

## OUR IMPOSSIBLE WAR

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Editor:

The recent tragedy in Viet-Nam in which a number of our million dollar bombers were destroyed on the ground comes as no surprise to an experienced combat infantryman. It probably will be followed, in due time, by the Reds making another Dienbienphu out of the city of Saigon.

Since war has evolved above the clan level it has been conducted in conformity with certain basic principles. These principles are commonly called, "Napoleon's Maxims", although they were expounded in part by many earlier combat leaders.

The violation of any one of these Maxims is usually enough to lose a war. For example the violation of "The Principle of Exploitation" lost us World War II in Europe by the failure to capture Berlin, and also the "Police Action" in Korea by failure to exploit the successful Inchon landing.

The war in Viet-Nam is an impossible war - it violates too many principles. Basically it violates "The Principle of the Objective". There is no objective in Viet-Nam. The initiative remains with the Reds at all times. We are just fighting here and there at places chosen by the Reds. This practice also is a violation of "The Principle of the Offensive".

The recent destruction of dozens of our jet bombers was the culmination of a long series of violation of "The Principle of Surprise" in Viet-Nam. It is an accepted maxim that a leader may be forgiven for being defeated but never for being surprised. To have an air field brought under attack by enemy mortars, which are relatively short range weapons, indicates a gross violation of "The Principle of Surprise", and a lot of stars should fall.

The entire Viet-Nam military organization violates "The Principle of Unity of Command". An adviser is no substitute for a commander. For success in battle it is necessary that one man say what shall be done and that the others, through the chain of command, do it. If some Viet-Nam commander does not see fit to follow the advice of his adviser, no force, such as relief from command, can be used. If a Viet-Nam commander decides to bomb Cambodia, and the U. S. commander disallows it, the same principle is violated.

In addition to the violations of the Principles of War, there are other impossible conditions in Viet-Nam:

First, the country is so fractionized, and the various elements are so busy fighting each other, that any concerted effort is impossible.

Second, there is no battle front in the accepted sense. A Red may be a rice farmer today and a Viet-Cong guerrilla tonight. In wars among so-called civilized nations the fighting man wears a distinctive uniform so he can be identified as a soldier.

Third, the United States is trying to fight a ground war from the air. The importance of aerial bombing is the greatest fraud that has ever been perpetrated on the American people. Granted that it can cause great destruction to buildings and to material, its effect upon infantry, that has been trained in guerrilla warfare, is almost negligible.

Besides that a trained guerrilla machine-gunner, with an anti-aircraft mount and belts loaded with one fifth tracers and a few incendiaries, should be able to hide out in the brush and knock down all the helicopters that came within half a mile of his position. It might be said that the terrain in Viet-Nam is so unfavorable that we can't fight ground warfare there. Perhaps not, but obviously we can't fight air-ground warfare there either.

There appears to be two solutions of the Viet-Nam problem. One is to notify the capitals of North Viet-Nam and Cambodia that we will give them a ~~limited period to withdraw their ground forces and supplies in South Viet-Nam.~~ Refusal to be followed by a light aerial bombardment on their capital with a notice of more to come progressively unless they withdraw.

The other is to get all United States personnel out of Viet-Nam and let the Reds have it. Its importance is probably greatly overrated. China has seven hundred million people now; a few million more is not going to make any serious difference. The best weapons the Red have are, as in Korea, the ones they have captured from the troops we are helping. As for the South Viet-Nameese leaders, they probably will be delighted to keep the war going as long as we keep pouring in the millions. They never had it so good.

The war in Viet-Nam is an impossible war. The best we can expect is to continue indefinitely to pour United States blood and United States millions down a bottomless rathole. The worst and more probable is to suffer the ignominy of marching out of Saigon as prisoners of the Viet-Cong.

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