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TEN WAYS TO LOSE THE WAR

By William Bradford Huie

In an effort to discover what's wrong on the home front — why war plants are closing for lack of critical materials and why production is lagging for lack of man power — I asked several directors of the war effort in Washington this question: "If America loses the war, whom or what will you blame for our defeat?"

I got a variety of answers. Some were sharp, for the home front crisis hit Washington at the hottest, muggiest time of year, and tempers are short. One man said he would blame "1600 Pennsylvania Avenue" without hesitation. Another said he would denounce the labor unions. Another retorted: "Dollar-a-year men and business-as-usual are losing the war." A philosopher in WPB reasoned: "If we lose, we'll have to lay it to the selfishness of all of us. We don't want to face up to the job." Another replied: "I'll blame Donald Nelson. He's been too good a Methodist."

But the answer which seems to make the most sense came from a department head in WPB. He pondered my question, then answered slowly: "If America loses the war — and God forbid it! — and I'm called to testify at a Riom trial, I'll have to say that we lost because, at the critical moment, we didn't have enough tough, sincere men in power who would risk being sons-of-bitches. We didn't have enough men either in Congress or in the executive departments who could say 'No' and make it stick. Good fellows and politicians can't win

wars like this one; it takes men who will cram medicine down throats even if the children howl. To win this war, we've got to strip down to our waists and find a few tough sons-of-bitches to lead us."

It's a blunt summation, but, using it as a guide, I dug into the home front records and found ten typical situations which appear to prove its soundness — ten situations which form a pattern for losing a war. When you consider them together, you can understand why, with all our production miracles, we are still at crisis on the home front; why we have shortages in materials and man power; why plants making submarines and airplanes are being slowed down and shut down; and what must be done at home if we are to win on our far-flung battlefronts and escape defeat and a Riom Trial.

We can lose the war by —

I. *Allowing Wilson College to Make Silk Stockings.*

Wilson College — a fictitious name for an actual school — is operated by sincere Americans who have done a heart-warming job of educating underprivileged girls. A denominational school, Wilson has a novel plan for helping its girls pay their expenses. It owns a hosiery mill where two hundred girls pay board and tuition by working part-time.

When the supply of Japanese silk was cut off, Wilson faced a tragedy. The mill couldn't get enough nylon or rayon because of swollen demand and the market for cotton stockings was too limited. Without silk, the mill would shut down and hard-working, ambitious girls would be denied an education. The school would have to close. The town where Wilson is located would suffer.

But a woman in one of the churches thought of a way to save Wilson and its girls. The school would charge each girl a "tuition" of a thousand pairs of silk stockings. The church could ask women all over the country to contribute their discarded stockings to the girls, and the combined "tuitions," plus a small supply of raw silk, would enable the mill to operate through another school year. The idea worked. The stock of reclaimed and raw silk was assembled and permission to use it as planned was asked of the Government.

Now modern war has two vital uses for silk. It is needed for parachutes, but, above all, it is needed for powder bags. A big gun — too big to fire a cartridge — is loaded by throwing in a shell and then a bag of powder behind it. If the

powder bag is silk, it volatilizes completely on explosion and goes out the muzzle, leaving the barrel clean. But if the powder bag is anything other than pure silk, it leaves a residue to foul the barrel.

Washington had to decide what to do with that stock of silk gathered so industriously at Wilson College. To seize it meant dashing the newly-won hopes and changing the lives of two hundred worthy girls. A Congressman and two Senators, with fires built under them by the church folks at home, fought to save that little hoard of silk. Only a ruthless man would have seized it under such circumstances. So the silk was not seized. The government agency said, in effect, to Wilson College: "Because of the humanitarian factors involved, we are allowing you to use the silk you have on hand. But this is war. *After you have used your present stock*, you will have to shut down your mill."

Result: We are now substituting nylon for silk in both parachutes and powder bags. Soon we will be using the next best substitute — rayon. Wilson's hosiery mill is closed now and many of its girls are working in war plants, foregoing their educations. Maybe the stock the mill used won't matter, but maybe an engagement will be lost this year because one of our batteries is cleaning fouled barrels when it might have been firing. That battery might have had silk powder bags if a man in Washington had said "No." To give two hundred girls a few more months of education may easily cost the lives of two hundred American fighting men.

II. *Allowing the Kraut Crop to Be Canned.*

Once kraut was packed and shipped in barrels and shoppers carried it home in paper containers. Or they brought buckets to the store for it. This year, with tin on the "critical shortage" list, WPB told kraut farmers and canners to go back to the old system. But a fight developed.

First, the farmers' representatives appeared in Washington. "You mean the cabbage crop must rot in the field?" they protested. "Barrels are out. This is 1942. Unless we have tin cans, we are ruined." The farmers recruited Congressmen who began ringing telephones and shouting. Then came the labor leaders representing the canners' union. "Are a few canners to do all the sacrificing? If that kraut crop stays in the field, our canners are out of work!" And, finally, the companies which manufacture the kraut cans sent pleaders. "Look at these kraut

cans," they said. "We have already made the cans and *put labels on them!* Must we waste all the labor and money which has gone into the processing of these kraut cans?"

WPB officials looked at the kraut cans. Yes, the cans had been "processed." Labels were on them. It would take time and labor to reprocess the cans into bearings for airplanes. The farmers and Congressmen and union leaders and can makers had powerful arguments. Maybe it would be just as well to let them can this year's crop. But this is war! *Next year's crop will not be canned!*

The kraut crop goes into tin cans. So does the mushroom crop. So does tobacco in cases where cans have already been labelled. Meanwhile, our precious tin stockpile dwindles and men continue to die on rafts and in exploding boiler rooms trying to bring tin from Bolivia through the submarine blockade.

III. *Preferring Gold to Brass Cartridge Cases.*

Modern war laughs at gold. Our government would like to trade off all we have at Fort Knox at the rate of a pound of gold for an ounce of tungsten. WPB classifies gold as "plentiful; to be substituted wherever possible for anything critical." Yet seven thousand skilled miners are still mining gold in the United States!

To understand how monstrous this situation is, you must consider it in the light of the copper shortage, one of the most serious present handicaps to the war effort. Seven thousand trained miners could relieve the copper shortage. Copper is needed to make the brass for our cartridge cases. Yet a Washington which has the power of life and death over six million men in the armed services has not yet dared assume the power to close the gold mines and transfer the gold miners to the copper mines!

There are plans to do this, yes, but *after the election.* After the election, the War Manpower Commission, headed by Paul McNutt, plans to ask Congress for power to conscript labor. But at this dark moment, Mr. McNutt can only ask for voluntary co-operation and neither the owners of the gold mines nor the unions which represent the miners have chosen to stop mining gold and start mining copper.

IV. *Hesitating to Handle a Hot Potato in the Lumber Industry.*

Lumbering is as vital to the war effort as mining and lumber is af-

fected by the most serious labor shortage in the country. Lumberjacks have deserted the forests in droves. Some of them have gone to the Army, but most of them have gone to the shipyards and aircraft plants where wages are higher. In the Pacific Northwest, thousands of them have flocked to the shipbuilding plants.

As a stopgap, until we have the courage to conscript labor, the lumber industry is pleading with the Army to divert fifty thousand troops to the forests. The industry contends that the Army is being unrealistic in drafting more men than can be employed on the battlefronts until we have more shipping. But in asking for troops to man its axe handles, the lumber industry has smacked into a stone wall in Washington. One of the objections advanced is that *lumbering is dangerous* and the inexperienced troops would suffer casualties in the forests! But the most stubborn opposition comes from the powerful labor unions in the Northwest. The suggestion that soldiers become emergency lumberjacks at Army wages is called the "hottest potato in Washington."

The soldiers on our battlefields are handling grenades every day, while in Washington we have no one who dares handle a "hot potato." Meanwhile, there is a critical shortage of the spruce from which most of the wooden supports in both airplanes and ships are made. And there is critical shortage of the plywood that is becoming increasingly vital in airplane manufacture.

V. *Letting Politics Dictate the Rubber Policy.*

The fact that pleasure cars are still burning up our precious rubber stockpile in America's dark hour weighs heavily on many men in Washington. Everyone I have talked to at the capital is ashamed of the manner in which the stockpile has been handled.

WPB officials tell me that the truth about this scandalous operation is this: Five months ago, Mr. Nelson went to the President with a hard-boiled rubber program. He proposed immediate nationwide gasoline rationing to be followed by confiscation of tires on pleasure vehicles. The President took the proposal under consideration, then asked his political advisers what effect such a program would have on public opinion. One by one, pro-Administration Congressmen from the Middle West told the political leaders that gasoline rationing might mean their defeat in November. They claimed that all the op-

position machines in the midwest were praying for gas rationing.

In response to this pressure, I am told, Mr. Nelson's hard-boiled proposal was vetoed and the rubber salvage drive was sponsored instead. The drive was a colossal flop, and everywhere except on the Eastern seaboard, pleasure cars continue to burn up the rubber stockpile.

Mr. Nelson is accused of being too soft and of being reluctant to stand up to the pressure groups. But his partisans point to his rubber experience as evidence that he has never been given full power, and that had he acted hard-boiled six months ago, he would already have been out on his ear. The inability of a people to fix responsibility on its leaders is one of the ways wars are lost.

VI. *Failing to Solve the Problem of Steel Alloys.*

To understand our steel difficulties, you must remember that steel is much more than refined iron. It is refined iron plus something else and this "something else" is the rub right now. We have plenty of iron ore and more steel production capacity than all of our enemies together, but these little "something elses" come from other parts of the world.

Take tungsten. Tank warfare has made tungsten more valuable than diamonds. Tungsten carbide is as hard as diamond, and can penetrate armor plate better than any other substance. The ideal anti-tank shell is made of steel and tipped with tungsten carbide. We don't produce tungsten in the New World. We have always got it from the Chinese interior. Donkeys brought it out of the mountains to our ships. But now we can get it only with the greatest of difficulty. We need cargo planes not only to carry supplies into China, but to bring out that precious tungsten. Our tungsten need is imperative because Germany has apparently found a new source of it. We thought Germany had none, but on Marshal Rommel's recent advance in Egypt, he was not only firing shells from better guns than we had, but he was also firing shells tipped with tungsten carbide.

A little thing like a cargo plane flying out of Shangri-La with six tons of tungsten may determine the winner and the loser in this war.

Vanadium is another priceless ingredient for war steels. We get ours from Peru and there is the shipping and submarine problem again. Cargo planes could fly into the Andes and scorn the subs in the Caribbean.

Nickel and manganese are in the same classification, except that we have some sources of them. Nickel is needed for all the crankshafts and gears which must drive our war machine and this means that all the peacetime crankshafts and gears must be broken up to reclaim the nickel. To meet the nickel shortage, WPB and the American Iron and Steel Institute are proceeding in three ways. They are trying to develop new sources. They have forced the Army and Navy to accept "emergency specifications" in which much silicon and manganese are substituted for nickel as hardeners for steel. And they are working the junk dealers overtime in scrapping all of the old automobiles.

The fight to find these "steel hardeners" highlights WPB's problem of inventories. Most of the tungsten steel is in tools and every industry which uses hard-steel tools must be combed to see that tool stocks are kept at a minimum. Here WPB is having to fight industry's natural tendency to hoard tool inventories for the long pull ahead.

VII. *Retaining a Business-As-Usual Psychology.*

Let's give dollar-a-year men in Washington all credit for the patriotic motive and pass on to other conscious and unconscious motives. A man I'll call Phineas Wilson, vice-president of the XYZ Corporation, is typical. I know Mr. Wilson. He's head of a department in WPB. He's "on loan" to the government. He draws $50,000 a year from his company and a dollar a year from the government. He had much the same job in the last war.

"What's wrong with our war effort, Mr. Wilson?" I asked him.

"Not one thing! We're performing miracles. I know because I was at this desk in the last war, too. Take roller bearings, for instance. That's what I know most about. My company had three plants in 1940 and we produced x tons of bearings. We've built two new plants just for war business and this year we'll produce $2x$ tons of bearings."

Now the obvious strength of Mr. Wilson is that he knows roller bearings. But his weaknesses are inherent in his position. First, he came to Washington to look after his country's interest and *his company's interest.* In his mind, the two are the same. If his country needs bearings, the simple answer is to let his company make them. Doesn't XYZ know more about making bearings than anybody else in the country? Let the government build new plants for XYZ

and let XYZ make all the bearings we need.

But suppose there is no time to build new plants for XYZ? Or no materials for plant building? Mr. Wilson admitted to me that, despite his company's miracle, it would not be able to meet more than half the demand for bearings this year. Suppose the smart thing to do is to let other smaller companies help XYZ with bearing production? Mr. Wilson finds himself squirming on a spot. His country's interest and his company's interest no longer coincide.

These little plants have never made any bearings. XYZ has spent millions developing a special technique. It has a secret, patented hardening process. Should XYZ now give away all its developed skills, techniques and patents? If it does, what will happen to XYZ *after the war?* A whole flock of new competitors will have been spawned. Mr. Wilson's company will stand helpless, knowing nothing that its competitors don't know, and unable to produce a better bearing than a dozen smaller companies.

Can Mr. Wilson deliberately destroy his company, which pays him $50,000 a year while he is serving his country? No, and he gets swift support from certain other well-meaning and patriotic dollar-a-year men. One of them, it happens, is vice-president of XYZ's bank and another is vice-president of the brokerage firm which handles XYZ stock.

And that helps explain why we have delayed "farming out" work to small companies in some industries. It explains the undercover fight to protect existing markets for various products at home and abroad. It explains why little companies have not been encouraged to make sponge iron in the midst of a steel shortage, and why more reclamation plants for handling scrap rubber were not rushed at an earlier stage in the crisis.

The decision to risk wrecking great companies and ruining their stockholders, banks and dealers is not an easy one to make. Neither is the decision to wipe out potential post-war markets, to create tough new commercial competition, to yield domestic and international patent privileges. But we can lose the war if, when the choice between country and business comes, we choose business.

VIII. *Making Saxophones and Junk Jewelry.*

Many small industries may be destroyed before the war is over, for we must accept *civilian casualties* as one of the prices of victory.

Typical of these small industries is the jewelry industry. Giving work to three hundred thousand Americans, the industry lives off copper, so it has fought a running battle with WPB from the beginning of the emergency. According to WPB officials, some of the jewelry companies have been guilty of deliberately "chewing up" copper stocks to forestall seizure. This means that they have hastily manufactured tons of "junk jewelry," and then come forward with the label-on-the-can argument against seizure. Because of the labor which would be required to reduce the junk jewelry back to its copper component, WPB has allowed it to go on the market.

"The people who 'chew up' our vital materials in this manner are as guilty of sabotage as any German spy who blows up a bridge," I was told at WPB.

The companies which manufacture musical instruments have been hit hard. I am told that some instruments are still being made in spite of the critical shortage of brass. To win the war, we'll have to reverse this process and confiscate thousands of saxophones and trombones and trumpets.

Aluminum is still being wasted in at least four ways. One of the largest manufacturers of electric motors is still using aluminum in rotors where a more abundant metal could be substituted. Some combustion motor manufacturers are using aluminum in pistons where cast iron could be substituted. A Washington laundry was caught using pure aluminum clips on shirt collars and a large winery was found still using aluminum foil to cap its bottles.

As for magnesium, here is a condition that is a challenge to every American. The incendiaries that Jimmy Doolittle dropped on Tokyo and the flares which light bombing targets are made of magnesium. The demand for both of these exceeds by many times our supply of magnesium.

We can lose the war if we prefer junk jewelry and saxophones and aluminum foil on chianti bottles.

IX. *Allowing the Army and Navy to Waste Precious Metals.*

All of the war wasting is not being done by civilians. The Army and Navy have also been guilty. The WPB is the agency which guards our stocks and apportions them among the armed services and the civilians. So, in the pulling and hauling, the armed services have also been guilty and the guilt is due not to insincerity, but to a

failure to comprehend the position we are in.

The word "waste" in wartime takes on a new meaning. You are guilty of waste in wartime when you use any substance for any purpose for which you might have substituted a more abundant substance. Thus, when the Army and Navy use brass for shell cases, they are guilty of waste, not because brass is not the best material for shell cases, but because steel shell cases are good enough. The copper shortage is far more acute than the steel shortage, so steel must be substituted for copper wherever possible. Similarly, the services are guilty of war waste when they specify aluminum rotors in motors when copper rotors would suffice. Copper is critically short, but aluminum is even shorter.

The whole question of our naval strategy and tactics is tied up with the metals problem. Shall the Navy build great ships that can't be used for two or three years, or shall it build small, fast vessels that can be employed quickly? Only recently has the decision been made to follow the latter course. The naval weapon with top priority now is the fast patrol boat for use against submarines; second is the submarine; and third is the destroyer. Some of the first patrol boats were built to "yacht specifications," with brass rails and monel-metal urinals, but that sort of folly has been stopped.

We can lose this war unless our armed services build only the proper weapons for victory, and strip them down to the barest and most effective essentials.

X. *Refusing to Draft Eighteen-Year-Old Boys for Service.*

The draft is interlocked with the whole shortage problem. In fighting the shortages, the WPB has to be as concerned about the draft as is the Selective Service Board. Every informed man in Washington knows that Congress already should have drafted the eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds. The first reason for this — that these boys make the best soldiers — should have been sufficient in any realistic handling of the war. But the second reason — that the drafting of these boys would ease the labor shortage — is even more compelling in the eyes of the WPB.

Most of the draftees now are thirty years old and over. Most of them are coming right out of the mills, mines and forests where labor shortages already exist. Is this a realistic procedure? Boys eighteen and nineteen usually have no skills. Not only are they best fitted

to help on the fighting fronts, but they are least fitted to help on the home front. In America's hour of peril, we have expert lumberjacks and expert copper miners doing "squads right" on our drill fields while thousands of nineteen-year-olds loll in drugstores, while lumber and copper production fall off!

Democracies lose wars this way.

At the beginning of the emergency, every agency which expected to use materials looked at America's wealth and said: "Yes, I see all I will need to do my job." Then everybody grabbed at once and it was like a game of musical chairs. No one had figured on anything except his own particular needs. As overworked as that word "co-ordinator" is in Washington, there was not enough co-ordination.

The same thing was true of our man power. Everybody, including the army-builders and the machine-builders, looked and saw all the men he needed. Then everybody grabbed and nobody found enough.

We have now, painfully, reached the end of this grabbing period. Now comes the co-ordination, the regimentation, the moving into line, and the compromising. Washington's success in this new phase of the war effort will determine whether we win or whether we lose.

"Please, mein Führer, you promised me to relax this week-end . . . ."

▶ *The aerial soldiers of fortune are a tough and colorful lot.*

TEST PILOTS

By Lewis Marshall Thompson

Today's soldier of fortune works at some sprawling, humming aircraft plant. He has traded his rifle for a crash helmet and he grumbles about his income taxes. His job is test pilot. He stands between some other pilot and death because it's his responsibility to take a plane up and give it hell, to ask more of it than it will ever be called upon to give in actual combat. If the plane fails — well, test pilots take care of that with a slogan: "Death is for dopes."

Take the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation test pilots, out in Burbank, California. Their roster of a hundred-odd men — typical of similar groups in other parts of the country — includes chaps who have flown alcohol up from Mexico and Cuba during the prohibition era. It includes a handful of aces from the last war. One man is just out of a Nazi concentration camp in occupied France. There are men who have fought with Chiang Kai-shek, and men who have fought for Loyalist Spain. There are crop-dusters, racing pilots, barnstorming stuntmen, men who have pioneered airmail routes over the Andes, round-the-world flyers, and the private pilots of three Indian maharajas and one Chinese mandarin — not forgetting the fellows who flew Chamberlain to Munich, the Duke of Windsor to secret rendezvous with Wally, or were the pilots of Lord Beaverbrook, Hearst and Winston Churchill.

They are normally a high-spirited, rough-and-tumble lot, these test pilots and they seldom enjoy a quiet interval. Life is rarely dull on the ground for them, never dull in the air. They torture each other with raw hot-foots, build bonfires under their best friend's chair, or else take the hinge pins out of the men's room door so the fellow inside, when he opens it to come out, falls flat on his face.

Between test hops, while they are resting, the boys don't indulge in easy loafing as normal men will. If they wear a ring, they move it from one finger to another, back and forth. If they sit in a chair, they won't sit on all four legs but must