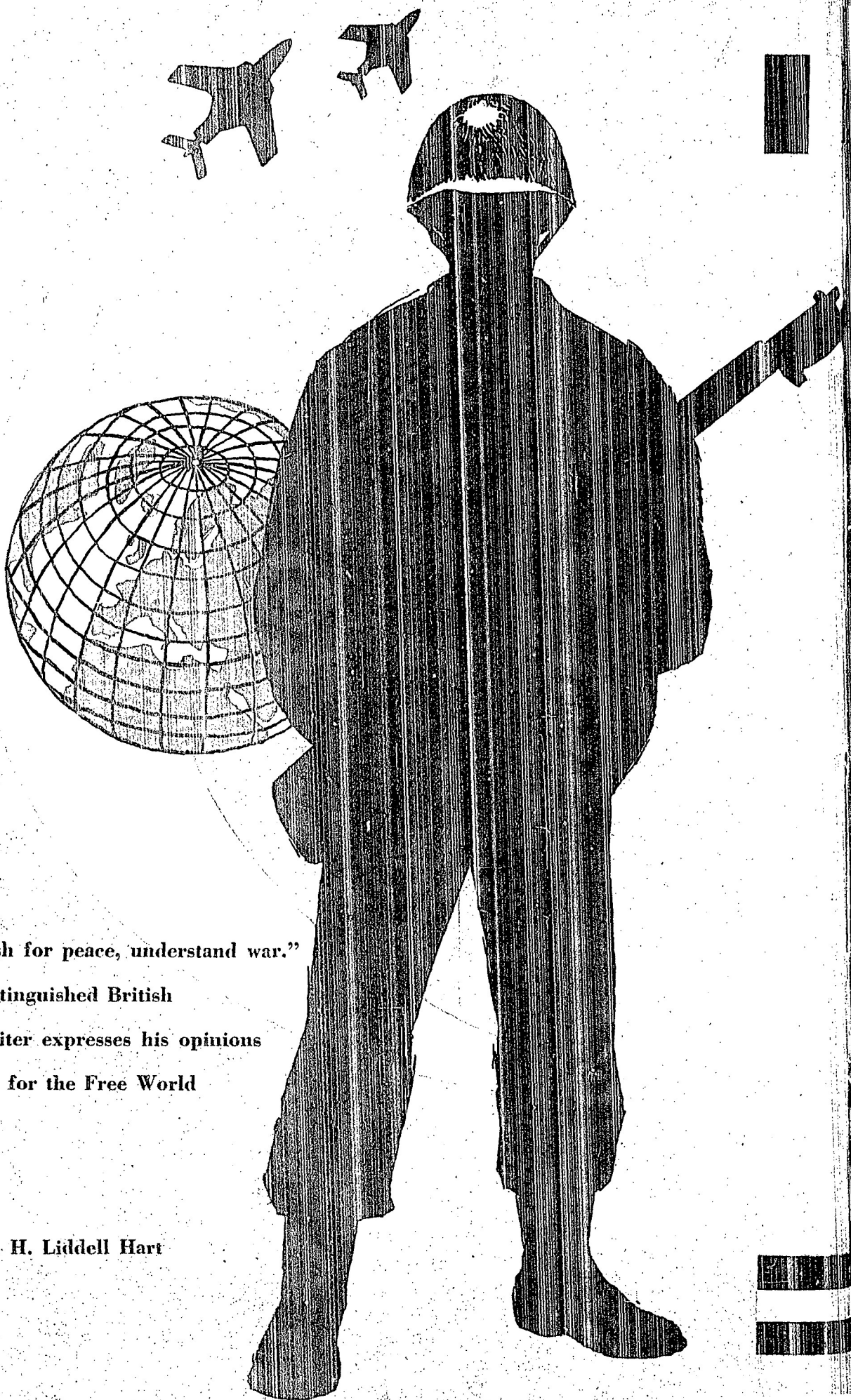


# DEFENSE of the FREE WORLD

Liddell Hart, B H

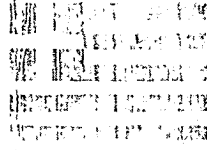
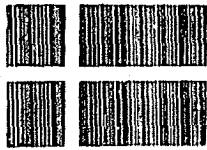
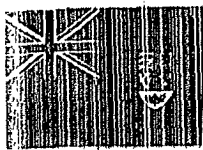
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**“If you wish for peace, understand war.”**

**. . . the distinguished British  
military writer expresses his opinions  
on a policy for the Free World**

**By Capt B. H. Liddell Hart**



# DEFENSE of

# the FREE WORLD

THE ROMANS COINED THE maxim: "If you wish for peace, prepare for war." But the many wars they fought, and the endless series since their day, show that there was a fallacy in the argument—or that it was too simply put, without sufficient thought. As Calvin Coolidge caustically remarked, after World War I: "No nation ever had an army large enough to guarantee it against attack in time of peace or insure it victory in time of war."

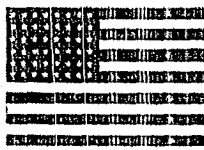
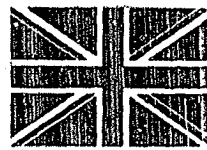
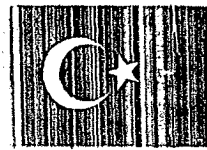
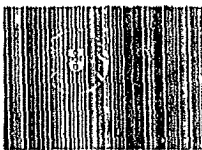
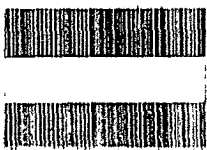
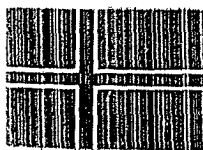
In studying how wars have broken out I was led to suggest, over 20 years ago, that a truer maxim would be: "If you wish for peace, understand war." That conclusion has been reinforced by World War II and its sequel. It signposts a road to peace that is more hopeful than building-plans—which have so often proved "castles in the air."

Any "Plan" for peace is apt to be not only futile but dangerous. Like most planning, unless of a mainly material kind, it breaks down through disregard of human nature. Worse still, the higher the hopes that are built on such a plan, the more likely that their collapse may precipitate war.

There is no panacea for peace that can be written out in a formula like a doctor's prescription. But one can set down a series of practical points—elementary principles drawn from the sum of human experience in all times. Study war; and learn from its history. Keep strong, if possible. In any case, keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes—so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-righteousness like the devil—nothing is so self-blinding. Cure yourself of two commonly fatal delusions—the idea of "victory" and the idea that war cannot be limited.

These points were all made, explicitly or implicitly, in the earliest known book on the problems of war and peace—Sun Tzu's, about 500 BC. The many wars, mostly futile, that have occurred since then show how little the nations have learned from history. But the lesson has been more deeply engraved. And now, with the development of the H-bomb, the only hope of survival, for either side, rests on careful maintenance of these 8 pillars of policy.

It may appear strange that the first point of advice for preserving peace should be to study war. But there is no better cure for an inclination toward, and belief in, forcible solutions—provided that such study goes far enough. That has certainly been my own experience. I was not cured by going through WWI, and at the end of it I still remained a keen soldier, while during the immediate postwar years I was active in evolving the new methods of armored attack, intended for British use, that were later adopted all too successfully by the Germans for their *Blitzkrieg* of WWII. But by the 1930s longer and deeper study brought a clearer view of war—and with it I came to see that such a new solution of the defense-cracking problem was not well-fitted to the needs of peacefully inclined countries, naturally sluggish in arming, like ours. I then sought to evolve a counter to the new form of attack. This would have effectively nullified the *Blitzkrieg* (and did so later in the war) but it was not applied in 1940. The British and French leaders had not yet come to understand the new attack method evolved in



the 1920s — as Sir Winston Churchill himself frankly admits in the first and second volumes of his memoirs.

It is necessary to recall these facts from the recent past since they help to make clear one essential part in “understanding war,” and also because they have an important bearing on the solution of our present defense problem.

But there is much more, beyond this, to be learned from extending the study of war and the evidence of history. It becomes clear that the surest way to prevent war is to avoid taking steps that, in experience, have precipitated it. Although this may be called a “negative course,” it is a form of negative that leads to positive benefit. For it keeps clear of courses that cause fatal accidents, while keeping the road open for the normal “traffic” between nations which promotes peaceful relations.

On examination it can be seen that most wars were avoidable. Also, that the actual outbreak was in many cases produced through the more peacefully inclined side losing its head, or its patience, and putting an otherwise calculating opponent in a situation where he could not draw back without losing “face.”

To limit the danger of war, unlimited patience is needed. That is not easy for the statesmen of the Western democracies, especially those who are by temperament eager for quick solutions. Even where the statesmen realize the necessity, they are under pressure from an emotional electorate. At the same time patience is extraordinarily strained in dealing with Oriental statesmen who are under no such pressure, and are accustomed to spinning out time. Yet as Sir Anthony Eden has wisely remarked, and Sir Winston Churchill emphasized: “To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war.”

It would be less strain on the statesmen and safer for all concerned if it could be arranged for them to be represented by tame parrots, or gramophone records, as their deputies. But in the absence of such an arrangement, the rising generation of statesmen should be trained to develop endless endurance in “jaw-jaw.” For the alternative, a “show-down,” can all too easily be suicidal in the H-bomb age.

There is a widespread feeling in

the West that no “settlement” is possible, or likely to last, with the Communist regimes of Russia and China — and that these will continue to grab more gains wherever they can. That feeling has much justification in experience and in knowledge of totalitarian trends. But the more right it is, the more vital that Western statesmen, in taking countermeasures, should bear in mind a long-standing lesson of police experience — that “a burglar doesn’t commit murder unless he is cornered.” This is also true of the community of nations.

It is courting danger, also, to attempt political countermeasures that are beyond our strategical capacity. A tragic example of that folly was the British “guarantee” to Poland offered by Mr Chamberlain in 1939. Suddenly reversing his policy of appeasement, it combined provocation with temptation. It was a challenge to Hitler, which no one of his temper was likely to swallow, while the manifest strategic impossibility of Britain and France giving effective aid to a country so strategically remote as Poland naturally tempted him to demonstrate the unreality of the guarantee. We now know, from the captured German records, that Hitler had no intention of tackling Poland in 1939 and only decided to do so *after* Chamberlain’s offer to support her. It acted like throwing down a gauntlet, or waving the proverbial red flag in the face of a bull. So the unfulfillable promise merely ensured that war would come at the time and in the circumstances most disadvantageous for us.

Western statesmen should have learned from costly experience that it is folly to bluff on a manifestly weak hand. Yet recent crises in the Far East have seen repetitions of that “unstrategic” political tendency.

Another lesson of strategy, which should be a pillar of policy, is the importance of putting ourselves in the other’s shoes and looking at every step from the other side’s standpoint *before* we take the step. To minimize the risks of precipitating war while we are developing our power of defense, we should endeavor to understand Communist-Russian mentality. That requires a realization not only of its Marxist logic, missionary fervor, revolution-

ary ferment and power urge; but also its underlying fears, its intense suspiciousness and ignorance of the outer world — characteristics that have been accentuated by long isolation as well as by the governmental system. The same applies, with certain differences, to Red China.

Taking account of these mental conditions and viewing the strategical situation from “the other side of the hill,” we may be better able to understand how steps, and which steps, on our part that are intended as defensive safeguards are liable to appear as designed to gain offensive springboards. The protective spread of American bases in the Middle East and Far East may, naturally, look from the other side like a ring of such springboards being pushed in close to the vital centers of Russia and China — thus producing, in reaction, a sharpened impulse to push them further away by expanding the area of Communist control.

Here we are brought to the great and grave problems arising from the development, successively, of the atomic and the hydrogen bombs.

The hydrogen bomb is not the answer to the Western peoples’ dream of full and final insurance of their security. It is not a “cure-all” for the dangers that beset them. While it has increased their striking power it has sharpened their anxiety and sense of insecurity.

That is an ironical reflection on the hasty and thoughtless way in which their leaders agreed in 1945 to unloose the atomic “Frankenstein’s monster” in order to hasten Japan’s collapse. The most startlingly significant revelation in the final volume of Sir Winston Churchill’s war memoirs, aptly entitled *Triumph and Tragedy*, is his statement that “there never was a moment’s discussion as to whether the atomic bomb should be used or not.”

The H-bomb might be regarded as retribution for Hiroshima — a “trigger-release” which looked to the responsible statesmen so easy and simple a way of assuring a quickly complete victory and subsequent world peace. Their thought, Sir Winston Churchill says, was that: “to bring the war to an end, to give peace to the world, to lay healing hands upon its tortured peoples by a manifestation of overwhelming

power at the cost of a few explosions, seemed, after all our toils and perils, a miracle of deliverance." But the anxious state of the peoples of the Free World today is a manifestation that their leaders failed to think *through* the problem — of attaining peace through such a victory.

They did not look beyond the immediate strategic aim of "winning the war," and were content to assume that military victory would assure peace — an assumption contrary to the general experience of history. The outcome has been the latest of many lessons that pure military strategy needs to be guided by the longer and wider view from the higher plane of "grand strategy."

While strategy runs contrary to morality, being purely concerned with the application of force and deception, grand strategy tends to coincide with morality — since it requires a farsighted regard for the ultimate state of peace.

In the circumstances of WWII, the pursuit of triumph was foredoomed to turn into tragedy and futility. A complete overthrow of Germany's power of resistance was bound to clear the way for Soviet Russia's domination of the Eurasian continent and for a vast extension of Communist power in all directions. It was equally natural that the striking demonstration of atomic weapons with which the war closed should be followed by Russia's development of similar weapons.

No peace ever brought so little security, and after 10 nerve-racking years the production of thermonuclear weapons has deepened the "victorious" peoples' sense of insecurity. But that isn't the only effect.

The H-bomb, even in its trial explosions, has done more than anything else to make plain the non-sense of "total war" as a method and "victory" as a war-aim. They are out-of-date concepts.

That has come to be recognized by the chief exponents of strategic bombing. Marshal of the RAF, Sir John Slessor, recently declared his belief that "total war as we have known it in the past 40 years is a thing of the past . . . a world war in this day and age would be general suicide and the end of civilization as we know it." Marshal of the

RAF, Lord Tedder, earlier emphasized the same point as "an accurate, cold statement of the actual possibilities," and said: "A contest using the atomic weapon would be no duel, but rather mutual suicide."

Less logically, he added: "that is scarcely a prospect to encourage aggression." For a cold-blooded aggressor may count on his opponents' natural reluctance to commit suicide — as an immediate response to a threat that is not clearly fatal.

In view of what the air chiefs themselves have told us, it is evidence of "unsound mind" on our part to contemplate taking the *lead* in using such weapons. Moreover, the trust which the statesmen place in the possession of the H-bomb as a deterrent may be another of their illusions. For the threat to use this trump card may be regarded in

Moscow and Peking as a bluff. Indeed, it may be taken less seriously there than in countries on the near side of the Iron Curtain whose people are perilously close to Russia and *her* strategic bombing forces. Its back-blast in such countries has already been very damaging.

It may be necessary to have H-bombs and be able to deliver them *if* the Russians should try to do so. But it is unlikely that a cool-headed enemy will initiate "mutual suicide" with these weapons and far more likely that he will pursue the subtler and more restrained kind of aggressive action that has come to be called "cold war." (It is more accurately described by the long-established term "limited war.") Moreover, he may exploit a variety of techniques, differing in pattern but all designed to make headway while

### WHAT CLAUSEWITZ MEANT

General Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), who is to military strategy what Adam Smith is to economics or Isaac Newton to physics, has been rarely read, more rarely understood, but abundantly quoted.

Unfortunately he was a follower of Hegel's method of presenting thesis, then antithesis, followed by synthesis, where the balanced conclusions are put forward. In his monumental work *ON WAR*, he first describes war in theory as subject to no limitations of violence, only to develop immediately thereafter the opposite point that qualifications in practice must check the theoretical absolute.

"War is an act of force and to the application of that force there is no limit," he declares. Also: "In affairs so dangerous as war, false ideas proceeding from kindness of heart are precisely the worst. . . . He who uses force ruthlessly, shrinking from no amount of bloodshed, must gain an advantage if his adversary does not do the same. . . . Never in the philosophy of war itself can we introduce a modifying principle without committing an absurdity." These and like remarks have been quoted (and not by the Germans alone) as a justification for absolute violence in war.

Yet Clausewitz takes pains to show that the above remarks apply only in a kind of theory which has no place in the real world. "War is never an isolated act" is one of his subheadings. If war were followed to its logical but absurd extreme of absolute violence, "the result would be a futile expenditure of strength which would be bound to find a restriction in other principles of statesmanship." This leads him directly to his most famous and most misunderstood remark of all: "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means."

The meaning of this famous statement becomes clear if we read the seldom-quoted sentences that precede it: "Now if we reflect that war has its origin in a political object, we see that this first motive, which called it into existence, naturally remains the first and highest consideration to be regarded in its conduct. . . . Policy, therefore, will permeate the whole action of war and exercise a continual influence upon it, so far as the nature of the explosive forces in it allow." This is in fact the leading idea of the whole work, and to it Clausewitz returns again and again.

It is also the theme that governs the meaning of his famous definition of the object of war as being "to impose our will on the enemy." He indicated that the "will" must have reasonable limits: "If our opponent is to do our will, we must put him in a position more disadvantageous to him than the sacrifice would be that we demand."

In other words, according to Clausewitz, a defeated enemy, far from having unconditionally surrendered his will, must have a will of his own.

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causing hesitancy about employing, and difficulty in applying, atomic counteraction.

The aggression might be at limited tempo—a gradual process of encroachment. It might be of limited depth but fast tempo—small bites quickly made, and as quickly followed by “offers” to negotiate. It might be of limited density—a multiple infiltration by particles so small that they form an intangible vapor.

It is folly to put most of our effort and resources into preparation for what is not probable, at the sacrifice of what is needed to meet the kind of aggressive action that is likely.

So long as official spokesmen continue to talk about their intention to use H-bombs or A-bombs in an unlimited way if “war” should come, they will continue to undermine the Western peoples’ will to resist, and foster the growth and spread of the apathy about defense that is becoming increasingly plain. For the common people have the common sense to realize that defense by methods likely to spell “suicide” is no defense, in terms of reality.

Nor is apathy the only danger. Faced with the prospect of mutual “atomization” if war should break out, the peoples of Western Europe, and Asia may become more inclined to the alternative of turning Communist peacefully, or of nonresisting surrender. It is strange that the leaders of the West do not see that a form of defense that spells *suicide* makes no sense. It is stranger still that they do not realize the boomerang effect of implying such a policy and strategy as being inevitable.

These considerations at least require the fullest effort to think out and produce a better method of defense. It is folly to rely on wholesale devastation and extermination as our first line of defense, and to contemplate using it as an answer to any less-than-vital threat.

For the individual members of NATO, only their own region is really *vital*. To check Communist expansion in the Middle East and further east is important for their interests, but not truly vital.

Moreover, the situation in these Asiatic regions is unlikely to provide a clear-cut test of aggression—owing to the current anti-European feeling

in certain areas and other factors, political and economic.

While it is highly desirable to preserve these Asiatic regions from Communist domination, it would be folly to pursue this aim by action likely to prove fatal to the Western countries themselves, i.e., precipitating all-out war with H-bombs.

So long as there is thought and talk of taking such a course, there will be growing hesitation in the Western countries, and still more in Asiatic countries, about taking a firm stand against aggression. Thus on every ground it is essential, and urgent, to evolve a policy and strategy of defense that are not *dependent* on such suicidal means.

Any cold-blooded planners of aggression tend to be calculating, and less emotional in their reactions, than their victims and opponents. That provides a safety-check of which our strategy should take account. Even though an all-out duel with H-bombs might not be so fatal to Russia or China as it would be to the countries of Western Europe, more centralized and civilized, the “ice-cold” minds in the Kremlin are unlikely to initiate such a devastating duel so long as the West possesses the power to reply in kind.

Neither side can reckon on being able to cripple the other’s retaliatory power at a stroke as Japan could with the US battle fleet at Pearl Harbor, since airfields from which H-bombers might take off are too numerous and widely spread. To reckon on crippling the menace at the outset would be almost as vain as finding the proverbial “needle in a haystack.” Indeed, it is astonishing that some of the Western air chiefs seem to put faith in such a dubious chance and are inclined to stake the survival of civilization upon it. But although some Western governments might be emotionally jerked into such a course under pressure of a Communist invasion, it is not likely that cool-headed planners in the Kremlin would base *their* strategy on any such long-odds gamble.

A better prospect of checking a Communist invasion lies in using *tactical* atomic weapons against the actual invading forces (including possibly, though not necessarily, the near ends of their supply arteries).

The best chance of being able to use such weapons without precipitating all-out warfare would be to make it clear beforehand that we do not intend to start a general “atomization” of cities and devastation of countries if the other side abstains.

An open declaration or pledge to this effect might carry the disadvantage of diminishing the restraint on lesser forms of aggression. But, what is more vital, it would help to reassure the people of Western Europe and Asia that there is a way of resistance to aggression that does not entail “H-bomb suicide”—and thus counteract their palpably increasing hesitation to oppose Communist aggression. Every speech or statement that discounts or disparages the practice and possibility of “limitation in warfare” tends, in the H-bomb age, to weaken the spirit of resistance.

If it is not considered possible to draw a line between the tactical and the unlimited use of the new weapons, it would be wiser, on balance, to discard tactical atomic weapons. The risks of such a discard would not equal certain suicide involved in all-out war with H-bombs. Indeed, the experience of the last war, when analyzed, provides very encouraging evidence that the present scale of the NATO forces, if they are remodelled in the light of that experience, and reinforced by the Germans, should be capable of withstanding a mass invasion of the vital area of Western Europe.

In Normandy, analysis shows that Allied attacks rarely succeeded unless the attacking forces had a superiority of *more than 5 to 1* on the ground, accompanied by domination of the air. On the Russian front, where such complete command of the air was lacking, defense repeatedly succeeded against even greater ground odds—7 to 1 or more—except when and where the front was too wide for the defender to ensure the necessary minimum density of the fire network.

A grasp of what these facts mean provides a new outlook that is far more hopeful than the so-called “New Look” strategy, formulated and announced early last year, of relying on “massive retaliatory power.” That new-sounding name merely covered the reversion to an old

mode regardless of the fact that Russia had developed both A-bombs and H-bombs in the meantime, and thus also became capable of such "massive retaliatory" action.

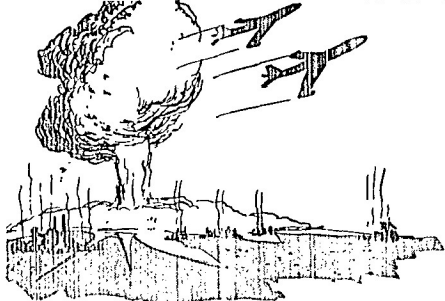
It is worse than foolish to plan defense on a basis that means committing suicide—and even more absurd to think of doing so in reply to any local aggression.

Moreover, a massive Russian invasion can be reckoned as the least probable contingency in the present situation. As the Russians did not attempt it during the years when their armies could have overrun Western Europe with little hindrance, and when the deterrent of atomic retaliation was at its minimum, it becomes much less likely that they will embark on it now. Far more likely is a continuance of local and limited aggression—carried out by satellites and conducted on guerrilla-type lines.

In concentrating on defense against "frontal" assault, the Western powers have been slow to recognize, and prepare to meet, their opponents' shift to "outflanking" moves—on the plane of grand strategy. With a clearer realization of the balance of probability, and a redistribution of their resources accordingly, the Western powers could attain a greater state of readiness to meet and check this *erosive* action.

The H-bomb was hailed as "The Great Deterrent"—to aggression and war. That idea was a blend of truth and fallacy. The H-bomb is a "Great Deterrent"—i.e., to great-scale aggression and thus to another "great war." But it is not a suitable or effective deterrent to small-scale aggression and small wars. A clear grasp of this fact points the way to a suitable redistribution of our resources and remodelling of our forces.

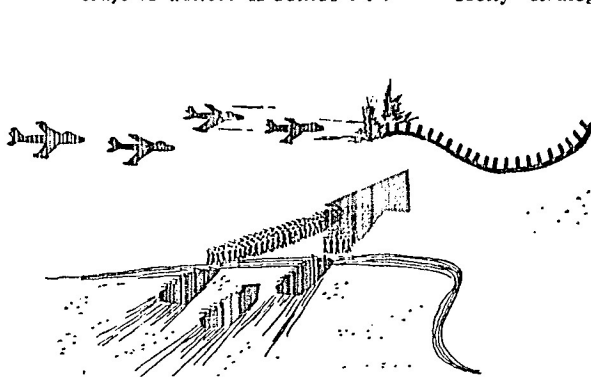
For the continued provision of the "Great Deterrent" a relatively small number of super-performance aircraft should suffice to ensure the possibility of delivering enough H-bombs to destroy the vital centers of any country. Thus a great strategic bombing force of the ordinary kind becomes obsolete and superfluous, since in a small war it would be impossible to attempt air operations deep behind the other side's frontiers without grave risk of blowing it up into a great war, and of precipi-



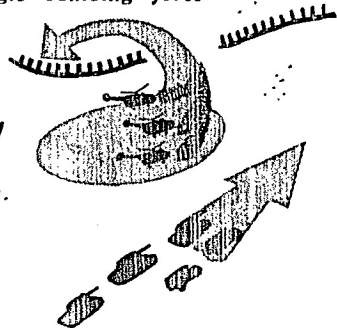
*A few super-performance aircraft to deliver H-bombs . . .*



*. . . negates the need for a great, costly strategic bombing force*



*. . . while more economical, highly mobile, "fire brigade" combat teams, supported by tactical air, can handle local aggressions*



tating the instantaneous dispatch of H-bombs from that side. Besides the reduction of this "superfluous fat" in the air force, there should also be scope elsewhere for saving much of what is at present being devoted to preparation for another great war on familiar lines—now a most unlikely contingency.

With the money, manpower and other resources that we could thereby save, we should be in a far better position than ever before to tackle small wars and extinguish local outbreaks of aggression that occur in various parts of the world—the problem that has hitherto baffled us, and is insoluble as things stand. Superior quality and rapidity are the key requirements, militarily, in dealing with such outbreaks—not mass and slow-motion. Short-service conscripts tend to be a useless encumbrance and a sitting target. What we need are strategic "fire-brigade" forces of high mobility and highly trained skill. They should be airborne, so that they can be quickly switched anywhere that an outbreak occurs. They should be given ample tactical air support of a suitable kind and means of air supply wherever it can be advantageous. They should be organized in small composite combat teams of a handy and very flexible kind, so that they can grapple with guerrillas or strike like a swarm of gnats against larger in-

vading bodies. Light armored fighting vehicles of high cross-country maneuverability would be a valuable form of equipment—but not cumbersome 50-ton tanks. The helicopter should be developed to the fullest possible extent for such forces. With such a pattern the prospects of quenching the new Communist strategy of "small aggressions" could be greatly increased.

The strength required for security in these conditions will more certainly be attainable when our late enemies, now allies, are rearmed. The supreme irony of our present precarious situation is that we could be already secure if they had not been disarmed under the conditions of peace that we imposed.

The fact shows the short-sightedness of the "total victory" aim and "unconditional surrender" policy that we pursued. The idea of keeping major nations disarmed in an armed world was a freak of fancy—born of an emotional urge that was not controlled by awareness of the complex problem of bringing peace out of war. No statesmen who understood statecraft ever tried to disarm a defeated opponent completely. For the natural result of creating such a vacuum is to dislocate the international balance, so that former allies became rivals for power in the vacuum, and easily turn into enemies.

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