

Baltimore renewal, Charles Center, where we explored from the highest balcony on the mall to the lowest sub-level of the ~~establisment~~ parking garages. Eventually, we got tired of walking, stopped in Bickford's for coffee and change for the bus, and departed beautiful downtown Baltimore. Charlie got off the bus to wait for the next crossing bus at around 6:00, and I arrived home a few minutes later.

Although technically not a fan expedition, I suppose it is broadly speaking within the purview of this column to mention that a couple of days later I took Stella to the Manchu Inn (when I find a good restaurant, I tend to begin introducing people to it), then we saw "Putney Swope", a wild, funny movie that I unhesitatingly recommend to oksobs within reach of these words.

The following Friday evening, Chalker, Schauble, Halterman and I went up to Philadelphia for the PSFS meeting in Dave's car (Jack was still driving the rental VW). The gathering was the usual scintillating business meeting, followed by an interesting talk by Lin Carter, followed by the gabfest at the Chuckwagon which is the main reason we go to Philly meetings. There being no cool way to shoehorn myself into a seat next to Michelle Malkin, I did the next best thing and sat with Lin at the adjacent table. (Sorry, Lin; ordinarily, the pleasure of your company is second to none, but she is sexier than you...) The company there also included Ron Stolof & fiancé Marcia, Ken Goldstein & girlfriend and Reese Morehead, who had come up by bus from Bainbridge. The thing broke up fairly early, as Philly gatherings are prone to do, we drove back to Baltimore and had breakfast, and I got home a little after 4:00 AM.

There was of course a BSFG meeting that evening, and for the second consecutive Saturday the universe was on "TILT". Even before the meeting commenced, I learned that Don & Debbie were leaving Baltimore for Plattsburg, N.Y., where Don has a new job as managing editor of the Plattsburg Press Republican (gasps of recognition ripple through the throng). They will be sorely missed by all their friends here. Charlie Ellis & I rode over to Jack's with the Sobwicks, joining Chalker, Morehead, Halterman, Weston and Krieg for the BSFG thingie. The first couple of hours of the gathering consisted of collating and stapling copies of Mirage, a periodic phenomenon with which most of you under 25 have had no contact. This was followed by a poker session, in which your obedient servant lost (the second consecutive Saturday on which this incredible cosmic error has been permitted to occur) and Halterman abused the privileges due a guest by winning heavily. Kim, Ed and Don & Debbie left fairly early, and when the gathering broke up at 6:30 Sunday morning Charlie, Dave, Reese & I went downtown for breakfast. After dropping Reese at the bus station, Dave took Charlie and myself home. I did not go to sleep immediately; I ate dinner a little after noon, and finally crawled into bed for a four-hour nap around 2:00 PM.

Waking up at 6:00, I learned that Debbie had called while I was asleep. She called back about an hour later, to tell me that they were going to have to move sooner than expected, needed help in cleaning out the apartment; had lots of stuff to give away, Charlie and Loretta were already there, and would I like to come over? I was lettering the heading for this issue's "Dissenting Opinions" at the time; leaving the stencil in the lightbox with "LETT" done, I grabbed keys, money, coat and such and departed, arriving at their apartment around 8:00. Debbie also phoned Jack, but he begged off, citing the necessity to devote at least a little of his time to mundane pursuits like working and sleeping. Details like that don't stop me--I just give up sleeping. The work was essentially finished by midnight. Loretta left with a car load of loot, and Charlie & I had ours stacked neatly in the living room. (I acquired two large shopping bags of books; Charlie went in for things

like a signal generator, two FM radios and an 8 mm projector.) We then started a poker game, which continued, save for a 20-minute break for an expedition to a sub shop for eats, until just before 7:00 AM when the taxi I had called earlier arrived. (Things were back to normal--I came out ahead.) We loaded everything into the back seat and trunk, and bid farewell to Don & Debbie. After dropping off Charlie and his load, I managed to get home about 7:30, which gave me plenty of time for a leisurely breakfast, a quick face-and-hand wash and a change of shirt before going to work. No problem; I only dozed off once, very briefly, that afternoon.

(Parenthetical note: Had it not been for her being hobbled by a bad foot, I most likely would have gone out with Stella that Monday night, and I somehow doubt that our relationship would have been improved by my falling asleep periodically while she was talking...)

Next weekend was BaltiCon. There have been a number of complaints about the convention, directed at such things as the cash bar, a PA system which made it almost impossible to hear the program, and the fact that the principal room parties, Chalker's on Friday night and the Carters' on Saturday night, were held in rooms so small that attendees were advised to bring their own shoe-horns. None of this disturbed me greatly; I rarely drink anything but beer (that was free), I avoid the formal program at cons at almost any cost, and there is something to be said for crowded parties for promoting friendships. To me, what makes or breaks a con is people, and BaltiCon was disappointing only because a number of people I had looked forward to seeing failed to appear. (Well, there were also some personal--girl-type--problems that marred a couple of hours of the weekend, but there are some limits to what I relate in this rambling journal of life...)

I arrived at the Lord Baltimore Hotel around 6:30 Friday evening, and joined a huge throng consisting of C. D. Ellis and Gary Sevehla in the lobby. The first arrivers I saw (several people had come in earlier and were out eating dinner with Jack) were the Pittsburgh crew: Ron & Linda Bushyager, Jon Kerch, Suzanne Tompkins and Ginjer Buchanan. Suzle and Ginjer were unescorted, a fact that I noticed in the confirmed time of .00381 seconds. Ron Bounds noticed it shortly thereafter. It thereupon ceased to be true. Other people turned up in driblets over the next hour or so--a couple of pairs of Haldemans, Stella Calvert, Lin & Noel Carter, the Boardmans, Jake Waldeman, Damon Knight & Kate Wilhelm, Dave Halterman, Paul Schauble, Loretta Ellingsworth, Don & Debbie, Kim, to mention just some--and by the time the cash bar and party room opened, there was something fairly approaching a throng in attendance. The early hours of the evening were mainly devoted to renewing acquaintances with people, some of whom I hadn't seen since PhilCon last November. The free beer having run out early, I drank ice water most of the evening. At one point, Don Sobwick press-ganged me into helping carry a couple of gallons of mixer from his car up to Jack's room, where the festivities moved after the Embassy Room closed at 1:00 AM.

Around 11:30, Ron Bounds & I took Suzle & Ginjer out for coffee and then a tour of the infamous Block. For those who don't know, I might explain that The Block, actually three blocks long, is a district on East Baltimore Street consisting entirely of strip joints and pornography stands. Picture a concentration of a major city's sordidness and vice in a three-block strip: garish signs, blaring music, hustlers strolling arm in arm with bowling ball salesmen from Muncie, Indiana, furtive characters standing in alleyways. It was a new experience for the girls. We took them to the Club Oasis, which boastfully cites a Time magazine feature identifying it as one of the worst nightclubs in America. Oddly enough, nobody was asked for ID (Suzle and Ginjer are both over 21, but not obviously so), and we sat around until the club

closed at 2:00 AM, nursing exorbitantly priced beers and watching a succession of strippers and some of the other patrons (the latter were more entertaining than the former).

We returned to the hotel around 2:30, and went upstairs, where the foursome was transformed into a fivesome by Jon Kerch, who was waiting in the corridor when we arrived at the room being shared by Suzle & Ginjer (Kerch was sleeping on their floor). After a few minutes of quiet and restfulness, we moved on to Chalker's room, where the party was in full swing, and somehow managed to find space--for all of us--on the corner of one bed (as I said, there is something to be said for crowded parties for promoting friendships). Ginjer decided to call it a night around 4:00, and we split. When I returned some time later, the space we had occupied on the bed was, incredibly, still vacant, and I sat down with Ron & Suzle. Bounds, not being satisfied with an equal division of the available pulchritudinous femininity, had earlier attempted a little light poaching (encumbered, to be sure, by having Suzle under the other arm), so I returned the favor in the same spirit of friendly rivalry (to no avail--Suzle was by this time rather taken with the Bounder). After a while, Suzle also decided to retire, and she departed with Ron. The party continued for some time thereafter, gradually losing personnel, until Chalker decided to go to sleep and threw us out.

I had secured floor space with Mark Owings, but for some reason found myself unable to sleep, so after about an hour I said to hell with it, left the room quietly so as not to awaken Mark, and wandered down to the lobby. There I found Ed Seigel, and we went out to a decidedly second-rate breakfast at the Trailways station. It was 8:30 by the time we got back to the lobby, and a group of Lunarians led by Lee Smoiré were just arriving, having taken a 3:30 AM bus. After they stashed their gear upstairs, I joined them for breakfast (I tend to eat lots of breakfasts at cons), followed by a brief walking tour of the Charles Center.

The next few hours are blurred. They consisted mainly of me attempting to assemble the foursome of Ron, Suzle, Ginjer & yhos for a brunch date. It never did come off, though finally at around 4:00 PM I did go out for a snack with Ginjer--and the ubiquitous Kerch. The only noteworthy moment of that brief expedition was when we met a Baltimore Transit Company driver with a peace button on his cap, and exchanged grins and V-signs with him.

At 5:30, the Great Wall of China Science Fiction, Marching & Egg Foo Young Society convened in the lobby and descended fifty-strong upon the China Clipper restaurant on North Charles St. Two very straight middle-aged couples were the sole patrons when we arrived, and they were, shall we say, somewhat impressed by the influx of hair and beards. Particularly impressive were Walter Breen, looking very much like an Old Testament prophet, and Ray Ridenour, whom I have nominated for a Hugo for Best Fannish Head of Hair. The food was good, the service not (though since we created Instant Rush-Hour by our very arrival, I suppose the restaurant can't be blamed too much), and I paid off a long-standing bet by buying Dr. Boardman's dinner. Returning to the hotel, we managed to put ten people into the Boardman car, most of whom spent their time giving Perdita useful suggestions on her driving. The car was so crowded that I didn't realize Sherna Burley was in it until we disgorged into the underground parking facility at Charles Center.

The early hours of Saturday night can best be told in snippets: Listening to Ted Greenstone instruct Gary Labowitz on the finer points of guitar playing...Damon Knight playing with a superball...singing with Chuck Ryan, Gay Haldeman, Doll Gilliland and Ron Bounds...becoming so well known to the lady running the cash bar that I had only to walk into the vicinity and she would pour me a beer...Bruce & Flo Newrock...

sitting on the mezzanine with Kim Weston and Charlie Ellis and crying in my beer about my girl-type troubles...trying to talk Roger Zelazny into singing...being sought out by John Boardman because of the church-key I wear on my belt...Paul Schauble doing his "Batman" imitation and hotly pursuing Devra Langsam...Andy Porter being Andy Porter...cursing the hotel for locking up its restrooms...

Around midnight, the Carters opened up their party, which is always a highlight of any con. The room was, to say the least, crowded, and the festivities overflowed into the corridor and, eventually, into the Burleys' room (never mind that their room was two floors up; it was still the same party). Several hours of joy and good conversation followed, until around 3:15 or so Lin announced a coffee expedition. After dispersing to various rooms for warm coats, about forty people congregated in the lobby and then proceeded down the street to Bickford's, the only place large enough to hold the entire mob. People began to depart when we got back to the Lord Baltimore, and eventually we'd gotten down to the number of people comfortable for the traditional game of title-chains. If I'm not leaving anybody out, the circle consisted, reading clockwise from Lin, of Himself, Chalker, C. D., Noel, Mark Owings, Linda Bushyager, Dave Ettlin, Karina Boardman, me, Ginger and Tom Bulmer. Ginger decided to call it quits around 6:30, and when I got back from seeing her to her room I discovered that the game had ended during my absence. I picked up my coat from Lin's closet and bid good-night to all.

Going to sleep was not on my schedule. There was no way to manage it if I wanted to be around to bid farewell to people leaving on Sunday morning and afternoon; and, besides, I had by this time built up a good deal of momentum for staying awake, so that two or three hours of sleep would have been worse than none at this point. I walked around the block seven or eight times in the cold morning air, then joined C. D., Reece Morehead and Karina Boardman in the lobby. A while later, Charlie & I went to Bickford's for breakfast (if you call a frankfurter and hash browns breakfast); then returned to the lobby. People drifted downstairs a few at a time, some to leave, others to hang the lobby and wait for other departees to awaken. I had another breakfast, in the hotel's Oak Room, with Deborah Kogan, Lin & Noel and Bill Bacharach, and then back to the lobby once more. There I stayed, seeing people off, until after 3:00 in the afternoon. By this time, I was wiped out, totally. In a thick haze, I left the hotel with Stella, and after coffee at some restaurant or other I walked her to the Post Office to check her box for mail, saw her off on a bus, and then managed to find the proper transit stop for my own bus. The bus came (it must have, otherwise I would still be there...), I arrived home, and as my final act of consciousness I phoned the Sobwicks to wish them good luck in their new home and all that.

"Gulliwokl's Travels" will continue as soon as Gulliwokl gets out of the nursing home...

THE WAR, FEBRUARY 5-MARCH 4: Since there has been a newspaper strike in this city, I have more than ever come to realize how inadequate for most purposes is radio and TV coverage of the war. Partly this is the result of time/space limitations, which apply to news in every area (for CBS to provide all the news in as much detail as the New York Times would require, among other things, a 32-hour day). But even making allowances for that, the electronic media's coverage of Vietnam sometimes verges on the pathetic. In #175, I joked about this situation with regard to the nickle-and-dime local stations, but the network news is frequently little better. It is often possible to hear the 5-minute (or, in the case of CBS, 7-minute) hourly radio

newscast, and sometimes the half-hour evening TV newscasts, without encountering the idea that there is a war in Vietnam. There seems to be a surpassing strange order of priorities, so that, e.g., the mortaring of an Israeli kibbutz by Arab guerillas will be mentioned, but 25 or 30 shellings that same day in South Vietnam will not. CBS is the most egregious culprit, though NBC and Mutual do it too. Mutual's bag is the refinement of detail avoidance to an art form, as in "Communist forces launched new attacks this morning in Vietnam" and then on to another subject. NBC is the best of the lot, but it too has an idiosyncrasy: occasionally one of its staff men in Saigon sends in a report on battle activity 24 to 36 hours old as if it were current.

February 5: Nothing much happened at today's 53rd "negotiating" session in Paris, except that the DRV delegate complained about another US air raid in the North Vietnamese panhandle. Last week, casualties declined slightly on both sides, with total Allied casualties around 2200, including 70 Americans and 343 ARVN killed. The NFL Tet truce went into effect this morning, and the battlefield was generally quiet. There were a few shellings, and a ground attack south of Da Nang killed 3 Marines.

February 6: In Laos, new fighting has erupted on the Plain of Jars, and US and Royal Laotian authorities have begun the evacuation of the remaining civilians on the Plain, which the CIA/Royalist troops can't even consider trying to hold if the Other Folks make a serious effort to recapture it. In Vietnam, meanwhile, the advent of the Year of the Dog is being celebrated. The Allies recorded 113 incidents during their 24-hour cease-fire, a slightly smaller than usual number, including a couple of sharp clashes today in the western Delta and the shooting down of a US helicopter on the coastal plain below Da Nang.

February 7: Song My has made the Army downright picayune about little things like killing people. Lt. James Duffy is about to go on trial as a result of an incident that would have been considered perfectly routine a year ago. Last Sept. 4th, Duffy's company captured a man hiding in a bunker beneath a hootch in Binh Phuoc district, north of Saigon. He was discovered to be an ARVN deserter, and was also suspected of being a VC, so Duffy, Sgt. John Lanasa and several other unidentified soldiers tied him to a pole and shot him to death. So far, neither Lanasa, who is identified as the triggerman, nor any of the others besides Duffy have been court-martialed. The NFL truce continued today, with about a dozen shellings and a couple of ground clashes, mostly in the Delta.

February 8: Well, Charlie appears to have crossed everybody up by doing nothing whatever to mark the holiday season. Since it's still a good bet that something is brewing--the 25,000 trucks that came down the Ho Chi Minh Trail in January weren't carrying souvenirs to be sold to departing American soldiers--, I've been raking through the weeds of my mind for the next Significant date. The only thing that comes to mind is Mar. 13th/14th, the anniversary of the night on which the Battle of Dien Bien Phu commenced. But I have no prediction; with Charlie, one can never tell. Maybe two days from now--maybe three months from now. There's even one theory going the rounds in Saigon that the Viet Minh will do nothing for the next six months except to keep building up their strength, then lower the boom in August or early September. There were a few shellings this morning, the South Vietnamese press center in Saigon was bombed, and there was sharp fighting west of Saigon.

February 9: Secretary of Defense Laird and JCS Chairman Wheeler departed for South Vietnam today on another of those periodic tours of inspection, where they will get together with American officers and US

CONTINUED AFTER "MATTER IN MOTION"

Some social scientists are groping towards the establishment of a "Law of Conservation of Taboos". The idea behind this law is that, in any society, some topics of conversation must necessarily be regarded as not fit for general discussion. They become hedged about with taboos and inhibitions, and are spoken of in euphemisms and in euphemisms of euphemisms.

If this view is valid, then as sexual taboos fall another set of taboos must come into being. These are obviously going to be taboos on violence--its practice, description and advocacy. And, whether the "Law of Conservation of Taboos" is or is not valid, certainly there has been a growth of such taboos in the last generation.

Before World War II, Gershon Legman wrote a critical essay entitled "Love and Death". Legman, whose dry humor is familiar to a small but devoted set of readers, compares the development of violence and death in the "detective" novel with the continuing taboos on sex. He finds much irony, as have his successors in the battle against censorship, in the fact that a brutal and sadistic murder can be described in

MATTER

BY JOHN BOARDMAN

IN MOTION

gory detail in any newspaper, novel or film, while an act of sexual intercourse (at the time Legman wrote) could merely be hinted.

World War II, which at a conservative estimate killed every fortieth human being, provoked a reaction against both the taboo on sex and the lack of a taboo on murder. The greater freedom of sexual activity, which for sound biological reasons occurs during a war, combined with a revulsion against large-scale killing to bring this about. This is not to say that since 1945 people have been more averse to war, but in that time they have found it necessary to hedge about with euphemisms and explanations things that were once frankly stated and gloried in. And, in the quarter-century since World War II, great and proud nations have swallowed insults and aggressions that would have been regarded as casus belli in 1914 or 1939. While brush-fire wars continue, the all-out nuclear war feared since 1945 has gradually retreated from the first place it once held among mankind's anxieties.

Before World War II, every nation had a government agency which it frankly called a Department or Ministry of War. Since then, these bodies have been renamed "Department of National Defense" or some such euphemism. This has not made major changes in the activities of these ministries, but it has been felt necessary to disguise their purpose.

This columnist, in his publication Graustark, has pointed up the arguments of contemporary apologists for war by quoting men who advocated it in a franker day. No contemporary Hawk would be caught uttering such words as these:

"Hail to war! It is only through war that man was able to rise from the lowest depths to his present dignity and worth. Over the body of a fallen foe he had the first vision of glory and immortality." --Pierre Proudhon (1809-1865)

"The hope of driving war out of the world is not only senseless, it is deeply immoral. It would, if realized,

cripple many essential and splendid forces of the human soul and would turn the world into a temple of selfishness." --Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896)

"War is but a composite exemplification of the struggle of man upward: the multiplication of his individual efforts into one, and the aspirations of his diurnal strife turned to a greater and nobler end, not of himself but of his race."--Homer Lea (1876-1912)

"Blood is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood." --Padraic Pearse (1879-1916)

"We wish to glorify War--the only health giver of the world--militarism, patriotism, the destructive arm of the Anarchist, the beautiful Ideas that kill, the contempt for women." --Futurist Manifesto, 1909

"A pacifist is as surely a traitor to his country and to humanity as is the most brutal wrongdoer."--Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)

"I looked upon this period of 'quiet and order' as an undeserved and mean trick of fate. Even as a boy I was not a pacifist... In 1914 I fell down on my knees and thanked Heaven out of my overflowing heart that it had granted me the good fortune of being allowed to live in these times." --Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)

"The voluptuary is wrong to think that he knows happiness. His most exquisite joys cannot compare with the exaltation of being under fire." --René Quinton (1866-1925)

Even those well-subsidized intellectuals whose job it is to make war palatable to the public don't dare to talk like this any more. Instead they retreat behind a screen of obfuscations like "the territorial instinct" (Robert Ardrey) or "the flywheel effect" (Iron Mountain Report) or alleged preparations by somebody else to conquer the world (Herman Kahn, Rodyon Malinovsky).

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In 1963, the Defense Department sub-contracted to a private "think-tank" a study of what would happen if the world disarmed. The "think-tank", which was probably Herman Kahn's Hudson Institute, assembled a group of about 15 authorities in various fields of the physical, biological and social sciences as a "Special Study Group". The SSG met regularly for three years, and after many stormy sessions put together a report on the importance of war in our social system. The most important conclusion was that, in view of its importance to all our institutions, war is the social system. An abandonment of war, the SSG concluded, would result in economic disaster and political collapse. Needless to say, the government promptly disbanded the SSG, swore all its members to secrecy, and classified the report.

Fortunately for the public right to know, one of the social scientists on the SSG leaked the salient points of the report to Leonard C. Lewin. Lewin passed these conclusions on, first in an article in Es-

quire, and then in a book, "Report from Iron Mountain on the Possibility of Peace" (Dial Press, 1967).

The SSG report is hair-raising. They concluded that, if there did occur a world-wide disarmament under the authority of an international peace-keeping agency, there would be removed from the American economy a "stabilizing" effect produced by the annual expenditure of billions of dollars on goods which do not enter the consumer market. This "flywheel" effect, as the Report calls it, provides for correction by governmental action of the natural tendency of the capitalist economic system towards periodic depressions. It can be confirmed by the history of our own country's economy, which was still in a depression before it went on a military basis in 1940. It has been on a military basis ever since. "Economic systems, political philosophies, and corpora jures serve and extend the war system, not vice versa."

These considerations place a new light on the causes of wars. "Wars are not 'caused' by international conflicts of interest. Proper logical sequence would make it more often accurate to say that war-making societies require--and thus bring about--such conflicts." To do this, the societies must make credible to their publics external threats. In response to these threats, the government (backed by the public) will promote military development. Here the SSG quotes another government study, one by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency: "The greatly expanded public sector since World War II, resulting from heavy defense expenditures, has provided additional protection against depressions, since this sector is not responsive to contraction in the private sector."

The continual anti-Communism endemic in the United States since 1945 has served to make this threat credible, and thus to justify the ever-increasing role of military spending in our economy. War and the threat of war also have a political utility, as they make the rule of the country more easy. It is easier to justify the suppression of individual liberty if some overwhelming foreign threat can be credibly cited. "The possibility of war provides the sense of external necessity without which no government can long remain in power. The historical record reveals one instance after another where the failure of a regime to maintain the credibility of a war threat led to its dissolution."

Under these considerations, the SSG considered various non-military alternatives as "flywheels". Chief among these were a War on Poverty and the space effort. Both would require large expenditures of public funds on goods that would not enter the consumer market. However, after considering both alternatives the SSG concluded that they would not work as well as war. A war on poverty would eliminate the poor as a separate class, and thus ultimately be self-defeating as far as its economic effects were concerned. And neither this nor a space program would provide the urgency, the willingness to commit public money and energy, that war or the threat of war provides.

At the time of the publication of the SSG report, there were a few claims that it was a hoax. However, the editors of both Esquire and Dial Press expressed their confidence in its authenticity, and the developments of US military policy since 1967 have done nothing to dispel this belief. In fact, the debate over the Anti-Ballistic Missile is almost a case study in the SSG's conclusions. As Frank Mankiewicz and Tom Braden observed in their New York Post column for July 17, 1969, the pro-ABM advertisements are heavily studded with the names of scientists employed by the companies which will make literally billions of dollars off the ABM. "As one brokerage firm reported to its clients, the day of a favorable decision on ABM will be the 'day they shake the money tree for electronics companies.'"

The SSG report offers no solutions--probably because its conclusions were too uncomfortable to the people who were paying the bill. But if they are completely correct, and a world-wide economic depression and the disintegration of government would follow upon the end of war, I am sure that most of us would not regard this as too great a price.

--John Boardman

JOTTINGS

CONTINUED

Embassy personnel and everybody will tell each other how fantastically well the Vietnamization program is going. The NFL truce ended this morning and war as usual resumed, with about 25 towns and bases shelled, and light ground attacks on a US Army bivouac northwest of Saigon and a Marine position southeast of Da Nang. There was a battle on the Plain of Reeds west of Saigon, where American Green Berets and CIDG mercenaries have lost 22 men killed since Saturday, and other clashes north of Saigon, south of Da Nang and near Quang Ngai.

February 10: According to sources in Vientiane, Gen. Vang Pao, who commands the Meo mercenary army with the CIA as the eminence gris, has agreed with his American advisors on a policy of orderly retreat from the Plain of Jars in the face of Pathet Lao/PAVN advance. It is adjudged far better to lose the Plain than to lose the Meo army, which is the only reasonably competent force on the government side. In another sector of that little war, Royal Laotian forces suffered another defeat and heavy casualties when enemy forces overran a strategic hill near Pak Beng, 170 miles northwest of Vientiane. Back in South Vietnam, meanwhile, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were clashes in the Delta, north of Saigon and south of Da Nang, and two helicopters were shot down.

February 11: Secretary of Defense Laird held a news conference in Saigon today. He said (surprise! surprise!) that the Vietnamization program is moving ahead in giant strides. However, he also noted that it will be impossible to remove all US combat troops in the foreseeable future, as some must remain to protect the American logistics bases and personnel which will be aiding the ARVN. If those American troops were to rely upon the ARVN to protect them, they would be risking being Vietnamized right into pine boxes. Before dawn, the Viet Minh shelled about 25 towns and bases, and penetrated a 101st Airborne Div. camp west of Hue, killing 8 Americans. There were clashes southeast of Da Nang, near the DMZ and west of Saigon, and a helicopter was shot down near the Cambodian border, apparently crashing on the Cambodian side.

February 12: The DRV didn't send its second-ranking negotiator to the Paris talks today; it sent the number three man instead. Claimed enemy losses rose a bit last week, while total Allied casualties declined slightly to around 2000, including 95 Americans and 298 ARVN killed. This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, 9 Marines were killed in an ambush south of Da Nang, there were clashes in the Delta, northwest of Saigon and near Tam Ky, and a helicopter was shot down in the Central Highlands.

February 13: Heavy fighting has erupted in Laos, both on the Plain of Jars and in the jungles of central Laos. Pathet Lao/PAVN units attacked five government positions in Savannakhet Province, but the major focus of attention (and, for the US, concern) is the Plaine des Jarres. Enemy forces overran Phou Houai, a hill commanding the Nong Pet crossroads 130 miles northeast of Vientiane, apparently wiping out the defenders, and attacked Gen. Vang Pao's forward headquarters base at Xieng Khouang and the adjacent airfield. In South Vietnam, the Viet Minh

shelled about 25 towns and bases, including Hue, there were clashes south and north of Saigon, 3 Americans were killed in a battle near Phan Thiet, and there was a battle south of Da Nang.

February 14: In two days of fighting in Laos, Pathet Lao/PAVN units have seized more than a dozen small towns or strategic hills, and are reportedly moving armored columns and artillery onto the Plain of Jars. They attacked Xieng Khouang again, reoccupied the town of Khang Khai, which commands another strategic crossroads, and attacked a government position south of Xieng Khouang. In South Vietnam, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases this morning, and lightly assaulted an ARVN camp in the Delta. An American unit lost 7 men, a tank and an APC in an ambush north of Tay Ninh, there were clashes south of Da Nang and in the Delta, and two helicopters were shot down.

February 15: According to US Intelligence, a huge supply depot that was established by the Viet Minh about 20 miles north of the DMZ shortly after the bombing was halted has in the past couple of months been transformed into an underground installation. The implication is fairly obvious: the Viet Minh are convinced that at some point in the future the US will resume bombing North Vietnam. Before dawn, the Viet Minh shelled about 25 towns and bases, and there were clashes west and north of Saigon, south of Da Nang and near An Khe.

February 16: NY Times reporter Tad Szulc notes that a secret memorandum recently submitted to the National Security Council confirms once more that, despite the best efforts of Allied forces, the NFL infrastructure--the shadow government--remains essentially intact throughout South Vietnam. The much-heralded Phoenix Program, a CIA/CORDS effort to detain or neutralize (or, as it is called when the NFL does it to us, kidnap or murder) NFL agents, continues to decline in effectiveness, and Americans involved in the program now admit that the number of NFL operatives in the cities, towns, villages and hamlets is "beyond estimating". This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and assaulted an ARVN position near Bong Son. There were clashes in the Delta, north of Saigon and near the DMZ, and two helicopters were shot down.

February 17: The battle for the Plaine des Jarres is nearly at an end. Despite an air campaign of unprecedented magnitude by the United States (air strikes in South Vietnam have been reduced to free the maximum possible number of bombers for action over Laos), Pathet Lao/PAVN forces have overrun more than 20 Royal Laotian Army positions since last Friday. The government holdings on the Plain of Jars are now limited to the provincial capital of Xieng Khouang and the nearby Xieng Khouang airfield. Enemy forces are operating within a few miles of this pocket to the north, east and west, and sources in Vientiane report that infiltrators south and southwest of Xieng Khouang are impeding retreat of the remaining government units. In South Vietnam, there were about a dozen shellings, and minor ground clashes in various parts of the country.

February 18: According to NBC News, the high-level committee appointed by the President to investigate the Song My massacre discovered another massacre in the course of its probe. On the same day that the now-infamous Charlie Company was slaughtering women and kids in the section of Song My village which US Army maps call My Lai 4, Bravo Company of the same battalion was conducting a similar massacre in My Khe 4, another hamlet less than two miles away. The Army has charged Capt. (then Lt.) Thomas Willingham with murder in that incident, and other members of his platoon may ultimately be court-martialed. This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 25 towns and bases, 7 Americans were killed when a helicopter was shot down north of Saigon, there were clashes south of Da Nang and in the Delta, and another helicopter was shot down

in the Central Highlands. In Laos, Communist forces launched a new attack on the Xieng Khouang airfield and, for the first time in the war, attacked Long Cheng, the CIA headquarters base near Sam Thong.

February 19: The 55th session of the four-party peace talks in Paris was substantially the same as the other 54. Due to the continuing newspaper strike in Baltimore, and the perverse failure of such normally reliable sources as the NY Times and the Huntley-Brinkley Report to have the information, I don't know anything about last week's casualties except that 96 Americans were killed and 589 were wounded. ARVN KIA is probably around 250 or so, and claimed enemy losses should have been about the same as the last couple of weeks. Before dawn, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were clashes in the Delta, west and north of Saigon and on the central coast, and two helicopters were shot down in I Corps.

February 20: The Xieng Khouang airfield (also known as the Plain of Jars airfield) is now the only remaining government position on the Plain. Completely surrounded and accessible only by air, it is garrisoned by an estimated 1500 to 2000 men, mostly of Gen. Vang Pao's M30 mercenary army. Meanwhile, back in the center ring, the Viet Minh shelled about 25 towns and bases, and assaulted a 101st Airborne Div. camp southwest of Hue. There was a battle northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border, 14 Americans were killed and 29 wounded in an ambush near Que Son, there were clashes in the Delta and south of Qui Nhon, and a helicopter was shot down.

February 21: Several days of hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have focused heavily on the Phoenix Program, otherwise known as the Terrorism for God, Mom & Apple Pie Program. Such hearings are useful inasmuch as they serve to once again get into print some of the details about the program, such as its employment of the dregs of Vietnamese society as professional assassins at four times regular army pay, its use by many local officials as a "protection racket" (they make people pay a certain sum, either in lump or in regular installments, for not being picked up as "Communist suspects"), the tendency to inflate the roles of "neutralized" NFL cadre by tossing in any civilians who happen to be dead after a battle in a populated area, and so on, ad nauseum. The most interesting thing about Phoenix, though, continues to be its failure. US Embassy officials, off the record, call it the most important and least successful program in the war zone, and the principal reason for its lack of success is the one that reveals so very much about the real situation in South Vietnam: accommodation. The majority of officials at the local level make no serious effort to "root out" the Viet Minh shadow government, either because they are secretly sympathetic to the NFL or because they realize that the Viet Minh are going to win in the long run and have determined to do as little as possible to antagonize their future superiors in the Vietnamese bureaucracy or because they fear reprisals immediately (an official who is too zealous in "Phoenixing" NFL cadre may expect to be "Phoenixed" in turn by the NFL, which remains a pervasive force in the countryside despite silly rumors to the contrary in Saigon and Joseph Alsop's columns). This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were clashes northwest of Saigon, near Tri Ton in the Delta and south of Da Nang, and a helicopter was shot down.

February 22: The battle for the Plaine des Jarres has ended with the fall of Xieng Khouang airfield. The major attack was launched by six PAVN battalions supported by tanks, and organized resistance ended within two hours. A third of the Laotian troops garrisoning the position are listed as dead or missing; the rest apparently escaped to Long Cheng, the "secret" CIA headquarters base southwest of the Plain. Pathet Lao/PAVN forces now have several options for the continuation of

offensive activity. They can advance westward along Route 7, retaking the town of Muong Soui and ultimately cutting Route 13 between Luang Prabang and Vientiane, or they can move against Long Cheng, where Gen. Vang Pao's army is said to be preparing to "fight to the last man" (a slight exaggeration--in the crunch, the General and his CIA friends would be flown out, and most of the troops would attempt escape into hills). They could also dispose of the government positions in the hills east of the abandoned town of Xieng Khouang, though these are so insignificant that it probably isn't worth their trouble. In South Vietnam, the Viet Minh shelled about 25 towns and bases, and lightly assaulted two US positions in the northern provinces. There were clashes in the Delta and northwest of Saigon.

February 23: Henceforth, American prisoners released by the Viet Minh will not be permitted to hold news conferences. The reason is that most of the Americans who are released or escape from NFL captivity praise the treatment they have received. Since this is, in the words of one unidentified US Embassy source, "not in line with US Defense Department statements about the bad treatment American prisoners receive", the returned captives will no longer be allowed to talk about it freely. There were a handful of shellings this morning, and ground action was confined to minor clashes. In Laos, Communist forces have taken Muong Soui, and the nearby government airfield is surrounded and under constant shelling which has rendered its runways unusable. I have not bothered to point out before because I have not thought it necessary that, as always, the only question in Laos is how much the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese wish to do. They can be in Vientiane in a week if they choose.

February 24: According to US Intelligence sources, southbound traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail established another new record in the week ending last Saturday: 12,000 trucks. Before dawn, there were about a dozen shellings, but ground action remains in a relative lull. In Laos, enemy forces overran the Muong Soui airfield, with no word on the fate of the defenders, and are continuing to drive westward along Route 7 toward Route 13.

February 25: Tran Ngoc Chau, an opposition member of the Chamber of Deputies in Saigon, was sentenced today to 20 years at hard labor by a military court for "pro-Communist activities". Chau, a former province chief in the Delta, former mayor of Da Nang and former deputy administrator of the Revolutionary Development program, is guilty of having spoken to his brother, Tran Ngoc Hien, eight times since 1965. Hien was convicted last April of being a Communist spy. In Vientiane, the US Ambassador met with Prince Souvanna Phouma shortly after an emergency cabinet meeting. The purpose of both meetings was to discuss the deteriorating situation in Laos. This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were clashes in the Delta, north of Saigon and south of Da Nang, and two helicopters were shot down. In Laos, Communist forces continued their westward advance on Route 7, with Royalist troops retreating in front of them.

February 26: The weekly Paris session was the usual non-event. Last week, casualties increased on both sides, with total Allied casualties over 2300, including 83 Americans and 361 ARVN killed. This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 40 towns and bases, 18 government soldiers were killed in several battles in the Delta, and there were clashes north of Saigon, near the DMZ and in the Highlands.

February 27: Since Feb. 16th, US Command sources revealed today, Navy planes from the Seventh Fleet have flown no air strikes whatsoever against targets in South Vietnam, concentrating instead on supporting government forces in Laos. They need it. There was fighting today near Pak Beng, at the juncture of the Mekong and Beng rivers, PAVN units are

reportedly operating within a few miles of Long Cheng, 122 mm artillery pieces are being moved west across the Plain of Jars, and forward Communist units moving south from the Plain are said to be within rocket range of the administrative capital of Laos, Vientianne. In South Vietnam, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were several bombings in Saigon and Da Nang and a brief fire-fight in the Cholon section of the capital, there were clashes in the Delta, northwest of Saigon and on the central coast, and three helicopters were shot down, killing 7 Americans.

February 28: Yet another atrocity has hit the fan: Five Marines are presently being held in the Da Nang brig on charges of having murdered 16 civilians (5 women and 11 children) on Feb. 16th of this year during an operation south of Da Nang. Before dawn, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, but no major fighting was reported.

March 1: Embarrassed by the publicity attached to the case and the blatant character of its judicial railroading, the Saigon government, under pressure from Ambassador Bunker, has agreed to re-try Tran Ngoc Chau. This time, Chau will be permitted to defend himself, a rarity in South Vietnamese trials. This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, 4 Americans were killed in a battle north of Saigon, there were clashes near Qui Nhon and in the Delta, and two helicopters were shot down. In Laos, Communist forces mortared the airport at the royal capital, Luang Prabang, and it was revealed that ambushes on Route 13 have reduced traffic between Luang Prabang and Vientianne in recent days.

March 2: The Saigon government is planning to open a luxurious casino-cum-whorehouse in the capital, in hopes of replacing some of the foreign dollars being lost with the withdrawal of American troops. This is remarkable. Not the establishment, I mean; that's characteristic of the Mickey Mouse generals. What is remarkable is the fact that there's somebody in the Saigon government who expects the Saigon government to be around to enjoy the revenue from its pleasure palace after the Americans leave. Such naiveté is rare in this jaded world. Before dawn, the Viet Minh shelled about 25 towns and bases, and blew up a bridge north of Da Nang, cutting Route 1 between that city and Hue. There was a battle on the Plain of Reeds, 5 US troops were killed in two ambushes in I Corps, and there were clashes near Dak To and in the Delta.

March 3: In the Jan. 24th entry, I noted the deterioration of security in IV Corps in recent months. The Delta, however, is not the only area in which a downhill trend is visible. Security has been slipping in Thua Thien Province, after a year in which the eastern half of that province was one of three or four areas in the country where the Viet Minh were having their greatest problems. Unlike the Delta, this reversal cannot be attributed to the withdrawal of US soldiers or an influx of new enemy troops; the balance of forces is the same now as 18 months ago. So, too, in Binh Dinh Province, where Joseph Alsop--no less!--admits in a recent column that pacification has been suffering reverses lately. Binh Dinh is a particularly nasty case, because it was the most pacified province of South Vietnam as early as 1966 and the cradle of the Revolutionary Development program. This morning, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were clashes west of Saigon, near Phan Thiet and south of Da Nang, and a helicopter was downed.

March 4: According to US Intelligence, truck traffic spotted on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in February exceeded 45,000, and the number appeared to still be rising toward the end of the month. Incidentally, it hasn't been reported widely, but Viet Minh defections are on a downward curve again. Before dawn, the Viet Minh shelled about 20 towns and bases, there were clashes northwest of Saigon, near the DMZ and north of Quang Ngai, and a helicopter was shot down.

THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE OF KIPPLE, at least for some time. A decade is a long life span for any amateur magazine; I've decided that it's long enough for this one. In the past year or so, Kipple has progressively become more work and less fun. Time has become a problem, as "Gulliwokl's Travels" should make clear, but that isn't the central difficulty--I would manage to make the time, if I really wanted to publish Kipple as much as I once did.

This has not been a sudden decision. Kipple was, through most of its life, a highly politically-oriented magazine, but my attitude toward and interest in politics was changed by the events of the first half of 1968. My attitude today might bluntly be expressed in the following hypothetical but entirely possible exchange: "Say, Ted, do you think Sargeant Shriver can become governor of Maryland?" "Who gives a shit. When's the next WSFA meeting?" Had it not been for the war, Kipple would have ceased publication a year ago. Only the war journal and, in latter days, "Gulliwokl's Travels", has kept me at the drudgery of getting an issue out every month since last summer. Finally, even that is not enough.

The final straw, I suppose, the thing that forced the decision I'd been toying with for months, was the fact that some idiot gave the magazine's address in a sort of guide for underground high school publishers, and sticky quarters from people I don't know have been pouring in. I begrudge every extra turn of the crank, every extra stamp licked.

I'll still be publishing something. I'm not sure just what, yet. I know this about it, though: it'll be a fanzine, not a political journal, and it will not be available for money or request or anything else except being someone I feel like sending it to.

Sic transit gloria mundi...

--Ted Pauls

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