

MILITARY STRATEGY VS. COMMON SENSE



EDITOR'S NOTE: What interests are worth dying for? How far will we let our lives be squeezed by "military necessity"? How long should we put off compromise and armistice if it looks as if war must destroy everything worthwhile? These are political questions forced on a country by events, such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, or to be decided by the people and their elected representatives; decades of military training don't help in finding the answers. Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, the famous military scholar, a man who since 1920 has been consistently ahead of the world's general staffs in projecting new weapons and tactics, has serious doubts that any of the elaborate politico-military structures created by the Western governments since 1946 will be of any use whatever in any future war. Captain Liddell Hart goes even further, to ask if "war" itself—short of a struggle for brute survival—is possible today. In light of the ICBM (see next page) his reflections amount to an overall critique of force in the modern world.

By B. H. LIDDELL HART

THE TIME has come to ask whether the military men who are advising our governments about defense are giving good advice—or whether our governments are justified in following it. Although war is a difficult business, and includes many subordinate arts that only experts of long professional experience can master, there is undying truth in Clemenceau's now-historic dictum, "War is too serious a business to be left to the generals."

Why is this? Why isn't it proper for

a statesman to intrust himself wholly to the hands of the professional soldier, as he would to the hands of the professional doctor? First, we must remember that in recent times nations have rarely engaged in a major war more than once in a generation, so that the "military profession" is much less of a practising profession than others. Even the best peacetime training is more theoretical than practical experience. And theory and peacetime exercises tend to be governed by experience of past wars, where conditions and instruments differ largely from those of a future

war. The military chiefs who are promoted in one great emergency are apt to stay on for a long time, dominating peacetime staffs and war departments, and their influence persists still longer because of the fame they acquired as the top practitioners of the profession's last practising period. They not only have a persisting influence on successors who were formerly their subordinates, but tend to have still more weight with public and political opinion. They become dominant voices for the rest of their lives on all problems of war. Naturally, they continue to think in terms of *their* war—in terms of technique that soon becomes obsolete.

If a certain skepticism is appropriate in considering the "military profession," how much more in the larger aspect of war—where strategy impinges on statecraft. What is theoretically correct in strategy may be a dangerous error in the wider sphere of policy, or "grand strategy." While strategy is concerned only with winning a campaign or a war, grand strategy has to take a wider and longer view—of "winning peace" on a good basis. Yet even the ablest civil ministers are apt to be timid about questioning military advice either in war or in preparation for defense, although it may become obvious that something is seriously wrong—that

the generals-in-charge have not kept up with technological progress, are unimaginative, are not heart-and-soul behind the government, or are making dispositions that prejudice the political situation. Think of the tribulations of Lincoln with his generals—not resolved until the test of battle had brought to light, and to rapid promotion, the unknown and unprepossessing Grant. Think of the way the British generals of the First World War resisted the machine-gun and the tank, and the admirals resisted the convoy system, until the dynamic and irreverent Lloyd George forced their hands.

THE problem before us now is that of war in the Atomic Age, and it is all too evident that the military chiefs in charge of Western defense have not really come to grips with the problem, nor adjusted their thinking to the new

conditions. Before the Communist invasion of South Korea in 1950 the Western powers placed their trust in the atomic bomb as a preventive to aggression. When that invasion showed that their trust was misplaced they hurriedly began to rebuild their armies, in order to provide a surer form of defense. The main effort was made in Europe, through the organs there created under American leadership—NATO for its political direction and SHAPE for military direction. The plans originally formulated and strength visualized when General Eisenhower took over the command in 1951 had a promise of checking a Russian invasion without recourse to the atomic bomb.

But the strength then considered as the minimum necessary was never attained. Instead, the planned scale was successively cut down or whittled away through lack of will on the part

of some of the contributing governments in Europe as well as distracting developments elsewhere—particularly those which France has suffered first in Indochina and then in North Africa. In the USA, too, the eventual halt in the Korean struggle brought a demand for economy in defense expenditure.

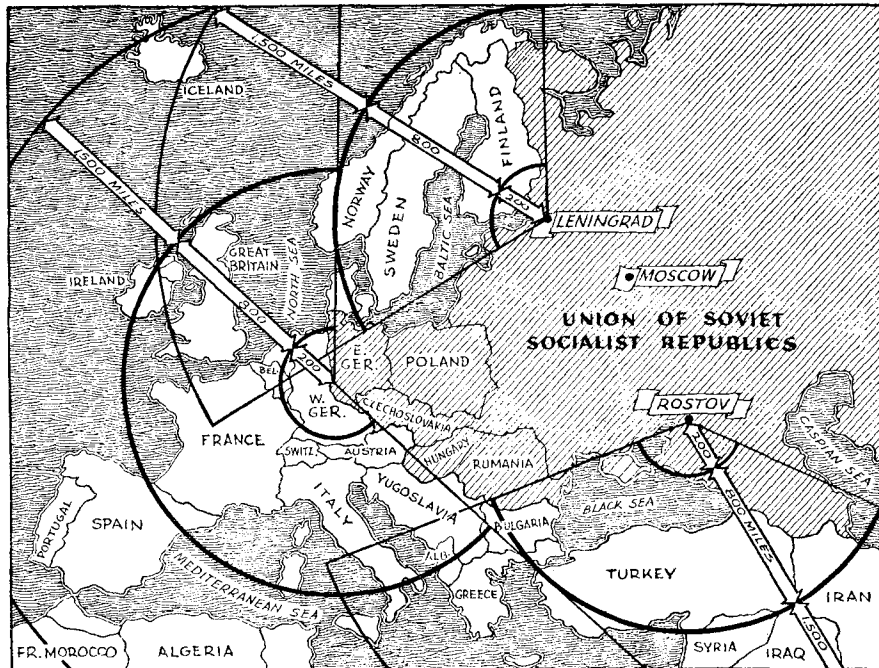
The election in 1952 of General Eisenhower and the halt in Korean hostilities brought forth a new doctrine—the New Look—which was supposed to accomplish the permanent end of American security, more cheaply and effectively than the Democrats had done. In January 1954 Mr. Dulles lifted the curtain on the strategy behind the New Look. He defined it as a basic decision “to depend primarily on a great capacity to retaliate by means and places of our own choosing.” With this, he said in a subsequent explanation, “you do not need to have local defense all round the 20,000-mile perimeter of the orbit of the Soviet World.” In March Vice President Nixon declared: “We have adopted a new principle. Rather than let the Communists nibble us to death all over the world in little wars, we will rely in future on massive mobile retaliatory powers.” That, obviously, was a threat of strategic bombing action with the new weapons of “mass destruction.” Indeed, the New Look was little more than a return to the “pure” atom-bomb theories of 1945.

In a speech that General Gruenther made to the English-Speaking Union in June 1954 he stated: “In our thinking we visualize the use of atomic bombs in the support of our ground troops. We also visualize the use of atomic bombs on targets in enemy territory.” This conveyed the impression that the planners at SHAPE recognized no distinction between the localized use of tactical atomic bombs in repelling invasion and the all-out use of H-bombs and A-bombs against cities. Moreover, he declared that if war “does take place our minds are clear that we must and shall use every weapon in our arsenal.”

These declarations sounded all the more ominous because of the explosion of the hydrogen bomb at Bikini on March 1, 1954. The photographs were appalling, and their effect more shattering even than the statement of the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Admiral Strauss, that one H-Bomb “could destroy any city.” The air chiefs themselves emphasized that war with such weapons “would be general suicide and the end of civilization.”

It may have been hoped that the explosion would impress the ruling

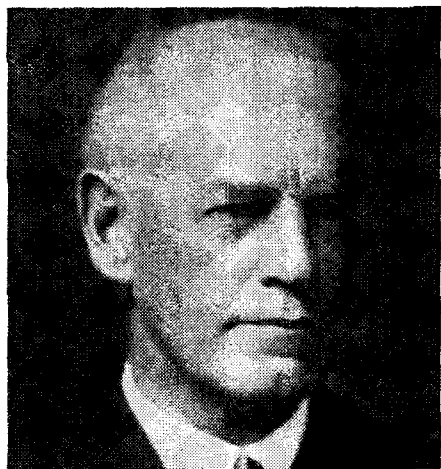
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THE PUSH-BUTTON AGE: The past few weeks have briefed everyone on a peril of which engineers and planners have been aware for five years: the Superweapon—the guided missile with an atomic warhead, against which no defense is yet conceivable—is out of the space-comics and halfway into reality. The map above dramatizes the ruin to which this armament reduces the tier of treaty forces the United States and her allies have constructed in Europe. Officially, the best missile possessed by America is the “Redstone,” at a range of 200 miles the equal of Germany’s famed V-2. But intelligence reports the Russians are already testing an 800-mile missile, and Senator Jackson spoke in the first week of February of a 1,500-mile missile, which, if based in East Germany, would leapfrog every installation in Europe or North Africa. Last, but not least, it is known that American experts are working night and day on the ICBM (and the Russians may be ahead here, too), with range 5,000 miles—the whole world its potential target. It is hard to see how one single feature of conventional warfare—the intricate rear-area supply and command echelons, staging areas for invasions, or airfields for SAC—can be of any use against guided missiles. Yet once these arms are in the hands of military commanders, Captain Liddell Hart points out, there will be an irresistible impulse to call on them in case of hostilities. Then war is no longer war, but mutual suicide.

P.E.N. for PEACE

Writers and the International Spirit



—Elliott & Fry.

Galsworthy—"badgered writers [to] join."

By MARCHETTE CHUTE

IT IS sometimes said that writers do not enjoy each other's company. They do not wish to know each other's opinions or watch each other at dinners, and in general they are about as gregarious as porcupines.

It may be so. Writers in general are busy people and they have many things to do with their time. But if they find a good reason for sticking together they can do it, and to prove it there is in existence an international club of writers known as the P.E.N.

The P.E.N. had a small beginning. Three years after the end of the First World War an English writer named Catharine Dawson Scott was trying to finish a novel in her native Cornwall, and an idea that had nothing to do with the book she was writing kept pushing at her. She hated war and was an ardent supporter of the League of Nations; and she began to consider the increased strength that writers would have if they could meet freely with each other in a friendly interchange of ideas.

As soon as she returned to London she went to see John Galsworthy, who was an ardent internationalist and important enough to be listened to. Not everyone took Mrs. Dawson Scott seriously, for she was shabby and unworldly and as vulnerable as dedicated people are likely to be. But Galsworthy took her seriously, and he did the same for her idea.

The P.E.N. Club was born in a

London restaurant on the sixth of October 1921. Since it was to be an international club it needed an international name, and someone pointed out that the opening letters of "poet," "essayist," and "novelist" were the same in most European languages. Playwrights and editors could also be included in the title, and in English P.E.N. was an easily remembered pun.

Galsworthy became the first president and served with vigor and imagination. The year before his death Galsworthy received the Nobel Prize for Literature; he made it over into a trust fund for the London P.E.N. He badgered most of the prominent writers in England into joining—"Very well," said Shaw resignedly, "I will go quietly." He persuaded Anatole France to start the first Continental center in Paris and to use his influence in spreading the idea throughout Europe.

Galsworthy was convinced that the club could stay out of politics and that its members could learn to meet on a level of friendship that ignored nationalism. Two years after the P.E.N. was born its first International Congress was to be held in London, and the committee sent a cordial invitation to England's late enemies the Germans. It even offered to pay the expenses of the delegates.

Old hates die hard; and although Gerhart Hauptmann was willing to come to the Congress, some of his fellow Germans persuaded him that

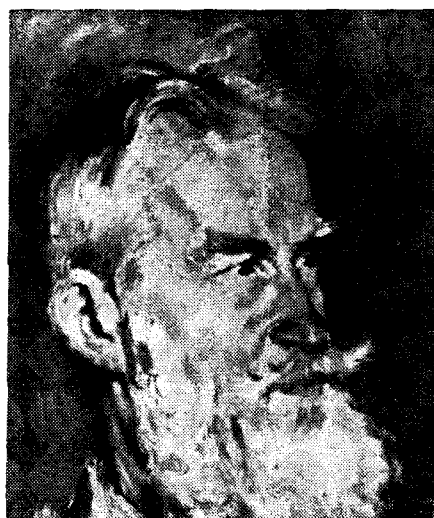
he ought not to permit himself to sit at the same table with Maurice Maeterlinck. Some of the Allied delegates, in their turn, decided with equal vigor that they did not wish to sit in the same room with Hauptmann.

Nevertheless, the Executive Committee managed to keep clearly in mind the basic purpose of the P.E.N. and so did the French members when it was their turn to play host to an International Congress. Twenty-three delegates came from Germany to Paris, and the French writers made a special effort to make them feel welcome. The following year the P.E.N. Congress was held in Berlin—the first international congress of any kind to be held there since the end of the war—and from then on the writers who had been engulfed in Europe's civil war were enemies no longer.

GALSWORTHY died in 1933, which was a frightening year for writers. The dream of international good will that had inspired the P.E.N., as it had inspired so many idealistic organizations of the Twenties, had vanished under the impact of a militant nationalism much more barbaric than any of the hatreds that had been let loose in the First World War. There was a growing list of writers in exile, and when the delegates met at the P.E.N. Congress in Yugoslavia a rising fear was beginning to flow over Europe like a poisonous wave.

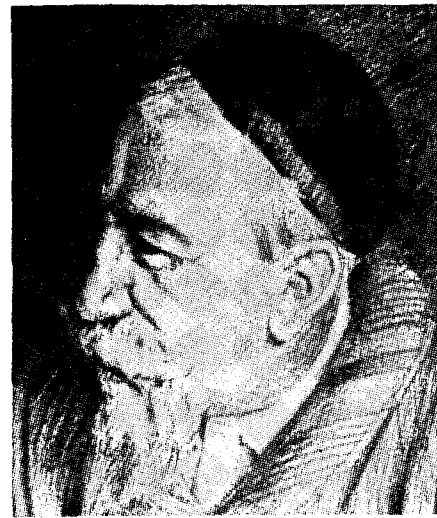
H. G. Wells was international president that year and presided over the tumultuous meetings of the Congress in the little opera house at Dubrovnik.

Wells, like Galsworthy, tried to keep the P.E.N. out of politics. What they were trying to achieve was an international brotherhood as non-partisan as religion. But the pressure on writers to take sides increased, and they argued the question at the Con-



—Augustus John

Shaw—"... [went] quietly."



France—"spread the idea."