

The War in Asia: More Questions Than Answers

*Will it take one million American soldiers to end the war in Vietnam? This is only one of many questions raised by six current books concerned with our involvement in Southeast Asia and what we may reasonably expect: **The Lost Revolution**, by Robert Shaplen (Harper & Row. 404 pp. \$6.95); **Our Vietnam Nightmare**, by Marguerite Higgins (Harper & Row. 314 pp. \$5.95); **The Vietnam Reader**, edited by Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall (Random House. 415 pp. Hardbound, \$5.95. Paperback, \$2.95); **The Communist Revolution in Asia: Tactics, Goals and Achievements**, edited by Robert A. Scalapino (Prentice-Hall. 405 pp. \$10); **Vietnam and the United States**, by Hans J. Morgenthau (Public Affairs Press. 112 pp. \$3.25), and **Outpost of Freedom**, by Captain Roger H. C. Donlon, as told to Warren Rogers (McGraw-Hill. 206 pp. \$4.95). Richard Dudman, who evaluates the books, is Washington correspondent for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. He has twice reported on the war from South Vietnam.*

By RICHARD DUDMAN

ALL THE easy ways to win in Vietnam have been failing, one after another. Billions in military aid to the French led only to Dien Bien Phu and an armistice that neither side intended to keep. More billions given to President Ngo Dinh Diem helped him, not to end the insurrection, but to build a family dictatorship until the United States gave the green light for his overthrow. Military advisers rarely could persuade the Vietnamese army to go out into the jungles and rice fields and fight the elusive enemy. Napalm and white phosphorus and bigger and bigger bombs rained on South Viet Nam, but the Viet Cong kept gaining recruits and territory. Progressively heavier bombing of North Vietnam, starting last February, has not stopped infiltration, slowed the fighting in the south, or brought Hanoi to the conference table.

The latest step is the commitment of American combat troops in numbers that soon could match the 275,000-man American peak in Korea and, some military authorities say, may have to reach 1,000,000 before the job is done.

As the United States thus finds itself ever more thoroughly bogged down in a land war in Asia, there is a tendency to stop thinking and go forward. An otherwise intelligent person can say, "I really don't understand the situation in Vietnam, but now that we're into it this far I suppose we have to see it through." Only slightly less thinking is the person who says, "We've got to draw the line somewhere," and lets it go at that.

Fortunately, some Americans want to know how we became involved in Vietnam, exactly what we are doing there now, and what conclusion we can reasonably expect. Fortunately, too, there are some books appearing now that address themselves to these questions.

Robert Shaplen, whose pieces in *The*

New Yorker have been among the best reporting from Vietnam, treats these basic questions fully in *The Lost Revolution*, a detailed story of the last twenty years of what Ambassador Edmund Gullion has called a "pattern of prediction and disappointment." Shaplen sees the Viet Cong as "still very much a southern revolutionary force in its own right," despite the men, supplies, and strategy direction that it gets from the north.

In Shaplen's view, the war was going badly long before Diem's overthrow. The largely phoney strategic hamlet program, the false Vietnamese reports of enemy casualties and progress in pacification, and the official optimism by top Americans combined to obscure the truth at the time. Shaplen credits American troops and air support with forcing the Viet Cong to back away from their plan to cut the country in two and attain victory in 1965. But he remains pessimistic about the possibility of an American victory or even a satisfactory stalemate.

Groping for an explanation for the many American failures in Vietnam, Shaplen says, "It seems to me that we have consistently approached Vietnam negatively—'to prevent' its military conquest and subversion, and 'to preserve' freedoms that have never actually existed—and have failed to deal with it creatively and with authority. This has inhibited our understanding of the real difficulties, and at the same time of the potentialities." In short, the United States has "proved incapable of dealing in revolutionary terms with a revolutionary situation." Of many turning points in the last twenty years, he says, "none was as significant, in my estimation, as our failure to influence the French to grant the Vietnamese in the south a decent amount of independence before it was too late." He suggests that the revolution in Vietnam actually was lost back

in 1947 and 1948, when the first unsatisfactory agreements were signed between the French and Emperor Bao Dai.

In those years, he says, few Americans knew much about Indochina. Now there are many American experts on that area, but "the deeper and more pressing question remains: How interested, let alone involved, were we really in the revolutionary possibilities and the revolutionary dangers in Indochina? . . . The sad truth of the matter, it seems to me, is that we have lost our revolutionary zeal; we tend not to think so much in terms of change and revolution as of adjustment and accommodation." As a partial remedy, he suggests that a School for Revolution be set up and that foreign service officers be required to attend it as they now often attend the Army and Navy war colleges.

MARGUERITE HIGGINS, concentrating on the last few years, is bitter about the past but optimistic about the future—if it can be called optimistic to look toward the possibility that the United States will "keep up its operations in Vietnam on a steadily rising scale, year after year, and decade after decade, if that is vital to our interests."

Our Vietnam Nightmare contains some good reporting, notably many new details about a cablegram drafted Aug. 24, 1963, by Under Secretary of State Averell Harriman and Assistant Secretary of State Roger Hillsman. It directed Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge to encourage the Vietnamese generals to revolt if President Diem would not fire his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and restore suspended civil liberties. The cablegram created a sensation and led to an almost open breach in Saigon between top CIA and military leaders, on the one hand, and Ambassador Lodge, lower-level CIA men and officials of the aid mission and the United States Information Service, on the other, who by that time were

swinging to the Diem-must-go school.

Miss Higgins makes the case that this move to "rock the boat" in Saigon was the work of an anti-Diem group in Washington, which rushed the cablegram out on a weekend when top officials were unavailable. President John F. Kennedy was in the shower at Hyannis Port, she says, when Under Secretary of State George Ball telephoned to read him a "cryptic" summary given Ball shortly before by Harriman and Hilsman on the golf course at the Chevy Chase Country Club in Washington. The message then was "cleared" with second- and third-level Defense and CIA officials as having been "approved by the President." In the locker room of the club, she says, someone reached Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, who "felt a sense of alarm" and alerted his superiors in the Pentagon, but to no avail.

The details are sinister only if it is assumed, as does Miss Higgins, that Diem was a satisfactory national leader, that the war was going well, and that the Kennedy Administration would have acted differently had it not been for implied deception in sending out the cablegram. Actually, Diem was far from satisfactory, the war was not going well, and President Kennedy himself encouraged the overthrow of Diem a few weeks later by calling for changes in "policy and perhaps personnel" as a necessity for getting on with the war.

Miss Higgins goes to great lengths to demonstrate that practicing Buddhists are a minority in South Vietnam and that the suicides by burning were intended to have political effect. True enough, but even a minority has a right to be free from persecution, and the suicides were no less real for being politically motivated.

In addition to being a defense of Johnson Administration policy, Miss Higgins's book is a catalogue of bad guys and good guys. One of the chief among her bad guys is Hilsman, whom she telephoned at 2 A.M. on learning of the killing of Diem and Nhu and said: "Congratulations, Roger. How does it feel to have blood on your hands?" One of the chief among her good guys is Madame Nhu. Miss Higgins asks whether Madame Nhu is a Dragon Lady or a Joan of Arc and answers that she is an "oriental Valkyrie."

In *The Vietnam Reader* Marcus Raskin and Bernard Fall provide a useful collection of observations and documents on many facets of the Vietnam problem. They range from articles by Senator Thomas Dodd and Walt W. Rostow in support of continued American involvement to an essay by Gary Porter of the Institute for Policy Studies questioning the value of staying there any longer. Porter links the war in Vietnam with a "globalist ideology" that has

erased the old distinction between vital and peripheral interests and empowers the United States to recognize and act in behalf of "free-world interests" whenever it sees them threatened.

The Communist Revolution in Asia, Robert Scalapino's scholarly volume, is a textbook or reference work with facts about the various Asian Communist parties and estimates of their aims and capabilities. His own first chapter, a view of the whole continent, seems to imply that current revolutionary ferment in Asia is exclusively a Communist affair.

Morgenthau's *Vietnam and the United States* contains articles by him that have appeared elsewhere since 1956, with the addition of a first chapter and a chronology. He argues that the United States in Vietnam is being driven along the same path that the Germans took in World War II and that the war in Vietnam can be won only "by the indiscriminate killing of everybody in sight—by genocide." He writes:

We have embarked upon a scorched-earth policy by destroying villages and forests; we have killed combatants and noncombatants without discrimination because discrimination is impossible. The logic of guerrilla war leaves us no choice. We must go on torturing, killing, and burning, and the more deeply we become involved in Vietnam, the more there will be of it. . . . The policy makers who are so concerned about our collective and their personal prestige might take a moment to reflect on

the kind of country America will be when it emerges from so senseless, hopeless, and brutalizing a war.

In *Outpost of Freedom*, Roger Donlon's story of horror and heroism has, sad to say, been expanded into a second-rate book that probably will lead to a second-rate movie. The account of the Special Forces' courageous defense of Camp Nam Dong, which won Captain Donlon the Congressional Medal of Honor, has been cheapened by the addition of youthful anecdotes like the time he waited tables at a college sorority house after drinking too much beer with the girls and spilled spaghetti and meatballs into the housemother's lap.

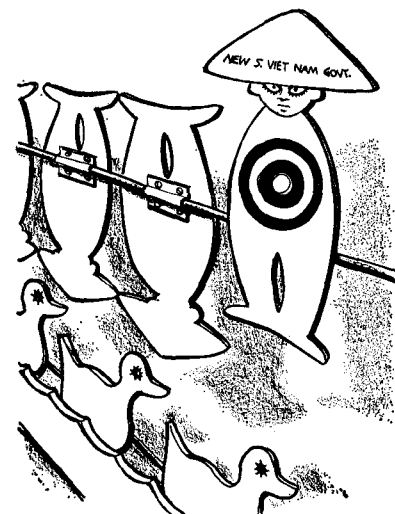
More serious, he dismisses the destruction of rice crops by aerial sprays as just so much Communist propaganda. The truth is that officials now admit and defend the practice as one of the unpleasant devices considered necessary in an unpleasant war.

Above all, the book is dated. The Special Forces have been left on the sidelines in a war in which they never were permitted to play fully their intended role of tracking down the guerrillas in continuing small independent operations. Now the war has passed them by as it has expanded into a conflict of strategic bombers, napalm high-explosive shells, and masses of nineteen- and twenty-year-old soldiers trained in conventional warfare in the hope that they can defeat an unconventional enemy.

If one picture is worth a thousand words, a Bill Mauldin cartoon is equal to several editorials. His latest collection, *I've Decided I Want My Seat Back* (Harper & Row, \$3.95), covers the human scene from the Deep South to outer space, scattering grapes at friend and foe and extending sympathy to luckless bystanders. Spanning the years 1961-65, the book closes with a brief note on the author's visit early this year to Vietnam, where his son is stationed.



"Whatever it is, it isn't paper."



"The Gallery."

Between Rebels and Rightists

The Unfinished Experiment: Democracy in the Dominican Republic, by Juan Bosch (Praeger. 239 pp. \$5.95), ***Dominican Diary***, by Tad Szulc (Delacorte. 306 pp. \$6), and ***Santo Domingo: Revolt of the Damned***, by Dan Kurzman (Putnam. 310 pp. \$5.95), agree that U.S. intervention in the recent revolution "frustrated the will of the majority." Hal Lavine covered the Cuban revolution for *Newsweek*.

By HAL LAVINE

AMERICAN foreign policy has frequently been criticized as too little, too late. But when the revolt broke out in the Dominican Army against the government of Donald Reid Cabral on April 24, the Johnson Administration reacted almost instantly and with overwhelming force. In a matter of hours the aircraft carrier *Boxer*, with 1,500 Marines aboard, had moved into Dominican waters to prepare to evacuate the Americans and other foreigners in Santo Domingo, if necessary. Less than four days later 405 Marines were ashore. Soon after, the Dominican capital was swarming with Marines and paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne, 22,000 men in all. They had orders that would have baffled any soldier: not to join in the fighting between the rebels and the forces of the military junta that had taken over the government from "Donny" Reid, but to stop it, while U.S. diplomats negotiated a settlement.

The Administration reacted without quite knowing what really was happening. Only the day before the revolt U.S. Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett, Jr., had left Santo Domingo to visit his mother in Georgia and then consult with State Department officials in Washington. Eleven of the thirteen members of the Military Assistance Advisory Group had gone to Panamá for a conference. The U.S. Embassy's naval attaché was dove hunting in the Cibao Valley. In charge of the Embassy was William Connnett, Jr., who had been in the Dominican Republic for less than six months.

Possibly the outcome would have been different if these officials had been in Santo Domingo when the revolt broke out. Probably, however, it would have been precisely the same. For the specter that haunts the White House—the spec-

ter that haunted Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy and now haunts Lyndon B. Johnson—is that of "another Cuba." The rebels were demanding the return to power of the Dominican Republic's exiled former President, Juan Bosch; however, in the State Department Bosch was considered "soft on Communism," if decidedly not a Communist himself. Moreover, the rebels had distributed arms to anyone who asked for them; obviously, some of the civilians fighting with the rebels must have been Communists, since they would have been among the first to ask. On this basis—and very little, if anything, else—the Embassy was reporting that Bosch's return would inevitably lead to extremism or even Communism "in six months." The Johnson Administration's reaction was nearly as predictable as nightfall.

Now, seven months later, U.S. troops are still in Santo Domingo. They have imposed an uneasy peace on the country, a peace broken night after night by gunfire. They have imposed a caretaker government headed by a decent and highly respected man named Hector García-Godoy, who is supported almost solely by the U.S. troops. When President Johnson will find it possible to recall them nobody, including Mr. Johnson, can even begin to guess.

WAS U.S. intervention a case of too much, too soon? Tad Szulc and Dan Kurzman, who covered the fighting, one for *The New York Times*, the other for *The Washington Post*, clearly think so. And so, naturally, does Bosch, whose book does not deal with the revolt that was made in his name but with the events that led to his ouster by the military. Bosch not only denies that he was "soft on Communism"; he goes further: he accuses his conservative opponents, the members of the National Civic Union who supported his ouster, of being the real "softies." He says his own party, the Party of the Dominican Revolution, was clean of Communists, while the Civic Union was full of them.

What he asserts is a half-truth (the Communists had infiltrated both groups), but it's a half-truth the State Department some day should ponder. For all their denunciations of Communists, Dominican right-wingers have long pampered them. Realizing how much the possibility of "another Cuba" frightens the United States Government they consider the Communists a valuable

asset. After the Organization of American States had voted sanctions against him, the late Rafael Trujillo Molina actually imported Dominican Communists from Cuba; by creating a "Communist menace," El Benefactor hoped to frighten the U.S. into pressuring the OAS to lift its sanctions. Following Trujillo's assassination, his son, Ramfis, continued his policy. The U.S. urged him to expel the Communists, and he did expel several, but the others he permitted to "escape."

As Bill D. Moyers, the President's press secretary, recently made clear, Mr. Johnson was and still is annoyed by the dispatches that Szulc and Kurzman sent from Santo Domingo. The fact is that both reporters are quite temperate in their criticisms of U.S. intervention. They do not believe the Johnson Administration made a good case for its contention that Communists dominated the rebel forces and that, if the rebels won, the Communists would take over the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, they do not rule out the possibility of the Communists' eventually coming to power as a result of the revolution. They are aware of the dilemma Mr. Johnson faced, and they sympathize with him.

What they say, in effect, is that he should have taken a chance. If the rebels had won and if Bosch had returned, the result might not have been the disaster the Embassy predicted; there might merely have been an ineffectual government, leftist but still democratic. (Bosch, despite his protests, was an ineffectual President; and even the State Department will admit he is a democrat.)

The Dominicans were once intensely pro-American. I can remember the day when Ramfis Trujillo left the country and his uncles Hector and Arismendi attempted to seize the government from the then President Joaquin Balaguer. U.S. warships appeared on the horizon to warn them off, and Santo Domingans crowded the waterfront shouting: "*Viva las imperialistas!*" No one is cheering the *imperialistas* now, because, as Szulc, Kurzman, and (of course) Bosch agree, the vast majority of the Dominican people supported the rebels when they called for the return of Bosch. By preventing him from assuming power the United States frustrated the will of the majority. As Tad Szulc says:

... in the first days of the revolution the United States Embassy lost, perhaps out of prejudice, a great chance to become aligned with a popular democratic movement while using the leverage that the U.S. would then possess to root out the Communist influences. Instead, I believe, we closed all the democratic options to the rebels and placed the Communists in the role of being the only "friends" of Dominican democracy.