'Free Derry' under open IRA control, with uniformed IRA men manning vehicle check points. Radicals and researchers from other countries were attracted to 'Free Derry', and publicized it further. The IRA had effectively established an urban guerrilla enclave, which it would be difficult for the British, in the full glare of TV exposure, to remove without adverse criticism. The propaganda advantage in Londonderry, and therefore the initiative, lay with the IRA.<sup>85</sup> The IRA now squandered this advantage with 'Bloody Friday', the wave of IRA bombing in central Belfast, which led to public disgust with the guerrillas. The propaganda initiative was now back with the British, who promptly launched 'Operation Motorman' in Londonderry, bulldozing the barricades with engineer tanks and dispersing 'Free Derry'.

<sup>83</sup> Labrousse, p. 70.

<sup>84</sup> Clutterbuck, p. 228.

<sup>85</sup> Clutterbuck, pp. 120-9.

Operating in a climate of public approval following 'Bloody Friday', the British arrested 160 IRA gunmen within 14 days of 'Operation Motorman', and the campaign in Northern Ireland had reached a turning point.<sup>86</sup>

The propaganda effects of the handling of the press accounts following 'Bloody Sunday', and of the popular revulsion against the IRA following 'Bloody Friday', had an important effect upon IRA prestige; in the case of 'Bloody Friday' the IRA's military capability itself was impaired. The Tupamaros at first demonstrated a considerable flair for propaganda, and it was their good public image which undermined the government's position. But propaganda mistakes which the Tupamaros made in the case of several kidnappings and murders were sufficient to cause a swing in public opinion against them, allowing the government to take firmer action which began the Tupamaros' decline. In the cases of both the IRA and the Tupamaros, the importance and sensitivity of propaganda to urban guerrillas is seen.

### CONCLUSION

An important method by which urban guerrilla movements seek to change the existing structure of society is by increasing the level of violence, in order to draw the police and armed forces into the struggle; the guerrillas then seek to provoke the security forces into taking repressive measures against the population. They conclude that when this occurs, political attitudes will become 'polarized' to extremes, with progressively more people favouring the guerrillas. The guerrillas must so manage the atmosphere of violence, that the greater share of the blame for it is apportioned to the government and its security forces by a discontented population. Frustrations caused by anxiety or economic pressures will then cause extensive changes in the political system. A second important method of many urban guerrilla movements is to emphasize continuous armed action, in preference to the secondary task of building a strong political organization and seeking wide popular support by means other than the example of violent action. These principles are drawn from the interpretation of the Cuban revolution, as presented by Guevara and Debray. The guerrillas believe that the example they provide in confronting the regime with violence will result in others taking up arms, and in the creation of a revolutionary situation. In time the 'ruling class' will be unable to maintain control. Guerrilla

<sup>86</sup> *Ulster: Politics and Terrorism*, p. 7.

movements following this strategy are scornful of 'old left' groups such as the Communists, who they believe are committed to empty words rather than to action.

Of these two methods, the strategy of 'polarization' is the more effective. The confrontations in Algiers in 1956-62 resulted in polarization to extremes, which contributed to French withdrawal. In Brazil and Guatamala repressive actions by the governments have kept alive the hopes of urban revolutionaries. However in Uruguay, despite a most promising beginning, urban guerrillas saw the city population turn against them. Emphasis upon continuous armed action in the Debrayist manner, with a lack of attention to organization-building, has been almost uniformly unsuccessful. The theory may have resulted from a misinterpretation of events in Cuba, and has not led elsewhere in Latin America to mass participation in armed action. The Communist critics of these methods, who argue that a revolutionary situation cannot be created at will, seem to be on firm ground.

'Expropriation' is a particularly effective urban guerrilla technique. Apart from filling the coffers of the movement, if well conducted it can lower the prestige of the government and correspondingly win publicity for the guerrillas. Hijacking of aircraft and kidnapping have proved to be most effective techniques, in terms of holding the attention of the media, and therefore provoking discussion of the political viewpoints represented by the guerrillas. Kidnapping has the particular advantage of causing loss of confidence in governments, which display uncertainty in kidnap situations, and are seen to be unable to protect potential victims. Indiscriminate terror attracts headlines; and has shown itself to be effective in colonial situations, in inducing 'polarization' leading to withdrawal of the colonial power. However hijacking, kidnapping and indiscriminate terror can all rebound drastically against urban guerrillas, as was shown by effective security force actions in the wake of Dawsons Field, the murder of Laporte, and 'Bloody Friday' in Belfast. Lenin appears to have been right when he urged urban revolutionaries to attack the morale of the security forces, but the Uruguayan experience shows that this method also can cause an unpleasant 'backlash' against guerrillas. Finally, the importance of psychological operations to urban guerrillas is vital. An inaccurate reading of the public mood, shown by an ill-timed 'Bloody Friday'-type terrorist act, can undo in a moment careful conditioning of public attitudes favourable to urban guerrillas. ✕



# BOOK REVIEWS



THE SHADOW WAR: RESISTANCE IN EUROPE 1939-1945, by Henry Michel, (Translated from the French by Richard Barry), Andre Deutsch, London, 1972. 416 pp.

*Reviewed by Mr G. P. Walsh, Senior Lecturer in History, Faculty of Military Studies, Royal Military College, Duntroon.*

WORLD War II in Europe has often been referred to as an international civil war and, as Professor H. Stuart Hughes has pointed out, it was such a conflict in a double sense. First, the War was a desperate struggle between resisters and collaborators — between patriots, on the one hand, who were trying to repel the invaders or render their occupation costly and untenable, and traitors or 'Quislings' on the other, who, either through fear or opportunism, helped the Nazis. This was a war without quarter: a resistance fighter knew the awful consequences that awaited him if he fell into enemy hands, while the fate of the traitor was, if anything, perhaps worse. Vengeance was long sought after and collaborators were hunted down and eliminated both during the war and long after it had ended. (Even as late as April 1974, five Estonians were sentenced to death for collaboration with the Nazis). But alongside this merciless 'shadow war' of the Resistance raged another quieter civil war — the war of the communists against non-communists within the Resistance itself.

In this book, published in 1970 under the title *La Guerre de l'Ombre*, Henri Michel first traces the origins of the Resistance movement in Europe and analyses its component parts, showing how it drew

on people from all political creeds and social classes. He then proceeds to examine how the Resistance was recruited, organized and equipped, and gives an excellent account of the various tactics employed and of the different problems faced in the various occupied countries. Every country occupied by the Germans gave birth to a clandestine resistance movement. The root causes and phases of development of the movements were the same in all countries, while the differences lay in the composition of the partisans and their specialized tasks. Many groups gathered vital intelligence, some organized the escape of Allied airmen, while others specialized in sabotage and guerrilla warfare. But despite the fact that the Resistance performed many useful and heroic feats, it was never taken very seriously by the Allies, who generally regarded it merely as 'a thorn in the enemy's flesh' or an auxiliary to their own secret services. Whenever a section of the Resistance threatened to cause discord among the major Allies it was abandoned without hesitation. Furthermore, as Professor Michel points out, 'The overall problem of resistance, the concept of an immense Trojan horse behind the enemy lines, was never even raised in Allied strategic discussions'.

The story of the Resistance in Europe is one of frustration, fierce rivalry and tragedy, and this is not surprising considering that the Resistance had backward linkages with the tragic civil war in Spain. The anti-fascist forces who failed in 1939, emerged from Spain even more divided than before and their quarrels flowed over into the Resistance movements. The communists, however, profited greatly from the Spanish experience as many served their apprenticeship in the International Brigades and later became partisan leaders: the communists gained a whole body of specialists in the art of popular warfare. Indeed, members of the International Brigade who fought against Franco included men of the calibre of Tito from Yugoslavia, Ulbricht from Germany, Marty from France, Ferenc Munich from Hungary and Szyr from Poland. The communists in the various Resistance movements were well organized, efficient, effective and ruthless: they had no illusion as to the kind of post-war society in which they wished to live and worked determinedly towards their goal. Other nationalist groups had visions of other Utopias and all the time the muffled 'shadow war' between the communist and non-communist factions went on. As Michel expresses it: 'Communists and nationalists might smile at each other and make statements about brotherhood in arms but in fact their

purposes were quite different.' In the complex tangle of ideologies, national interests, human relations, dormant conflicts and emergent rivalries, the wonder is that an astonishing similarity emerged in the various movements. That it did was no doubt due to the fact that a common enemy was being engaged and that personalities, like de Gaulle, Tito and Stalin, were able by stirring appeals to shake the subject peoples out of their lethargy. Nevertheless, Professor Michel concludes that:

The Resistance only reached its full stature when, by raising the country to revolt, it became the embodiment of the nation, with all its diversity and all its contradictions. Viewed overall, clandestine action resembled the apparently aimless hurrying and scurrying of the anthill, each insect busy with its tiny task, none apparently concerned with any other, paths crossing and their efforts apparently vain and disorderly.

*The Shadow War* also examines the nature and dividends of guerrilla warfare. As the war progressed the Germans were forced to commit increasingly large forces against partisan guerrilla units. Soviet and French partisans were able to play a strategic as well as a tactical role: for example, the *maquis* of the Vercors, Mont Mouchet and Limousin were able to divert two German divisions away from the Normandy landing beaches. But despite some notable actions, Michel reminds us that nowhere did the guerrillas score a decisive success. Guerrilla warfare, like the Resistance itself, was only a bonus for the major allies — it did not win the war.

The book is absorbing reading and the best comprehensive account of the European Resistance, but there are a few general statements which trouble the reviewer. For example, it is perhaps too much to claim in the context on p. 59 that 'the political structure of post-war Europe was decided in the underground of the Resistance'. Again, Professor Michel implies that Germany's long-term reason for intervening in the Spanish Civil War was to give the Wehrmacht a chance to put its new weapons and techniques to a live test — he makes no mention of the strategic possibilities and the importance of Spanish ores and minerals for Germany's armament industry. Nevertheless, *The Shadow War* is an excellent survey of a highly complex phenomenon. The book, which also contains a good chronology of main events and a very useful bibliography, is thoroughly recommended to all serious students of World War II and of guerrilla warfare in general. ✂

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

## Reply to Criticism of Montgomery

A hundred years ago, a military historian declared that he regarded all men as dead, meaning, I think, that he could attack reputations with impunity. But any writer who, in the 1970s, denigrates the achievements of Eighth Army and Field Marshal Montgomery must expect a counter-attack, however delayed it might be. Indeed, I think that students of military history generally would react adversely to the letter from Alexander Graeme-Evans which was published in the *Army Journal* of August, 1974. I wish to present the other side of his picture. In doing so, I shall follow the same sequence as he does. In my text, without intending disrespect for friend or foe, I shall employ only surnames, without rank or title. The meaning of my abbreviations should be obvious.

1. The achievements of Eighth Army listed on pp. 6 and 7 of the June edition are historical facts, presented by Varma for the benefit of students, without embellishment or any apparent intention to impress. They are 'mental milestones' to be kept in mind when studying his narrative. Whether they impress or not, is not really important or relevant. Perhaps their impact depends on the reader's experience and point of view. Whether some of the battles were necessary or not, is a question asked twice by Evans and my comments on it are deferred.

2. *Evans* — 'the Afrika Korps' comparatively orderly retreat to Tunisia was a mock to British arms' and 'not a rout comparative to that of the Eighth Army's retreat under Ritchie'.

A. Afrika Korps (15 and 21 Pz Divs) or Panzerarmee? For much of the retreat, from Alamein to Tunisia, 90 Lt Div, not DAK, provided the rearguard and would thus have borne the brunt of offensive action by the pursuing forces.

B. A 'rout' is 'an overwhelming defeat and/or disorderly retreat'. The Battle of Alamein lasted 12 days and Panzerarmee was overwhelmingly defeated. At Gazala, the battle lasted twenty days; Eighth Army was defeated but inflicted, comparatively, much more damaging casualties on Panzerarmee than the latter did on its opponents at Alamein. After Alamein, Panzerarmee's next serious stand was at Mareth, 1,500 miles and four months away. Eighth Army turned to fight at Mersa Matruh, then 'went on oozing slowly backward, spitting and clawing like an angry cat as it went'. (Clifford p. 284).

C. As a specific operation of war, any two retreats will be comparable. In this present comparison, there is the added advantage that the two retreats covered the same course between Gazala and Alamein. When retreating, Eighth Army covered the course in 15 days; Panzerarmee required only 8 days.

D. All retreats are chaotic, some more chaotic than others. A German, writing of Alamein, 'military retreats after a defeat are always harrowing. Fear and the spirit of *sauve qui peut* loosen all the bonds of discipline and nothing is more horrifying than an army, the criterion of discipline, which becomes a rabble'. All the reports from Rommel's entourage insist that it was impossible to stop the rout until 6 November. The speediest possible retreat was then expedient. It took place at breakneck speed. 'To get out of range of the RAF was the order of the day.' (Carell pp. 300 and 303). In June, the RAF had made a supreme effort to protect the retiring Eighth Army and had produced a miracle. One thing helped, the inexplicable inefficiency of the Luftwaffe. Coningham (AVM, AOC, Desert Air Force) believed that, in the last resort, it was the quality of pilots that was the operative factor. (Clifford p. 266).

E. The retreat of Panzerarmee, to Gazala at least, was disorderly. One of the most disgraceful incidents recorded on the German side occurred in one of the most highly rated formations, the Ramcke Para Bde. 'Ramcke had a considerable fleet of vehicles at his disposal but the trucks had driven off in the general chaos without waiting for the frontline troops. The battalion and company commanders also took to their heels.' (Carell p. 311). Rommel would hardly exaggerate yet, in the 'Papers', he noted, 'men abandoned their vehicles and fled westwards on foot'; 'wild confusion'; 'conditions indescribable'; 'utmost confusion reigned'; 'coastal road hopelessly jammed'; 'vast column of

vehicles 30 to 40 miles long jammed this side of the Halfaya and Sollum passes'; 'at Gazala, large vehicle jam, but the panic is now over.'

F. Compare Auchinleck on 28 June at Daba, 35 miles west of Alamein. Wanting to ascertain the general state of morale and discipline among the men coming back, he stood on the roadside and watched them go by. 'The troops were bewildered but completely unconcerned. There were no signs of panic such as people trying to pass each other. The spectacle was encouraging from the point of view of morale, but there was terrible disorganisation and I could see that the Army would need refitting.' (Barnett p. 182). In its retreat, Panzerarmee strove to avoid battle. Eighth Army carried out a fighting retreat. In June, 7 Armd Div's rearguard remained south of Tobruk until the 21st, the day after the port had fallen, then withdrew to Alamein 'continuously involved in difficult fighting'. British mobile columns hit back at the advancing enemy and during both retreats, British and Axis, the LRDG struck at the enemy's supply lines. The Germans did not do this. 'The implication was that the Germans could not do it. They were temperamentally unsuited for a job which required so much individualism, such loneliness and so much thinking for oneself.' (Clifford p. 243). We had not heard of the Brandenburgers!

G. West of Gazala, the aims of the two commanders had some bearing on the method of advance and retreat. Montgomery made Tripoli his goal and was determined that Rommel should not rebound as he had successfully done in April 1941 and January 1942. (Everybody who had taken part in a Benghazi Handicap would approve of this). Therefore, he prepared for deliberate battles at the Agheila position and the Buerat line. The vast advance set prodigious administrative problems requiring the methodical capturing and reopening of seaports. Rommel decided never to accept battle as that would inevitably result in the destruction of the remainder of his motorized units. 'Throughout our retreat, we called on all our resources of imagination to provide the enemy with ever more novel booby traps and thus induce the maximum possible caution on his advanced guard.' (*Papers* p. 350). A German view, 'Critics maintain that Rommel was convinced that all was lost and only a retreat to Tripoli and departure from North Africa was the right course to pursue. That is why he took no further risks and did not weaken the British by stout resistance but allowed them to advance too rapidly on his tail.' But Fuller declared, p. 238, that Rommel was

conducting a masterly retreat. Nevertheless, it was not a mock to British arms.

H. When the Panzerarmee's equipment is described as 'pitiful', credit must be given to the British sea, land and air forces which reduced it to that state, and to Montgomery who had a hand in the planning of it.

I. The British advance from Alamein to Tunisia took 3 months and 1 week, not 6 months. Six months after the advance began, Panzerarmee and von Arnim's 5th Army had been totally destroyed.

J. *Evans* — 'they remained intact to fight the rearguard action in Tunisia.' Montgomery commented on this apparent failure to destroy the German divisions. 'At first sight it seems strange that formations such as 15 and 21 Pz Divs continued to oppose us after their experiences in October and November [but] the reinforcements made available to Rommel during his withdrawal enabled him to retain the identity of the German formations present at Alamein.' They were reduced to skeletons before the retreat began. (*Mil Hist* p. 78). Rommel, on 4 November, 'the Army was so shattered that there was nothing for it but withdrawal' (*Papers* p. 395). And they did not remain intact during the withdrawal. For example, Night 9/10 November, British aircraft hammered the rearguard all through the night, inflicting losses of more men and material than some of the armoured engagements had done. (*Schmidt* p. 212-3).

Night 10/11 November, at Capuzzo, the bombers caused a considerable amount of damage. (*Papers* p. 348).

On 10 November, at the Egyptian frontier, 15 Pz Div had 1,177 all ranks but no tanks, 21 Pz Div had 1,009 all ranks and 11 tanks. At full strength, each would have had approximately 8,000 men and 135 tanks.

For the rearguard action in Tunisia, the Panzerarmee was extensively re-equipped and reinforced after arrival in the country.

K. 'Montgomery had failed in his objective [aim?] to destroy the Afrika Korps. Was this not the order given him . . . ? NO! Churchill to Alexander — 'Your prime and main duty will be to take or destroy at the earliest opportunity the German-Italian Army commanded by Field Marshal Rommel, together with all its supplies and establishments in Egypt and Libya.'

Alexander to Montgomery — 'To destroy the Axis forces in Africa at the earliest possible moment.'

L. 'As many as possible' is one of those vague terms which the Services deplore. Nobody could deny that Rommel extricated as many as possible. He himself wrote on 4 November, 'We had to save what there was to be saved,' (*Papers* p. 325) but that was not quite the same thing. Montgomery had no wish to see the enemy make a general withdrawal. He wanted them to continue fighting it out where they stood. Their destruction would then be certain. By staying so long, they had enabled him to give them so severe a battering that he hoped very soon to deliver the *coup de grâce*. (Phillips p. 382). And it could have happened.

On receipt of Hitler's 'victory or death' order, Rommel informed the Fuehrer that it would mean the inevitable loss of the Army and the whole of North Africa (p. 322). Westphal, his C of S, 'That means the end of the Army.' von Thoma, GOC DAK, 'It is the death warrant of the Army' (Carell p. 295-6).

3. Evans' list of 'respected military historians who have made the more telling criticism of Montgomery' does impress, yet Evans draws mainly, and equally, on just two of them, Rommel and Thompson.

A. Rommel's book was one of Varma's 'accounts of operations made too soon after the event'. The editor, in his introduction, admits that the Papers contain a number of errors of fact and that there are some disputable interpretations. In the text, he advises the reader to bear in mind that 'Rommel's account was written shortly after the bitter end of the African war and that he had no opportunity to revise it.' This advice relates to a specific point but I think that it applies to the Papers as a whole and ought to have been included in the introduction. In the background is the fact that Rommel flattered Liddell Hart by adopting the latter's theories when the Commonwealth Armies were not very enthusiastic about them, though that ought not to have affected L-Hart's judgement. Some of us were enthusiastic about his theories, but we had neither the power nor the opportunity to apply them.

B. Thompson's book, *The Montgomery Legend*, received rough treatment from my reviewer. The reviewer wrote, 'Part I is a recapitulation of much that has already been said in Corelli Barnett's *The Desert Generals* and seeks in the same way to show that Alamein was



an unnecessary battle and that it was fought on a secondhand plan to finish off an already defeated enemy.' 'It does Auchinleck no service to try to show that he would have fought the Battle of Alam Halfa in the same way and even more decisively than did Montgomery.' 'Part II gives a picture of Montgomery as a commander. It is not one that anyone who knows the Field Marshal will recognise; it is not even a good caricature. The description of Montgomery as a trainer and of his tactical doctrine is unbelievably wide of the mark.' 'Part III purports to be a critical study of Alamein. The author infers that if Montgomery had planned the battle better there would have been less hard fighting. He also levels the criticism that the battle did not go exactly as planned. Battles seldom do, but planning a battle is only one of the elements in victory; the genius of the commander lies in seizing and maintaining the initiative. This Montgomery did throughout the battle. No doubt Montgomery himself can be blamed for the 'according to plan' legend. He was not always so wise in what he said after a battle as in what he did during the battle. Some just points of criticism are made, particularly about '... the failure of the immediate pursuit.' (*RUSI Journal*, May 1967). Mike Carver, a tank man, one of Eighth Army's bright young men and himself now a Field Marshal, holds that Montgomery is perfectly justified in maintaining that, in general terms, the battle did go according to plan. It was a battle of attrition rather than of movement, as Montgomery had intended it to be. It may have been expensive and unromantic, but it made certain of victory, and the certainty of victory at that time was all important. (*El Alamein*, p. 201).

C. At Alam el Halfa, the Axis forces engaged were defeated. Of that there can be no doubt. If Rommel's mobile forces were exposed to great risks, (von Mellenthin wrote that 'the whole existence of the Afrika Korps was in jeopardy') Rommel did the exposing and did it against the advice of Panzerarmee's General Staff, who did not think that they could break through to the Nile (von Mellenthin p. 137). See comment 6, later.

D. What Rommel, on p. 329, wrote of Montgomery's Alamein was, 'They actually undertook no operations but relied simply and solely on the effect of their artillery and air force', and the Editor does explain, in a footnote, that the German interpretation of 'operations' differs from the English. Could Evans nominate the 'several days' which he has added to the quotation?

E. Again, when discussing the shortages of petrol, ammunition and supplies generally, critics and students really must look beyond the battlefield. Alexander, Montgomery and the British commanders of their naval and air forces did, with considerable success. The Battle of Alamein was not fought entirely over the gap between the sea and the Qattara Depression, or between 23rd October and 4th November.

4. Medenine — why lay such emphasis on Rommel's being sick? He had come straight from a successful battle at Kasserine, during which his health had even improved. (*Papers* p. 411). The idea of the tank trap using anti-tank guns was his anyway. It had been used very successfully at Halfaya in June 1941, at Gazala in May/June 1942 and at Alamein. 'In Africa, Rommel blended the offensive with the defensive drawing the opposing tanks into baited traps.' (*Papers*, p. xix, Editor's comment). I do not recall that it was employed in 1918. Rommel had planned that 15 Pz Div should hold the area Ben Gardane — Medenine until shortly before his counter-attack was launched, thereby giving Eighth Army no time to prepare a defensive position. But, on 20th February, 7 Armd Div pushed the German rearguard back to the Mareth Line, 'rather earlier than we had bargained for.' (*Papers* p. 414). By 5 March, Eighth Army was ready to meet the attack of three German armoured divisions. 'The British commander had grouped extremely well and completed his preparations with remarkable speed. The operation had lost all point the moment it became obvious that the British were prepared for us,' wrote Rommel. (*Papers* p. 415). One up to Montgomery, I think.

Since 1918 has been mentioned, perhaps we could note where lay the link with the first world war. When preparing for Alamein, Douglas Wimberley, GOC 51 (H) Div, had noted in his diary that it was to be a 'real set-piece battle of the first war type.' To a tank commander, 'it was apparent that the coming battle, with no flanks and against deep defences, would approximate to those of the first world war. No assault could succeed unless there was a substantial superiority over the defending forces, [but] there was no prospect of obtaining the orthodox 3 to 1 majority based on first war teaching'. (Phillips pp. 82-3). Lewin, who served under Montgomery as a regimental officer from the Nile to the Baltic and who knows personally many of the men who have denigrated or applauded him, thinks that Rommel's dispositions made inevitable a set-piece, first-world-war-type of battle (p. 70). When

it came to the pinch, there were not enough infantry. Apart from the shortage, only a portion of a unit would be employed in a battle — and that, doubtless, still held in Vietnam. Carver explains — the average infantry battalion crossed the start line with 20 officers and 400 men. Some would follow up to assist in consolidation, but approximately 250 men would take no active part in the fighting. In armoured regiments, the proportion was even smaller. With a full complement of tanks, the tank crews in a regiment numbered less than 200 men (p. 199).

To Fuller's accusation that Montgomery is pre-eminently a general of material, Lewin states the defence's case. 'The point about Montgomery is that he knew how to use what he got. I place him as the first British General in the Second World War to be mentally and technically equipped to tackle the *Material—enschlacht* which, increasingly and rapidly from the autumn of 1942 onwards, was the form that fighting took in the western world. His ability to organise and control (and understand) the immense variety of equipment produced for the forces was impeccably demonstrated on D-Day and, in a triumphant final fling, at the crossing of the Rhine. He was a modern general, completely at home amid the complexities of a technological age.' (Lewin p. 275).

5. Evans thinks it quite probable that Montgomery's attack terminology was subsequently incorporated into official War Office tactical doctrine 'since, after all, Montgomery did become CGS after the war'. The doctrine was incorporated in a volume designed for study by officers of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and above and by staff officers and those training for the staff — 'Conduct of War'. The manual was published on 15 February 1950, as usual, 'By Command of the Army Council' and the foreword was signed by the CIGS, W. J. Slim, Field Marshal!

A. 'It is one thing to preach, quite another to carry it out.' The RUSI reviewer — 'The outstanding impression left on most of those who served under Montgomery or learnt from him is that what he taught in peace about the conduct of battle he practised in war with outstanding success.'

B. If Rommel 'became quite used' to Montgomery's methods, the reverse is also true. With one flank resting on the sea, the only courses open to the attacker were a frontal assault and/or a single hook — and

Rommel employed the hook more often than not. 'I never knew Rommel to execute any exceptional manoeuvre or any that we did anticipate.' Leese, quoted by Phillips (p. 80).

C. The enemy was given time fully to exploit his line of retreat, writes Evans. The Axis rearguards were hustled out occasionally but, in accordance with the generally accepted doctrine, a retreating army prepares one or more defensive positions along its route of withdrawal before quitting its foremost positions. Rommel did this by setting to work those Italian troops which he could or would not employ with his rearguards. After all, he was carrying out a masterly retreat. 'With far fewer losses in the long run' is a matter of opinion and Montgomery's opinions deserve no less respect than Rommel's. Rommel's editor did warn us, and Montgomery was deeply concerned about the number of casualties sustained by Eighth Army. He wrote that a good general must not only win his battles; he must win them with a minimum of casualties and loss of life (*Memoirs* p. 348). At Alamein, he had divisions from countries which could not afford heavy casualties. He knew that and kept it in mind when allotting tasks, just as he remembered that *certain divisions were best suited for certain tasks*. Lewin studied this side of his General's character. Carnage due to incompetent planning and low morale due to unnecessary slaughter were aspects of the '14-18' war which most profoundly affected Montgomery. He was determined that the British soldier should never suffer another Passchendaele. No battle should be launched until calculation and careful preparation had ensured success. Husbandry of his infantry resources, the *sine qua non* of any commander, was at all times a matter of common prudence for Montgomery: and he was a prudent man (p. 9).

But I think that Evans has misinterpreted the extract which he quotes against Montgomery. It comes from Rommel's 'Appreciation of the Situation' which faced him at the Mersa el Brega position, which we call Agheila. His aim was to withdraw from there to Tunisia. Amongst the leading factors to be considered were — (i) the need to gain the maximum possible time and (ii) the need to execute the operation with the minimum losses in men and material. When considering the 'Enemy', Rommel judged Montgomery on the latter's methods between Alamein and Agheila. The first one and a half lines of the quotation, as far as 'foreign to him', is a portion of that judgment. The remainder of the quotation is, in my opinion, *speculation*

as to what would happen at the coming battle for Agheila. Rommel is not pointing to Eighth Army's losses over the whole pursuit from Alamein to Tunisia. If I am correct, Evans cannot fairly employ this quotation in his case against Montgomery.

6. Evans' 'final point' contains three questions:

- (i) the twice-asked question, were the battles after Alam el Halfa (or Alamein) necessary?
- (ii) Was Montgomery skilled enough or not? If not, why not?
- (iii) How many Armoured Corps officers would agree with Varma's final conclusion?

A. Question (i), Alam el Halfa (it would have helped your readers to understand Evans' point of view if he had given his own answers). The questions are not original. Barnett (p. 249) suggested in 1960 that, at Alam el Halfa on 2 September, an annihilating counter-stroke across Rommel's communications to the Qattara Depression would have achieved a complete victory and rendered the October battle at Alamein unnecessary. I have not been able to find Montgomery's own reply to this theory. Two years before Barnett's book was published, in the *Memoirs* (p. 110) Montgomery gave two reasons for not following up Rommel's withdrawal. One was the unsatisfactory state of his Army's training and equipment. The second derived from the Army's task. Montgomery did not want the Panzerarmee to withdraw from Alamein. 'We would prefer to bring him to battle, *when we were ready*, at the end of a long and vulnerable line of communications — with ours short.' 'If we were to carry out the mandate, it was essential to get Rommel to stand and fight and then defeat him decisively.' And, one might add, DAK was not the Panzerarmee.

Barnett went back beyond the *Memoirs* to 1949 and quoted from *El Alamein to the Sangro* page 8, where Montgomery first mentions his dissatisfaction with the standard of the training of his formations as a reason for not 'loosing them headlong into the enemy'. Barnett countered this with, 'This begged the question. A counter-stroke across Rommel's communications would have involved neither loosing his troops nor advancing headlong into the enemy', but did not suggest how it could have been done without letting loose some of his troops. An Eighth Army gunner answered Barnett, 'Montgomery was not going to let his armour rush pell-mell on to one of Rommel's famous anti-tank

screens as had so often happened in the old days. He was determined to smash the Axis forces at Alamein [and] he was prepared to wait for a certainty rather than go off at half-cock.' Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith had seen the great need for training and had informed London that Eighth Army would not be ready for offensive operations before mid-September (Lewin p. 61). But, in fact, Rommel's lines of communication had been subjected to continual harassing attacks by 7 Armd Div, (*Papers* p. 284) and 2 NZ Div had attempted to close the gaps at the minefield. Mike Carver, GSO 1, 7 Armd Div at Alamein, wrote, 'Theoretically, Montgomery might have administered the *coup de grâce* but the disappointing results of the action of 8 Armd Bde and NZ Div showed him only too clearly how blunt was the weapon in his hand when it came to attack. Montgomery was a realist and there is no doubt that persistence in counter-attack at that time would have gained him little and led to losses which he would regret later.' (p. 197 — Carver's Chapter 12, 'Wisdom after the Event', is worth reading). Fuller capped this, 'Wisely, on the 7th, Montgomery halted his armour because the battle of communications had been won.' (p. 234). But Rommel has the last word, 'Montgomery attempted no large scale attack and would probably have failed if he had.' (*Papers* p. 284).

B. Question (i) Alamein and subsequent battles — Barnett suggested (p. 256) that the Anglo-American landings in NW Africa on 8 November (Op Torch) would have made Rommel evacuate his defences at Alamein, that he would have been out of Egypt within a month and in Tunisia in three and that 2nd Alamein was therefore unnecessary. Had Eighth Army held its attack until Rommel had left the shelter of his fixed defences, Barnett wrote, it could have completely destroyed Panzerarmee at small cost. That is conjectural, as conjectural as the contrary view expressed by Liddell Hart in 1948, 'If the German forces had retreated from Alamein before Montgomery struck, it was unlikely that they would have been so decisively smashed, as they were.' (p. 172). In the circumstances, it might be helpful to consider what the enemy thought, without prior knowledge of 'Torch'. Rommel studied the possibility of pulling back but, having once installed his infantry in the Alamein Line, he was bound to accept battle there. An immediate withdrawal meant (i) abandoning all the ammunition piled up in the defensive positions, without having any worthwhile supplies in the rear to replace it. (ii) heavy losses in non-motorized infantry. (iii) the loss of the advantage of prepared defences. As it

was, the British suffered considerable casualties in our minefields and we managed to shoot off at them almost all the ammunition we had stored in the Alamein line.' (*Papers* p. 331-2). To Rommel's staff it was obvious, for a number of reasons, that Panzerarmee could not stay indefinitely at Alamein. Hitler would never have accepted a voluntary withdrawal, so the only alternative was to go forward to the Nile. In July, a visitor from OKW stressed the importance of remaining at Alamein in view of Kleist's impending invasion of Persia from the Caucasus. (von Mell pp. 135-6, 141).

General Bayerlein — 'It can hardly be supposed that the Allies would have landed in NW Africa before Montgomery had first tied down Rommel's Army by his attack.' (*Papers* p. 234, footnote). von Thoma — 'Rommel's success had caused such a sensation, that he could not draw back. Hitler would not let him. The result was that he had to stay there until the British had gathered overwhelming forces to smash him.' (Liddell Hart p. 171).

On the British side, the shortest answers came from two men who were there, Phillips 'Utter nonsense' and Lewin, 'Wholly unrealistic', but both gave two good reasons which made it imperative that Rommel be soundly and convincingly defeated as soon as possible. Firstly Malta — at that time, Malta's value as a base for offensive operations against the enemy's lines of communication was greater than ever, but the island was on the verge of starvation and in deadly danger, Hitler having ordered that it be paralysed by aerial assault. In order to save the island, the RAF must have the use of the airfields in Cyrenaica, and quickly. Secondly, in the invasion of NW Africa, a factor of considerable importance was the attitude of the French people living there. A resounding success in the Western Desert would sway French (and Spanish) opinion in favour of the Allies. In the event, the Gazale airfields were in use on 17 November and the Martuba group on the 19th. The first convoy, Stoneage, sailed from the Canal on the 16th and arrived in Malta on the 20th, the day on which Eighth Army entered Benghazi. The French offered little more than token resistance.

So, Panzerarmee could not withdraw and Eighth Army had to capture airfields in Cyrenaica by mid-November, defeating the enemy beforehand. Montgomery could not afford a stalemate, far less a defeat. The nation's interests demanded nothing less than a decisive and manifest victory. The second battle of Alamein was unavoidable.

C. Question (ii), Montgomery skilled enough? The short answer is 'Yes', but an adequate answer would require several pages of this Journal. 'Time was bound to bring a close questioning of Montgomery's generalship, his whole nature, his every word and deed being an open invitation to controversy.' And, as Evans writes, in the case of controversy it becomes a matter of whom to believe. Everybody must decide for himself, after studying the material available, and heaven knows enough has been written on the subject. A good, human picture of the man is given by the writer who was closest to him, in *Generals at War* and *Operation Victory*. As de Guingand wrote, 'You must know the man if you are to appreciate to the full the job he has done.' Of those which I have read, that with which I most closely agree is Lewin's. He discusses this particular question. But, again the last word to the enemy — von Thoma, 'In modern mobile warfare the tactics are not the main thing. The decisive factor is the organisation of one's resources, to maintain the momentum. Montgomery is the only Field Marshal in this war who won all his battles'.

D. Question (iii) — I am not an Armoured Corps officer but I imagine that the Israelis' Blitzkrieg tactics have been undergoing very close examination at home since the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

If we are to put ourselves in touch with the 'flesh and blood' of the situation, let us take it literally. 'Montgomery and Rommel could decide every move, but their own power evaporated when it came to the execution of their decisions in the front line. There, decisions lay at the level of the battalion or company commander. He could and did decide whether to struggle on and, if so, how, to stop or, occasionally, to go back. To the fighting man, Alamein frequently seemed a chaotic and ghastly muddle. The longer it went on, the less patient one became, the less inclined to obey orders and generally to take trouble' (Carver). Historians and Analysts, remember this!

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