

of all because of the political effect among Israelis. The new cabinet is more "hawkish" than the previous one and the influence of Dayan and the generals continues to grow. Thus, Israel's preoccupation with security draws its attention from other matters and leads to an emphasis on preemptive strikes and raids which undercuts its image as a beleaguered little peace-loving democracy.

Israeli occupation policies have been severely criticized and staunchly defended. Arab allegations of physical torture are common. While denying these charges absolutely, even some Israelis will admit that treatment of suspected terrorists in interrogation centers is less than gentle and that psychological pressures are used. Thus an Israeli general explained that tape recordings of screams are played outside a prisoner's cell and he is told that he will be tortured, although no actual physical torture is employed. Some prisoners are held in administrative detention for periods of a year at a time, indefinitely renewable, without any intention to bring them to trial (either because a trial would reveal an informer's identity or because a conviction could not be obtained). Terrorists are not executed, but the houses of those who even knew they were in the neighborhood are blown up.

One wonders what the cumulative effect of these policies will be on the Israelis themselves. As control devices they seem to create greater solidarity among the Arabs. They are undoubtedly milder than what many Arab regimes would do were the situations reversed. But over a prolonged period such measures can only serve to anesthetize and brutalize the Israelis and widen the human gulf between peoples.

The Israelis cannot afford increased alienation. Eventually the people in this area must live together and that can only be done on a human basis. The Israelis, whatever the historical argument, have established themselves there. Even the Arab governments admit under their breath that Israel is there to stay. The Palestinians don't like to admit it but they do say that all the Jews are there to stay, whether in a bi-national state of Jews and Arabs or in a secular democratic state. The Arabs perhaps feel that they can afford to wait, for time and the population figures are on their side. Even Israel, if present trends continue, will eventually have an Arab majority.

Israel, for her part, continues to build a homeland for the Jews of the world and cultivate the pride and the strength that has made her short history so remarkable. Hers is the triumph of technology and of a people with a cause. Now she is beginning to be confronted by another people with a cause, and she will need wisdom to match her courage. Perhaps the greatest kind of wisdom will be to admit that the

Palestinian Arabs also have a cause.

I am reminded of two statements, both by Israelis. One man was a Jew, a professor at the Hebrew University. He had been very defensive about criticism of Israel but finally admitted that his emotions were mixed. In obvious distress, he said, "I sometimes fear that in the cause of correcting an injustice we are letting another injustice take place." The other statement was made by an Israeli Arab, a Christian minister. He had been very critical of Israeli discrimination as he saw it, but finished by saying, "Don't go away from here the enemy of either side. We both have enough enemies already."

the press

A REVIEW OF EVENTS IN LAOS

If recent events in the Laotian civil war seem dramatic but incoherent, much thanks is due to the press. While its coverage has been adequate, it has suffered heavily from terse, irregular, and fragmented presentation. But as the review which follows should make evident, deeply troubling issues have nonetheless been raised: the existence in Laos of a prototype for "Vietnamization"; the use of intensive airpower in an attack on a social system; and the intentional creation of large numbers of refugees as part of the same effort. This review carries the reader to the end of February, 1970 and the beginning of serious, open expressions of concern in Congress.

The focus of reports appearing in the press in the fall of 1969 was a series of campaigns involving C.I.A. supported Meo tribesmen in Northern Laos, on the Plaine des Jarres. Henry Kamm analyzed this key alliance in a series of dispatches in the *New York Times* (10/26,27,28/69): "The U.S. maintains and largely controls an army of irregulars in Laos. The force, known as the Armée Clandestine, is made up mainly of Meo hill-tribesmen from the North. It has borne the brunt of the fighting against North Vietnamese intruders and Pathet Lao rebels. Its military successes in recent months reversed a deterioration of the situation that had brought Laotian and American officials to the edge of despair in midsummer. The big question in Laos is whether the North Vietnamese, now estimated at 50,000, will return to the attack in the weeks and months to come and whether the clandestine army, aided by continuing American bombing, can stem the tide once more." (10/26/69)

In the course of the late summer victory in the Plaine des Jarres, however, important changes in the nature of the war had been made. T. D. Allman summarized these in the *Times* (10/1/69): "As a result of a general increase in U.S. bombing and logistic support in Laos, following Communist gains earlier this year, many factors governing the Laotian conflict have been altered. What was essentially a conventional war for control of territory has become a hit-and-run war of attrition. The main U. S. targets now, according to sources in both the Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao rebels, are the rebel economy and social fabric. The restraints on the U.S. in bombing Laotian targets have been significantly relaxed over the last six months. The daily total of U.S. bombing sorties has risen to the hundreds with U.S. jets often refueling over Laos, rather than returning to their Thai or South Vietnamese bases as they continue their round-the-clock search for targets. According to Laotian sources, the object now 'is to hit the enemy where he is' and to allow no sanctuary"

"Refugees from the Plaine des Jarres area say that during recent months most open spaces have been evacuated. Both civilians and soldiers have retreated into the forests or hills, and frequently spend most of the daylight hours in caves and tunnels. Refugees said they could only plow their fields at night because they were unsafe during the day. 'So long as the U.S. bombing continues at its new level,' a European diplomat said here this week, 'so-called Communist territory is little but a shooting range. They find it difficult to move troops and supplies, agricultural production drops, the civilian population becomes upset. They lose their tax and labor base. That is why the Pathet Lao continue to make a cessation of the bombing the prerequisite for any peace talks.'

"The bombing has contributed directly to the production of refugees, many of whom have been evacuated from Communist territory, usually in U.S. aircraft. The Laotian war, according to government figures, has produced more than 600,000 refugees, or more than a quarter of the population of the kingdom. . . . The bombing, by creating refugees, deprives the Communists of their chief source of food and transport. The population of the Pathet Lao has been declining for years and the Pathet Lao find it increasingly difficult to fight a people's war with fewer and fewer people. The exodus from territory being bombed has served to increase Pathet Lao dependency on the North Vietnamese."

By December it was clear that rebel forces had no intention of accepting the losses they had suffered.

Writing in *The Boston Globe*, Thomas Reston gave the following forecast (12/21/69): ". . . Communist forces are preparing their buildup for a return thrust, and this is what has the military attachés here in Vientiane puzzling over their wall-sized maps these days. According to intelligence reports reaching here, the North Vietnamese 316th and elements of the 312th (it was the 312th which supposedly played the crucial role in crushing the French at Dien Bien Phu) are massing in the hills above the eastern section of the Plaine, as well as along Route 7, which leads west into Laos from Vietnam." Reston goes on to state that such battles as those in the Plaine des Jarres, battles occurring in a country "for all practical purposes kept afloat by U.S. aid," are "perhaps the perfect model for future expectations if President Nixon's Vietnamization Plan succeeds. . . ."

By February, preparations for a rebel counteroffensive were underway. The *Times* (2/8/70) carried the following assessment of pre-battle conditions: "While their leaders made diplomatic attempts to stave off the pro-Communists' dry-season offensive and evacuate people from what will again become combat zones, the ordinary people of Laos shrug their shoulders and say that the question of war or peace is not theirs to answer."

And: "The Plaine des Jarres, for example, was a major population center of the north. Now its population is down to one-tenth of the 150,000 who once lived there, hardly a house is left standing and the refugee camps where the last of the plainsmen live are about to be evacuated. Soon the Plaine may be empty. . . . Unlike the situation in Vietnam, the war has not so much transformed the life of Laos as it has deepened existing ills and delayed, perhaps permanently, the achievement of Laotian nationhood. Heavy dependence on the U.S. in most phases of life is putting off into an indefinite future the time when Laotians will finally take into their own hands the fate of their country."

In the midst of these reports from Laos, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee saw its long battle to end government secrecy over Laos come to a head. John Finney of the *Times* had covered earlier phases of the story on December 13, 16, and 18, but by February the issue was the release of secret government testimony on Laos. Said the *Times* (2/12/70): "President Nixon was reported today to have refused to authorize the release of anything more than a heavily censored version of a Senate subcommittee transcript of Administration testimony on the extent of U.S. involvements in Laos. . . . Senator Albert Gore,

Democrat of Tennessee, told the Senate this week that he had access to the transcript and that, 'the evidence is ample that the war in Laos and U.S. participation in the war in Laos has been secretly but greatly escalated.'

As the battle for the Plaine des Jarres drew closer, elements of strategy were discussed. The *Times* wrote (2/13/70): "In the fighting, observers here expect to see a contest between U.S. air-power and North Vietnamese infantry, with the Laotian forces serving to hold positions only long enough to draw the enemy forces into the open where they can be attacked from the air. U.S. personnel completed the withdrawal of the entire civilian population of the Plaine earlier this week, apparently in preparation for the unrestricted use of air-power, while the U.S. military men continued large-scale mining of the approaches to the Plaine."

Several days later, fighting was underway, and the *Times* reported (2/18/70): "North Vietnamese troops, despite what one observer called 'the most intensive U.S. bombing in the history of the Laotian war,' are reported to have driven government troops from more than twenty positions in and around the Plaine des Jarres. According to intelligence sources, the enemy is preparing a final thrust to push the Laotians completely off the plain. . . . The North Vietnamese are reported to control the eastern half of the plain, the hills on the plain's north and eastern rims, and are said to have infiltrated behind the government's position, impeding lines of retreat."

The next day (2/19/70) the *Times* carried the following dispatch: "Informed sources reported today that B-52 bombing raids in South Vietnam had been halted for 36 hours while the planes, the biggest bombers the U.S. has, went into action for the first time against North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops threatening the Plaine des Jarres in Laos." The *Times* continued: "North Vietnamese supported by tanks mounted their fourth major attack against the airfield in the Plaine des Jarres last night. . . . With most of the rest of the plain fallen to the North Vietnamese, one diplomatic source today called the strategy 'disturbingly reminiscent of Dien Bien Phu,' and said that the ultimate success of the Laotian-American effort would depend on how effectively U.S. aircraft could evacuate the airfield, where most of the U.S. supported troops and equipment are concentrated."

As rebel troops continued to advance, notice was taken of what appeared to be a serious deepening of the Laotian conflict: the B-52 attacks on the Plaine des Jarres. Stated the *Times* (2/20/70): "Most ob-

servers called the decision the most serious escalation of the U.S. war effort in Laos. An American official who said three months ago that B-52 bombers would never be used in Laos said, 'No comment,' but added, 'you can imagine how I feel'. . . . The government's position continued to deteriorate last night, as North Vietnamese units overran an outpost about three and a half miles northeast of the airfield. The U.S. supported Meo tribesmen at the field, Laotian sources said, had re-established their perimeter following fighting in which four enemy tanks penetrated to the airstrip itself before the attack was repulsed. Sporadic fighting continued in the rest of Laos."

Then, on February 21, the *Times* carried the following: "North Vietnamese troops seized the Plaine des Jarres airfield, the Laotian government's major stronghold in the strategic plain, official reports reaching here today said. The reports said a wounded radio operator sent an urgent message at 3:15 A.M. saying that the airfield had been overrun. The operator asked for air strikes to blow up the ammunition dump and the command post. Sources in Vientiane said the strikes had been made and the dump and the command post destroyed."

A day later (2/22/70) the *Times* was speculating on the consequences of the battle: "Western diplomatic sources today said that the loss of the plain, despite the growing U.S. war effort in Laos, meant that the U.S. was now faced with involving itself even more deeply in the Laotian war, probably through expanded B-52 raids, or seeing the government of Prince Souvanna Phouma face further defeat."

Also occurring in the wake of the rebel's initial wave of attacks on the Plaine des Jarres was a significant example of the press's difficulties in covering the war. As the *New York Post* reported (2/24/70): "Laotian army troops today arrested three Western reporters who made their way unannounced to the government base at Long Cheng. . . . G. McMurtrie Godley, the U.S. ambassador to Vientiane, said that 'the American mission has lost any interest in helping out the press whatsoever because of what happened this afternoon.' He did not elaborate. The reporters were John Saar of *Life* magazine, Max Coiffait of the French press agency, and Timothy Allman, a part-time employee of the *N. Y. Times* and *Bangkok Post*. Reporters attempting to cover the fast-breaking developments in Laos have been forced to rely largely on American mission sources for their information, and on the mission for transportation to battle areas. . . ."

During the last week in February, the situation in Laos deteriorated further in the face of continued rebel attacks. The fall in midweek of the important U.S. supported air-base at Muong Sui was described in the *Times* (2/26/70) as "the most serious setback the government forces have suffered in the two weeks of renewed fighting in and around the Plaine des Jarres. . . ." Engagements at other support bases seemed immanent. As the *Times* pointed out: "With

Laotian troops offering only light resistance to the Communist advance, military sources, including some Laotian officers, have expressed doubt that the U.S. bombing will be able to halt the rebels' military progress toward the 1961 cease fire line, from which, according to their statements, they wish to negotiate a peace settlement that would shift the balance of power in the Laotian coalition to the left."

Kip Zegers

TOWARD "UNDERSTANDING" MODERN CHINA

Harold C. Hinton

In an effort to convey an "understanding" of contemporary China, a good deal of ink has been spilled over an unevenly receptive public (and by this reviewer among others). The public's response to the effort and to China itself has broadly reflected, on the Right, a sense of threat, and, on the Left, the absence of such a sense (except to the extent that American policy is thought to evoke a Chinese threat).

Understanding Modern China, edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa. Quadrangle Books. 284 pp. \$7.95.

In retrospect, the alarm of the Right and the euphoria of the Left seem about equally misguided. That this should be so is due, not only to the predilections of the perceivers, but to the uncertain sound given out by the analysts' trumpets and to the confusing behavior—to the analysts as well as to the public—of China itself. The Cultural Revolution is an excellent example both of Chinese behavior that is bewildering, not only by our standards but by any non-Chinese standards, and of a failure of analytical prediction; the reviewer can honestly claim to be one of the very few analysts who stated in print, during the years preceding the Cultural Revolution, that there were serious conflicts within the Chinese leadership, although he was far from perceiving the issues and alignments correctly.

The symposium volume under review stems from a

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CRIA-sponsored conference and, as its title clearly shows, is intended as a contribution to public understanding of the China phenomenon. That it achieves a significant degree of success in this effort is not only indisputable but almost inevitable. The subjects treated are real and important, and the contributors are competent specialists. Where they err, it is usually as a result of going beyond their competence and overstating their case.

The editor, Joseph M. Kitagawa of the University of Chicago, contributes an introductory chapter on "Western Understanding of the East" that, possibly because of his primary interest in comparative religion, lapses promptly and regrettably into instant world history. There is the currently fashionable tendency to pile the blame on the "West" for all the problems and misunderstandings that have arisen in the course of its historic contact with the "East." In the process, all too little of the essence of the phenomenon of "modernization," which is or ought to be the centerpiece of an account of the East-West relationship, at least in modern times, is conveyed.

After this subjective treatment of a complex subject, the account by Norton Ginsburg (also of the University of Chicago) of Chinese geography comes as a relief. While there is probably no way to make this subject exciting to the layman, the essential point of China's cumbersome diversity and backwardness is well communicated.

E. G. Pulleyblank of the University of British Columbia turns what ought to be, and presumably was intended to be, a sketch of Chinese history almost into a political tract under the somewhat loaded title, "The Unity of China." Consider the following words in his first paragraph, all of them referring to the