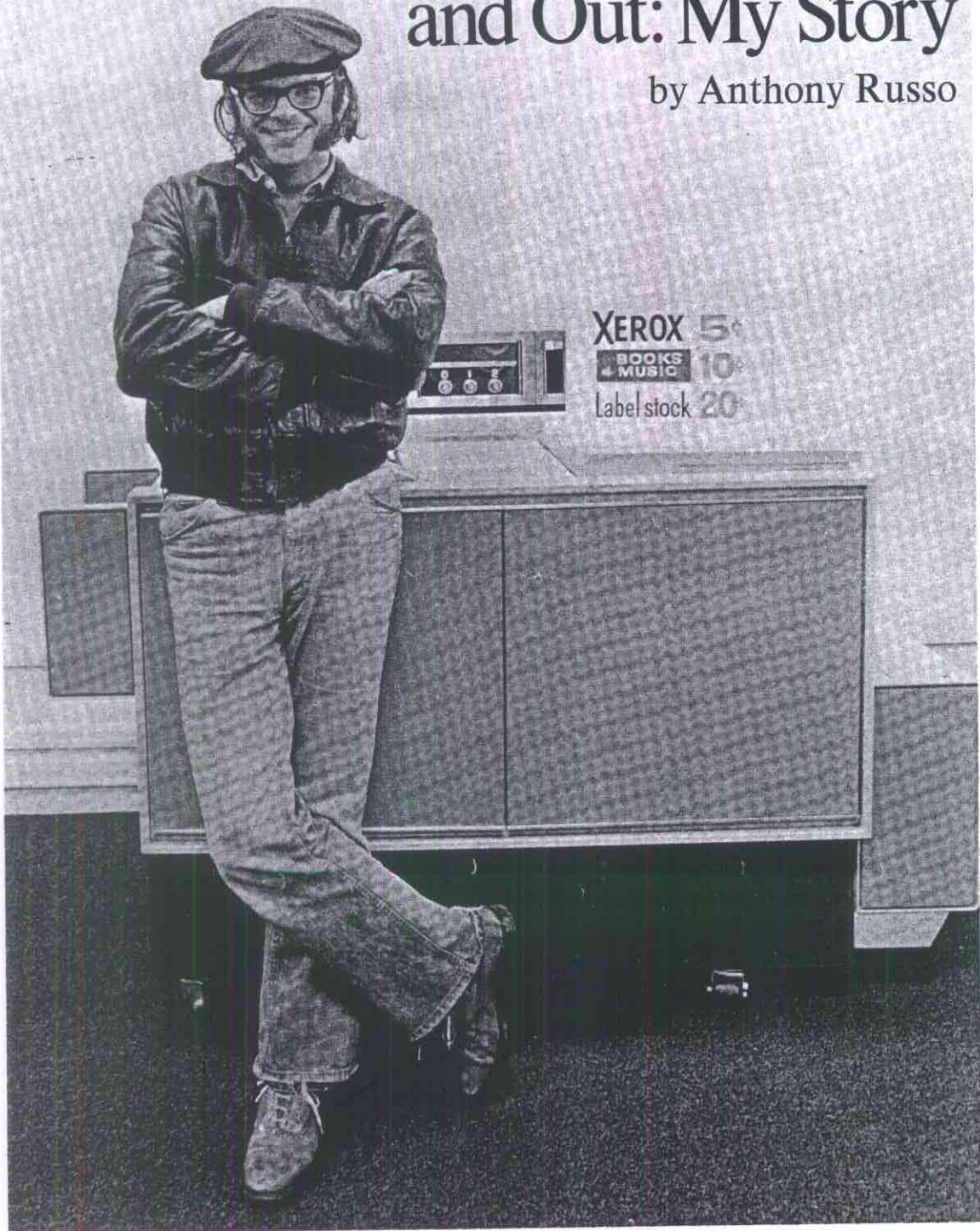


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Inside the RAND Corporation and Out: My Story

by Anthony Russo



“The RAND Vietcong Motivation and Morale Project . . . had built up a team which had interviewed over 100 prisoners and defectors from the Vietcong, which resulted in a report characterizing the Vietcong as idealistic people whose cadre often had a monkish quality of dedication. When these gentlemen came back to brief John T. Naughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Internal Security Affairs (Daniel Ellsberg was at that briefing), he responded: ‘If what you say in that briefing is true, we’re fighting on the wrong side.’

“But this wasn’t the advice the Pentagon wanted, and shortly before I arrived the professors had been sent home to the U.S. The new project director was very critical of the previous leadership—their studies were ridiculed, their intellectual integrity was impugned, and their report was seen as an embarrassment, something more than RAND had bargained for.”



(Anthony Russo is a retired defense intellectual, formerly employed by the RAND Corporation. He and co-defendant Daniel Ellsberg together are facing a possible sentence of 150 years in prison on charges arising from the “leak” of the Pentagon Papers.—The Editors)

[I]

I grow up in a small Southern town and prepare for an imperial manhood amidst the rubble of slavery and the ruins of a colonial past; I become a helper at NASA and witness the death of Buck Rogers dreams. I seek greener pastures.

GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH CAN BE both an alienating and humanizing experience. You grow up strong on soul food, even if you are stigmatized with the original sin of white racism. I was a walking contradiction, a half-breed Italian loose amongst

a swarm of plantation WASPS. I only saw black people from a distance—the third world didn’t run through my kitchen like it did for people who had maids and cooks.

My first memories of Suffolk, Virginia are WASP memories: segregated schools and the Lord’s Prayer. Weekend picnics to the homes of Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry, and daily walks in the Dismal Swamp where Washington skirmished with the British, gave me a sense of the roots of American history. But later Mickey Mantle and Frank Leahy eased out Washington and Jefferson. I suppose in retrospect that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* my dad bought me when I was nine probably saved me from the brain-numbing effects of false hero worship; the walks with my dad in the fields where the Nansemond Indians were destroyed and the dalliance with colonial patriots prepared me for later meetings with the patriotic Vietnamese.

My youth was a typical middle-class version of growing up absurd. My father had a respectable small town company job; I always got gold stars in school. In high school I played football in the Southern machismo tradition, and at college I was president of my apolitical fraternity.

If my native white racism was equivocated, it was because of rhythm and blues and jazz. Shirley and Lee, Fats Domino, Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington, were all cascading down around my ears when Dien Bien Phu was just three years off and my high school history teacher was complaining in class that Brown vs. Board of Education meant that "next year they'll be over here with us."

I worked at the golf course, learned to play, and made two black friends—Charley Wilson and Charley Garry—who worked there too. They taught me all about wine (they bought it for me as I was under age), women (what they liked), and song (they knew when and where the Fats Domino concerts were). Meanwhile my history teacher was scowling in class, complaining about having to sit with black people who everybody knew smelled funky. It was at this time that it occurred to me that history is likely to be far more interested in the birthplace of Fats Domino than about that of any of Virginia's politicians.

When I left high school in 1955 I headed off to college at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The idea was that college was supposed to lead to a good job. So, like legions of others, I went into engineering. At first it was industrial engineering, and then I switched into the aeronautical engineering program, partly because I'd loved making model airplanes when I was a kid. I soon became a member of the cooperative engineering program, alternating quarters between work and school until I graduated. My work was spent at the NASA Langley Space Laboratory in Hampton, Virginia, which became the eye of the hurricane when Sputnik was shot up, sending shivers of fear and envy up the American spine.

One thing that had loomed large in my mind when I decided to go to work at the Langley Lab was the fact that I could get a deferment from the draft. The draft had been a big issue then, although for less dramatic reasons than now. It was an interruption—a necessary one, since we were all patriots—of one's upward social movement into the middle-class certitude of jobs, family, possessions. It should be as painless as possible, so in school we were told to join the ROTC because then we could become officers, which everyone knew was better than being an enlisted man. College life became much freer when I was able to quit ROTC after my first year to become what is known as a "civilian student." Not understanding my alienation, I put my head down and plowed ahead with my work, learned a lot about space, and then went to work full-time for NASA after graduation in 1960. I worked on various problems, and even published a paper on the physics of electromagnetic waves in ionized gas. But by 1962, when John Kennedy set the goal of going to the moon in ten years, I was thoroughly disillusioned with what NASA was doing. It was clearly a front for military research, so I didn't think much of it. The Buck Rogers dreams I'd had as a 19-year-old had been undone, and I decided that I was going to seek my fortune elsewhere.



[II]

I journey to cosmopolitan Princeton, study theory—and learn to love JFK. The world is a peculiar place and I decide it needs changing. I take on the liberal tone of my surroundings and become a fledgling defense intellectual. I envision boring from within, and wind up in the belly of the whale.

I KNEW THAT I HAD TO MOVE ON, but at the same time keep my draft flank covered. The best way to take care of both problems seemed to be graduate school. So I applied to Princeton University and was awarded a fellowship in Plasma Physics.

In 1961 I left the woods and drove up to New Jersey. I had been enthusiastically for Kennedy in 1960—he seemed at the time a spot of sanity in the political atmosphere—but I didn't consider myself very political. I spent the first couple of years there trying to rid myself of a persistent Virginia accent and to accumulate enough class not to be seen as poor white trash. I was suddenly thrown in with Northern liberals who were capable of great harshness on the subject of racism in the South.

Being a child of the '50s, I had always been quite concerned with The Bomb. Eisenhower seemed to me quite capable of dozing off, falling out of his chair, and accidentally elbowing the button. By 1961 I was even more concerned about technological warfare and doubted the utility of proceeding in science when I felt the world was overstocked with it. So I dropped out of engineering with a master's degree and enrolled in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

During my last year in the Woodrow Wilson school, the year that JFK was assassinated, I worked with a professor named Oskar Morgenstern, one of the co-founders, along with the great mathematician John von Neumann, of the theory of games. I had heard the phrase "game-theory" tossed around a lot in discussions of the new techniques for planning and carrying out national defense. It was chic.

There was a lot of talk among students of how the principles of game theory were being applied to planning for defense crises and for possible forms the future might take. As it turned out, the theory is a very abstract set of mathematical techniques, without much in the way of practical application. It can only be applied to a small fraction of simple conflict situations: those where the objective of the conflict between two parties can be put on a graph, or measured in quantifiable terms. There was a second kind of gaming with which this got mixed up. It took place, we knew, at the government think-tanks. It was more a kind of scenario building or script writing for possible wars, usually total war. This had nothing to do with the pure game theory I had been doing; it was simply a group of people sitting around playing games with one another with maps, or by shaking dice to decide who had won or what the outcome of a particular move would be. In the course of this improvised theater of death, there would be occasionally interesting insights into the dynamics of nuclear encounter.

Princeton has a conference every year on a subject of public importance. In 1963–64 it was organized by Professor Morgenstern, with me helping, on the economic aspects of the space program—how does it tangibly effect people's lives, and how can we measure the benefits? Well, as it turned out, the “experts” we invited had thought more about prestige or fame and glory than about these questions. Not surprisingly, the conference yielded very little. Some of the best thinkers in the field came, but all they did was avoid any questions they hadn't already answered and, instead, stuck to the usual comfortable platitudes: “If the money weren't spent on space, it probably wouldn't be spent at all.” If all this empty rhetoric didn't make me a radical, I did realize even more clearly than before that the space program was simply a front for research on intercontinental ballistic missiles, and for finding new kinds of technology for weapons development.

About the time that the space conference was over, in the spring of 1964, I again faced the eternal question of what to do with my life. I was scheduled to finish the Woodrow Wilson school in June and wasn't sure what lay ahead. One of my ideas had been to go to work for the RAND Corporation. In retrospect it seems like a peculiar ambition. But at the time it appeared the logical outgrowth of the direction I'd been wandering toward. This was the early '60s, when the civil rights movement was at its peak. The march on Washington had just occurred; Malcolm X had just begun to be noticed on a nationwide scale, and there was a lot of talk about the Black Muslims; we were already in Vietnam, but that didn't seem critical. I was as much caught up in the notion of “getting involved” and changing things for the better as anyone else. What was attractive about RAND was mainly the myth that it was there that strategic decisions were studied. I had been terrified by The Bomb when I was a kid, and I felt I could bring sanity to the area of defense planning. After all, hadn't my idol, JFK, imported bright young men like myself into high circles of Washington?

Going to work at RAND was more than an idle masturbatory fantasy. I had talked to a couple of “RANDsmen” who had come to speak at the Princeton space conference. One

gentleman—his name was David Novick—came to talk on the economic cost of the space program. His message was that of an accountant; he projected the cost of the space program throughout five-year segments into the future. I didn't find this very interesting, but I did talk to Mr. Novick about his department and he expressed an interest in me as a potential RAND employee.

Meanwhile, Professor Morgenstern had been pleased with my work and ideas and suggested that I stay on and write my Ph.D. thesis in economics under him. Of course this meant that I would have faced two to three more years at Princeton, moving over to the economics department and doing the library-full of reading that would enable me to pass the exams and do a dissertation. This was appealing; I liked the notion of being Dr. Russo. But this alternative clashed with my fundamental hope of becoming active in the world, a doer rather than just a thinker. Even though Vietnam was still only simmering as a social issue—on the back burner behind the civil rights movement—I wanted badly to go there. And I had given a great deal of thought to that. There were several ways to do it: I could go on to work for the government; I could join the military; I could perhaps become a journalist. I had met some French students at Princeton who had gotten me interested in Indochina. I'd read everything I could get on the war there, as well as everything there was on the New Frontier defense strategy of counter-insurgency.

When RAND offered the job in a terse take-it-or-not telegram, I decided to accept. In retrospect I think I felt that I could be a kind of anthropologist observing the natives in the village of the Pentagon. And, of course, the RAND Corporation was where the action was, covering all bases from the thermonuclear aspect of things to research in Vietnam. I had the naive notion that, if reason could be brought to bear in a process that looked deeply questionable to me, then perhaps some good could be done. I was caught up in the myth of working from within. Professor Richard Falk was less sanguine about this whole affair than I was. My friends were similarly skeptical. I was alone in thinking the belly of the whale might be an interesting place to work.



[III]

The belly of the whale turns out to be decorated in Holiday Inn Modern. I wander around in long corridors for several months, making a few friends and influencing nobody. I enhance my skills by reading from RAND's top secret files. I find out about a classified study called the Vietcong Motivation and Morale Project. I practice corridor politics and by a stroke of luck I go to Saigon to interview the other side's POW-MIAs.

I FLEW TO CALIFORNIA AND BEGAN WORK in June 1964. The RAND Corporation building is across the street from the beach front in Santa Monica. I was immediately surprised by the strange familiarity of the place. Then I realized that the area had been used as a locale for hundreds of grade "B" movies and TV serials. A Hollywood stunt man runs an "in" bar next to RAND on Ocean Avenue; movie stars get their divorces across the street; academy award extravaganza's used to be produced right across the parking lot at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Mary Pickford's old beach house sits across the street and the ghost of Lawrence Welk, one of the wealthiest landlords in town, has moved up the street from the Aragon Ballroom where the bubble machine first operated. It is fitting that RAND should be in Santa Monica: a high camp relic of the space age in a field of low camp plastic flowers.

The RAND building is square with several criss-cross corridors that make patios where RANDsmen play ping pong at lunch. Surveillance from the roof and top floor is close; anyone taking a shortcut across the parking lot is watched by a guard through binoculars.

But the apparent laxity in security inside is enough to keep you off balance. How could such a serene building house a super-agency which in many ways is more important than the CIA? The answer is that for years RAND remained outside the public consciousness although physically right under the nose of sidewalk traffic by the beach.

When I first reported for work, I saw that the casual facade was just that, a facade. In each of the three lobbies there were impassive private cops packing guns, acting as receptionists and logging every person who entered or left. In order to get to the inner sanctum, you had to sign a log and clip on a red plastic numbered badge with a paper name tag slipped into it. The halls were lined with cubicle-sized offices and gave off sterile dullness of a government building. Professionals were seen passing back and forth, usually expressionless, even avoiding eye contact.

I reported to David Novick, chief of my department and the man who had hired me. He was a gruff old character who puffed on a cigar and generated a strong authoritarian air. He used a lot of the new defense jargon like "five-year projections," "cost benefit analyses," "pro-

gram budgeting," etc. Novick was an old hand who had been around in Washington and was known as a practical and hard-headed economist. I mentioned my interest in Vietnam a couple of times during the first couple of weeks I was there, but he gave me no encouragement. Most of the RAND projects on Vietnam were in other departments—Social Science, Logistics, and Engineering—and he said up front that wanting to go to Vietnam was no way to get ahead in his department. He appealed to my ego, though, by saying that the department was sorely in need of the kind of intellectual upgrading I would bring to bear. He needed cost estimates of weapons systems for the Air Force, and the statistical methodology used for delivering these estimates needed refinement, so that's what I set off to do. But I also set about reading everything I could get my hands on in the general RAND files. These files now, for example, contain a study RAND made of the Kennedy assassination: Project Star. It's a particularly special study—its classification is higher than top secret. Only a handful of RAND people know of its existence. RAND files also hold studies of the U.S. negotiating posture in the Indochina War, such being the specialty of the head of the RAND social science department, Fred Iklé, a former MIT professor and close personal friend of Henry Kissinger.

I found the place much duller than the popular myth imagines. I was disappointed in the lack of dialogue. I had expected to find at least some intellectual stimulation, but there was none.

But things began to perk up after a few months when, in poking more into things around the building, I found out about the "Vietcong Motivation and Morale Project" that to this day hasn't been made public. RAND had contracted to do the study for the Department of Defense (for one-half million dollars a year) with data coming from interviews conducted in Vietnamese with captured members of the National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese "infiltrators." A RAND team was to be formed and sent to Vietnam. RAND had been interested in the project for years. Guy Pauker, an Indonesian area specialist, had first proposed it early in the Diem reign, but Ngo Dinh Diem himself had been adamant about never allowing any Americans to talk to prisoners. After the 1963 coup, however, the way was open. The study was to provide ideas for the Department of Defense's psychological warfare program in Vietnam and generally upgrade understanding of just what the National Liberation Front was all about.

I was ecstatic about the remote chance I had of getting a spot on the project. Not only would it provide a means to get to Vietnam, but it would also provide a way to actually talk with the phantoms who were defying American might. From what I had heard from radical colleagues at Princeton and what I'd been able to piece together from Bernard Fall's books, and reading between the lines in the newspapers, I felt that the Vietcong were probably patriots. This situation didn't fit JFK's analysis of a counter-insurgency threat at all—an analysis which pictured wars of national liberation as ploys of the communist super-powers who were resorting to low-key aggression in small third world countries to avoid nuclear encounters. I couldn't see Vietnam as a pawn of Russia or China. I had studied foreign policy under three heavies at Princeton: Richard Falk,

George Kennan and Klaus Knorr. I thought I understood. But my views were at such odds with official policy and with the "experts" at RAND that I thought maybe there were some important secrets of which I wasn't aware or some intricate concepts that maybe only an insider could grasp. I was not yet the rebel, because I was ready to give conventional wisdom the benefit of the doubt. In fact I leaned over backward to do it. I wanted to be wrong. JFK who had been my hero, had supported involvement in Vietnam. I wanted him to be right.

By the fall of 1964 I had a good idea of what RAND was all about. Throughout that period I talked to people about getting on board the Vietcong Motivation and Morale Project, including the old timers who were in positions of authority. They checked me out pretty thoroughly.

At this time, I had been there close to six months, long enough to see that the mystique was deceptively false. RAND had been compared to the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton—I certainly didn't think it measured up to that. RAND had been called a university without students. A community of scholars in which secrets are kept from one another is virtually a contradiction in terms. But before this really got me down, I learned I'd been chosen to go to Vietnam.

In February 1965, I flew directly from Los Angeles to Saigon with a senior RAND member who, with an air of authority, pointed out several men from the "agency" (CIA) along the way. I remember when we first approached the seacoast of Vietnam, I looked down from the airplane expecting to see fighting going on, but it all looked very quiet. The soil looked red. Low-flying clouds spotted the lush landscape. The airplane landed at Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon, and we were met by members of the RAND staff in Saigon, and then processed through customs. We rode into town and checked into a hotel near the Presidential palace which was right around the corner from the RAND Corporation villa.

The Vietcong Motivation and Morale Project had been going for about six months. Initially it was run by two Vietnam scholars with contacts in Saigon who were working for RAND as consultants. They had built up a team which had interviewed over 100 prisoners and defectors from the Vietcong, which resulted in a report characterizing the Vietcong as idealistic people whose cadre often had a monkish quality of dedication. When these gentlemen came back to brief John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (he's featured in the Pentagon Papers), he responded: "If what you say in that briefing is true, we're fighting on the wrong side." (Daniel Ellsberg was at that briefing.)

But this wasn't the advice the Pentagon wanted, and shortly before I arrived the professors had been sent home to the U.S. The new project director was very critical of the previous leadership—their studies were ridiculed, their intellectual integrity was impugned, and their report was seen as an embarrassment, something more than RAND had bargained for. Leon Gouré, the new leader, was an absolute hawk on the war, hardly a value-free scholar. As time would show, Gouré would interpret the interviews with prisoners in ways that would make the U.S. Air Force look good or suggest that it be given more responsibility.



[IV]

I learn about Charlie and his communism. I see the American war machinery grinding its way through the Vietnamese countryside. I see things that I wasn't prepared for and that I don't like. I get a new view of the war and of RAND.

MY CHIEF RESPONSIBILITY on the project was to supervise three to four Vietnamese interviewers. With the rank of Army Captain, I negotiated with Vietnamese officials through the American military in order to set up interviews with prisoners. The prisons were all over Vietnam. We interviewed both in Saigon and in the provinces, asking the Vietnamese prisoners detailed questions about their family, their livelihood, and their attitude toward the war.

The Vietcong were not as I had supposed them to be. They had a courageous dedication and assured us they would fight to their last drop of blood to kick the American imperialists out of their country. Vietnamese villagers would refer to them as "the Liberation Gentlemen who speak with honeyed tongue." I was very surprised at their openness. I began to see that what motivated them above all was the profound desire to live in peace and to keep their Vietnamese culture free from foreign control.

I think one of the first jarring experiences I had was about two months after I arrived in Vietnam. Through an interpreter I interviewed a man who had been with the movement since before 1954. He was an agit-prop cadre who conducted traveling theater groups through villages in the rural sector very near Saigon. The groups would sing, put on plays, encourage people to resist. He didn't like me at all the first morning of the interview, but after we talked for two full days, he recited poetry and sang a song for me. I will never forget one of the lines of the song. "Our hatred for the Americans is as high as the sky." I didn't feel he hated me, and I certainly didn't hate him. He imparted to me the intense commitment of the NLF.

In retrospect, I think the main feature of the project

was the extent to which the interviews provided the NLF with identity in official American eyes. The interviews were printed in multiple copies and circulated throughout a number of American military and civilian agencies. They were very popular with Americans; here, for the first time, was the mysterious guerrilla who had heretofore been an enigma speaking to the reader from a printed page. The entire body of data consists of over 600 interviews.

Five years ago RAND said the interviews would be made public, but the 40,000 pages have still not been released. There is no way the study could help the "enemy" because the interviews are, themselves, testimony by the "enemy." Then why are they not made public? Well, for two reasons: (1) the interviews contain embarrassing stories of atrocities and crimes against humanity; and (2) they reveal the identity and therefore the humanity of the Vietnamese. Publication of the interviews would make it much more difficult to depersonalize the Vietnamese as "gooks," "slopes," and "terrorists"; we could no longer get away with ignoring the civilian body counts (330 per day); and we would have to re-examine all our imperial notions about "helping" the poor peasant countries of the third world.

As time went on, I became more aware of the outrageous kind of whoring that RAND was engaged in. Regardless of what came out in the interviews, Gouré, the project leader, would always find something to support his bias. He said that American air power, which had been beefed up considerably since February 1965 when the U.S. first began to bomb North Vietnam regularly, was tremendously effective in weakening the Front; and for this, of course, the Air Force loved him. He said that the Vietcong were losing and that their morale was crumbling. Gouré quickly became the hottest thing on the American briefing circuit, earning himself trips all the way back to Washington.

In the summer of 1965 the issue of refugees came up. The principal question was, "Did refugees help or hurt us; did they help or hurt the Vietcong?" Gouré concluded that "the generation of refugees," as the process was later to be called, helped the U.S. effort because refugees leaving the Vietcong took strategic support away with them. This position later became policy with the U.S. Army. They intentionally "generated" refugees. It was said that bombing, defoliation, crop destruction were used with this end result in mind. In some cases, helicopters and trucks would go into areas and load people up and take them out. The areas would then be submitted to saturation bombing.

In June 1965 I was sitting with Gouré in an Air Force office out at Tan Son Nhut air base. We were talking to Air Force people when word came in that the use of B-52s had been OK'd. I couldn't believe it—it seemed totally senseless. When I asked myself what role RAND had played in all this, I had to admit it was sizeable. Just how senseless was driven home to me a month later when I went to a little province town just north of Saigon to interview refugees who had come in from the forest which had been bombed. A little old man sat in a chair clutching a leaflet illustrated with B-52s dropping bombs. The leaflet announced that the area would be bombed on July 17 because enemy troops were there, and that arrangements for refuge should be made before that time. One day prior to schedule, the old man said, the bombs came. He was one

of the few survivors. He looked very sad. He was shell shocked and trembling.

When I compared the National Liberation Front, with its vitality and its will for freedom, with the spiritless Vietnamese who were fighting for us, it was clear that the ARVN were very much the niggers, the slaves, the mercenaries. American bombing, sweep and destroy missions, chemical spray programs, anti-personnel weapons, napalm: this institutional and technological terrorism is millions of times worse than anything at the disposal of the NLF.



[v]

I meet one of General Lansdale's right-hand men in Saigon reading a Lartéguy novel. I run into him again on Lavender Hill. I conduct my own Vietnam studies and get sacked for my pains.

IT WAS AT THIS TIME that I first met Daniel Ellsberg at the RAND villa at 176 rue Pasteur, Saigon. I was alone in the office that afternoon when he knocked at the door. We introduced ourselves; I invited him in and we began to chat. He had just arrived and wanted me to tell him of my six months' experience in Vietnam. At the time Dan was an employee of the State Department serving as a member of General Ed Lansdale's team.

We talked for about an hour. He was intense, curious, and impressed me as being rather bright. He took a lot of notes as we talked; I remember having the feeling I was being interviewed.

Over the course of the next year we bumped into each other a half dozen times at the RAND villa and various other places around Saigon. I remember him reading a Lartéguy novel; he was getting into the esoterica of Vietnam. He impressed me as someone who was highly critical of the mechanics of U.S. policy although accepting its overall design. At the time, he seemed to have faith that our government would eventually find the right way to fight the war.

Just before leaving Vietnam in fall of 1966, I read a

closely held top secret document called the "Roles and Missions Study." It had been done by a special task force and Dan had done the major portion of the work on the study. It was highly critical of the U.S. effort, recommended many changes, including the cancellation of programs and the disbanding of certain military units. In essence, the report was an indictment of General Westmoreland. It was circulated "unofficially" through a number of American agencies and generally received enthusiastic approval. Westmoreland, it was said, hit the ceiling.

(It was later, back at RAND in 1968, that we became close friends. I had just returned from a depressing six months in Saigon; Dan had come out from Washington. Our offices were right across the hall from each other. By this time, our positions on Vietnam were similar, although arrived at through quite different avenues. We had both worked from the assumption that policy could be changed from within, but neither of us had achieved success. We spent a lot of time sharing our experiences. In Vietnam I had worked at the grassroots level, while Dan had been at the policy-making level. To me he represented the Establishment; I was overjoyed at finding someone in his position to be against the war. At first our contact was mostly in the office. After several weeks we began having dinner together. Gradually we became close on a personal as well as professional level.)

During the 18 months of my first trip to Vietnam I visited various other parts of Southeast Asia. The more I grew to admire Asian culture—especially Vietnamese—the more I was outraged at the Orwellian horror of the U.S. military machine grinding through Vietnam and destroying everything in its path. Tens of thousands of Vietnamese girls were turned into prostitutes; streets that had been lined with beautiful trees were denuded to make room for the big military trucks and Saigon had a smog problem. From time to time there would be "accidents" when the U.S. army trucks defending Saigon would run over Vietnamese, killing them. I was fed up with the horror and disgusted by the petulance and pettiness with which the RAND Corporation conducted its business.

When I came back to the U.S. in September 1966, I experienced a deeper depression. People at RAND seemed unbelievably naive when they talked about the war. And the contrast between the death and destruction I saw over there and the naively carefree attitude at home was startling. But I stayed in Santa Monica at the RAND office for a year, still trying to make a difference. First I wrote a critical evaluation of the project in Vietnam; then I worked on a problem that had come up as a result of work that had been done at RAND on the relationship between pockets of resistance in Vietnam and socio-economic factors. I also wrote a study of the crop destruction program in Vietnam that was being conducted by the Americans, making no attempt to hide the way I felt about the war.

While I had been in Vietnam, a piece of work had been done at RAND by E. J. Mitchell which purported to show that in areas of Vietnam where the land was equally distributed, Vietcong support was much higher, and where the distribution of land was less equalized, there was more support for the government. It was a statistical study, using sophisticated methods of econometrics, and its upshot was

the absurd conclusion that, the poorer the peasant, the more likely he was to support the government. This would have been almost laughable, except that it was taken seriously. While in Vietnam, I thought everyone knew that Vietcong support was stronger in poorer areas of the countryside. But, because the results of Mitchell's study were so novel, it gained a great deal of attention both at RAND and in Washington. I set out to try to disprove Mitchell's hypothesis, and had just gotten underway with my work when a request came to me from the new director of the Vietcong Motivation and Morale Project to return to Saigon.

My first task was to wrap up a study of a crop destruction which RAND had promised the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) a year earlier. I was to address the question of how effective the crop destruction program was as a means of denying food to the Vietcong. After four months of research and evaluation, I concluded that the program should be discontinued. By developing a statistical model of the relationship between Vietcong food supplies and the economy at large, I could show that for every pound of rice that was denied the Vietcong through crop destruction, one hundred pounds of rice was denied the rural population. Written in careful "systemspeak" (Cost/benefit), the study showed that the crop destruction program was simply denying food to the civilians, and was empirically "ineffective" as a way to hurt the Vietcong. It was published by RAND and distributed to Secretary McNamara's office. Later I heard that McNamara had read the report and sent it to General Westmoreland with a query as to why such an ineffective program had been going on for so long. At that point the crop destruction program had been in effect for six years.

When I got back to Saigon, no one would talk to me about the report. I wanted to brief the military and civilian officials, but the ARPA field office was reluctant to set up briefings. As the weeks wore on, I became impatient. I told the Saigon ARPA people that if they didn't set up a briefing soon I would go back to Washington and explain that no one in Saigon was willing to hear the study briefed. At this the ARPA people arranged for a briefing to be presented to a man named David Griggs, a geophysicist on the faculty of the physics department at UCLA and a consultant to the RAND Corporation. At that time Griggs was working in Saigon as a scientific advisor to General Westmoreland. He told me that after looking at my report he had written a telegram to Secretary McNamara, which went out over Westmoreland's signature, saying that Westmoreland had personally inspected areas that had been sprayed with chemicals and had "witnessed the effectiveness" of the crop spray program. Griggs ended by stating that General Westmoreland was well pleased with the conduct and effectiveness of the program, and planned to continue it as in the past. I asked him to please explain why he disagreed with me; he simply looked at his watch, said he was busy, and had to leave. The entire meeting lasted no longer than fifteen minutes.

During my second stay in Vietnam, I resumed my work on the answer to the Mitchell study. I collected economic data on the rural population, gathering such items as per capita income, average size of landholdings, and the fertility of the rice fields. I also examined data on the extent

to which various geographical areas were controlled by the contending parties. I found, contrary to the Mitchell hypothesis, that poor areas were more likely to support the Vietcong. In fact, the correlation between support for the Vietcong and socio-economic factors was almost 100 percent. This evidence confirmed my views that the war was a conflict in which military power was of much less importance than the socio-political struggle.

I took these findings back to RAND early in 1968, where they were poorly received, to say the least. Charlie Wolf, my boss and head of the economics department, was not enthusiastic. Wolf had supported Mitchell's findings, which implied that it was the people of lower income who backed the puppet government, and he took great pride in arguing that increases in social welfare would tend to create greater problems. But I held to my views, and was not surprised when in May 1968 Charlie Wolf fired me, citing the usual bureaucratic rationale: "budgetary problems."

Wolf had been my administrative boss, but I had virtually no contact with him. My immediate boss had praised my work highly and had even, at one point, said that he should be working for me. I had thought my work to be top notch; more than a handful of people had complimented it in quite flattering ways; the same people had picked my brains in designing and pursuing their own studies. When I was fired, they all expressed shock to me personally, but only Dan Ellsberg went to the boss and protested. Dan was the only RAND professional who refused to behave like an inmate.



[VI]

I do some thinking of my own about RAND.
I visit the old place and find out that nothing has changed.

AFTER HAVING BEEN FIRED FROM RAND, I entered a long reflective period. The '60s had been an entire historical epoch, telescoped into ten years. The '60s saw the biggest expansion of capitalism history has ever known. The '60s saw men obsessed with abstractions take over the Defense Department. Herman

Kahn called the study of thermonuclear warfare "thinking about the unthinkable." We were supposed to get ready for Armageddon so that we could plan it away. We could avoid it only if we analyzed and understood it. In analyzing it, we became obsessed with it. As we backed away from this terrifying abstraction, we took refuge in the myth of counter-insurgency. The combination in the '60s of the greatest capitalist expansion history has known walking backwards into the myth of counter-insurgency created whole new careers for men like Charlie Wolf, a counter-revolutionary economist. His discipline is counter-insurgency.

Reflecting on these things, I began to put everything together. There is a right side and there is a wrong side in this great debate about the war in Indochina. On one side of the debate are men like Charles Wolf and Henry Kissinger, the Rasputin of the American Empire. Both are men preoccupied with abstractions. Both men have closed eyes, both men have linear minds which are paralyzed by paradox. Neither can recognize the difference between the inscrutability of fact and the inscrutability of reference. Henry Kissinger, in his application of the elitist defense intellectual theories of counter-insurgency, has decided that in order to have the freedom to exercise his theory one must also have the freedom to be dictator of foreign policy. In his mind foreign policy is beyond the ken of domestic popular opinion. Two million people have died to prove him wrong, and he doesn't recognize it yet.

When I left RAND, and quit the Establishment, I did so as a working member of the Establishment who had witnessed elaborately synthesized lies, mathematically formulated lies, perpetuated by people who are the first victims of their own deception. I had worked within the system almost continuously for 13 years, from the day that I began in the space program in 1956 at the Langley Laboratory in Hampton, Virginia to the day I left RAND—six months after Charlie Wolf fired me—January 3, 1969.

I wasn't sorry to leave. I hadn't been happy there. Recently I was reminded of this when I ran into two former colleagues at Chez Jay's, a restaurant next door to RAND, where half a dozen or more RANDsmen can be found any day of the week. It was crowded, so the waitress asked if we'd mind sharing a four-place table with two other people. Almost before we nodded approval, she dashed off to set it up. She placed a red-colored, woven screen on a table for four to separate us from the other two who were already eating. It's a good thing she did so; it probably saved the security clearances of two old RAND colleagues of mine, who, by chance, were sitting at the table as we stepped up to take our seats. I sat down and greeted them as they stifled gasps and managed to return the greetings weakly over the red screen, which by then had become a concrete metaphor for our different positions. It was more than a screen or even the Pentagon Papers which was between us. We both knew we had chosen different sides. I felt comfortable, but they seemed to squirm; both are fifty-fifty liberals, who oppose U.S. involvement in Indochina. One is an economist; the other an expert in propaganda analysis. Both have done extensive work in Vietnam and probably feel they are speaking the truth to power—a noble task; in reality they are but speaking truth *for*

power (an important distinction which Dan has taught me).

These men are paid with our tax money and have a lot to tell us about the war. The information they have in their heads and the secret documents they know about could do much to reveal the evils of U.S. government policy. One of them even went so far as to tell Dan Ellsberg he didn't want to see him for at least two years. When I asked them how things were going, the one nearer to my seat responded with a statement, the inscrutibility of which is unsurpassed even in Vietnam: "You know how it is, Tony, nothing ever changes."



[VII]

I leave RAND and set out to study my own country first hand. I walk the streets and meet diverse people not previously part of my culture. I tour colleges and share wine with denizens of the Bowery. The Pentagon Papers break all around me. I become an outlaw and a jailbird. They plan 150 years in prison for Dan and me, so we need help.

LEAVING RAND WAS A MOMENT OF CRISIS for me. It was not that I was distraught over losing a career; on the contrary, I had never thought of myself and RAND as being married. I had not been "coopted," not because I was any better than all the RAND people who are, but because my commitment had been of a different order. RAND, for me, was a means of getting somewhere else. I had gotten there and found out what I wanted to know. What bothered me most was that all the liberal myths about "boring from within" had died while I was at RAND, and I didn't have any strategy for change to replace them.

I decided to float for a while, and wait the '60s out. I began to study my country in much the same manner as I had studied Vietnam. I was able to do this much more easily, of course, because I knew the United States much better than Vietnam and could cut corners. Also, unlike my

former RAND colleagues, I didn't believe in using bureaucratic methods. I toured Watts and worked there. I lived with friends on the lower east side who knew the neighborhood so well they could point out all the muggers. They took me through the Harlem streets, and we went into "shooting galleries" (where junkies take heroin together). At one point I came close to death when three black men with knives mistook me for a heroin pusher. Luckily a friend saw the attack from across the street and helped me chase off the attackers. I hit college campuses during the strike after the Cambodia invasion in spring of 1970. By December of that year I had decided to go to work for the County Probation Department because I feel probation is the only viable alternative to incarceration.

On June 13, 1971, the Pentagon Papers broke; a few days later Sidney Zion, an unemployed former *New York Times* journalist, told the world that Dan had done it; and on June 19, in the afternoon, the FBI appeared at my doorway. The dialogue was terse: "Are you Russo?" "Yes." "We want to talk to you about Ellsberg." "I do not wish to talk to you." "Do you have a lawyer?" "That's none of your business."

The FBI lost no time in having me subpoenaed by the grand jury. On the following Tuesday morning, June 22, I pulled up to my house and, just as I got out of my car, noticed an FBI car skid to a halt blocking my driveway. Both doors flew open and two agents bounded up to me and tapped me on the shoulder with the subpoena. I noticed that Robert Meier, the U.S. Attorney, had not signed it. I later found out that Meier was against the government pursuing the case, because they essentially had none. He resigned shortly thereafter. The agents assured me that the subpoena was legal with only the clerk's signature. My attorney concurred, so I showed up at the courthouse the next morning with my toothbrush in my pocket ready to go to jail because I was sure of one thing: I was not going to cooperate with the inquisitors. I made it clear that while I would tell my story in open court I could not tell it in secret before a grand jury which is acting as a rubber stamp for the prosecution. Originally intended to protect the people from arbitrary prosecution by kings, grand juries in America have become repressive tools of the executive branch. No man or woman of principle should feel obliged to cooperate with them. Grand juries can punish or harass people who don't do their bidding. Legally they have the power to grant the witness immunity from prosecution (whether the witness wants it or not); he or she is then in the position of either answering any and every question asked (without counsel present) or being cited for contempt of court and put in jail. That's precisely the position I found myself in last summer. The prosecution was trying to coerce me into helping them get Ellsberg who, I have heard it said, was marked for prosecution by Henry Kissinger, one of his former colleagues.

I wasn't put in jail right away. I refused to testify on the basis of the Fifth Amendment and stuck to my position, even after they granted me immunity. I faced jail six times while a series of continuances, bails pending appeal, and stays of execution played themselves out through the summer. Each time it was a relief to find a few more days of freedom. But finally, on August 16, the Supreme Court

denied my motion to stay out of jail; I surrendered to the bailiff on the courthouse steps at 4:00 PM and was in the Los Angeles County Jail within two hours. After spending the night on the concrete floor of the bull pen, I was called into the booking room. The booking clerk, a young woman, insisted on taking my reading glasses while I was trying to explain to her that I needed them. Apparently you're not supposed to talk during the booking process, because one of the guards became incensed at me, grabbed my arm and began shoving me down a hallway where four other guards joined in and pushed me rather vigorously into a "maximum security" cell—the hole. The absurdity of the situation began to sink in as I sat on the floor in the hole. They had kept me up all night, made me sleep on the floor, shoved me around, and hadn't even let me make a phone call. I sat there until about 8:30 AM when I figured the time had come to ask for my phone call. The guard outside the door ignored my request; he wouldn't even acknowledge hearing me. I started getting mad and kicked the door for several minutes when all of a sudden it flew open, half a dozen guards burst in, and I was thrown to the floor, their knees in my back, while they handcuffed me, chained my ankles, and tied my wrists and ankles together behind my back. They slammed the door behind them and left me on my belly tied in a neat little bow.

The fact that I was now a criminal continued to be impressed on me during my entire 47-day stay in jail. On September 6, in Terminal Island Federal Prison where I had been transferred, I was beaten up for refusing to let two guards take my journal from me: one of my toenails was half torn off, a bone bruised, and a bump was left on the back of my head. For this I was then hauled before the "adjustment committee" (the Prison Star Chamber proceedings) where I was charged with "agitating and disrupting the other inmates." The guard who had beaten me was present but said nothing; I attempted to engage him in dialogue but he would have no part of it. In fact, no one on the committee said anything after I finished delivering my defense, which drew on behavior modification psychology. I was ushered out of the room while they deliberated; I returned to hear their verdict. I was acquitted of the charge; a hollow victory at best.

On October 1 I submitted a motion to the court, requesting a transcript of any grand jury testimony I should choose to make. Earlier in the summer I had suggested this to my attorney, but he hadn't thought it would work. So I got a new attorney who felt differently and we made the motion. If the court would grant it, I would agree to testify because a copy of the transcript could be made public. It was equivalent to letting the public into the grand jury room as far as I was concerned. The court did grant the motion, and I then agreed to testify. I was let out of jail, and scheduled to appear in court on October 18. But I never did testify: the prosecutor, David Nissen, abusing due process, refused to agree to give me a transcript and termed the court order "unlawful and beyond the authority of the court." A month after Nissen disobeyed the court order an opinion was handed down by the presiding judge, Hon. Warren J. Ferguson, declaring that, since I had been willing to testify with a transcript, I was no longer in contempt of court.

But no sooner was I out of jail and back on the street, when at the corner of Missouri and Selby Avenues in West Los Angeles, I was pulled over, handcuffed, choked, pushed face first into the pavement and beaten by two officers of the Los Angeles Police Department. I was charged with two counts of disorderly conduct, one of resisting arrest and drunk driving, and am awaiting trial. The next night Ellsberg spoke at the biggest political rally in the history of Los Angeles. It is well known that the FBI and the right-wing Los Angeles Police Department work closely together, although proving they did so in this case will be a difficult job.

After six months of coercion and harassment, the prosecution indicted me, disregarding the immunity which they had given me in June. My feeling is that the prosecution would have indicted me back in June had they not wanted me to help them get Dan. Attorney General Mitchell boasted back in the summer that he would indict anyone involved. He must have decided I was dangerous, for over 16 FBI agents came to try to arrest me, threatening my friends for "harboring a fugitive," although the indictment was still secret. Instead of calling my attorney to inform him of the indictment so I could surrender, they declared me a "fugitive" and started hunting me. My lawyer heard a rumor about it, checked it out, and arranged for my surrender. I barely escaped being dragged in like a criminal and held for \$100,000 bail.

So far, this is a story without an ending. The indictment itself is an affront to one's sense of justice. Dan and I are charged with "conspiracy to defraud the United States and an agency thereof." But the whole point of the Pentagon Papers is the incredible extent to which the government has defrauded the people of America. There is much more at stake than the fact that Dan faces 115 years of jail and I face 35. As William G. Thompson, one of Sacco and Vanzetti's lawyers once said: "I will say to your honor that a government that has come to honor its own secrets more than the lives of its citizens has become a tyranny."



Without the help of Katherine Barkley, my partner, this piece could not have been written.