



# Garbage Peddled As Historic Truth

**Joseph Alsop**

UNWITTINGLY, the country has just been given a prime sample of the garbage that people like Daniel Ellsberg have been peddling as historical truth. The garbage sample also shows why President Nixon has put in James Schlesinger Jr. as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to effect a forceful cleanout in some areas.

The particular pail of garbage served up at Ellsberg's trial was the testimony of Samuel Adams, an ex-CIA analyst and estimator. Adams darkly testified that in 1968, "there were political pressures from the military to display the enemy as weaker than he actually was."

★ ★ ★

THIS OLD ROW is worth examining because it tells such a lot about what may be called the Ellsberg-type in government, and also about the operations of a crucial but obscure part of our government. The story begins, then, in late 1965 or early 1966, when President Johnson declared, in effect, "Now that we're in a guerrilla war, I want someone to tell me just how many guerrillas there are."

No one in the U.S. government has ever thought of responding to this kind of presidential command with bleak honesty, by saying: "I'm sorry, Mr. President, we just don't know."

An incomparably ridiculous estimating process at once began among the civilian analysts in the CIA, and also among the military analysts in Saigon and the Pentagon. The system, in both cases, was to start with the ideal "table of organization" imposed by Hanoi in the South. This

indicated the numbers of guerrillas Hanoi regarded as desirable at every level, hamlet, village, district and finally, province.

With some difficulty, the numbers of hamlets, villages and districts in South Vietnam were ascertained. Multiplications were then made, on the basis of the ideal table of organization. The military analysts' result was 180,000 guerrillas. The CIA result was 300,000 guerrillas. This was because the CIA analysts insisted upon including a huge number for the almost purely imaginary "secret self defense forces."

Meetings were held on both sides of the Pacific, as Adams indicated at the Ellsberg trial. Charges were hurled at the military by the civilians, and vice versa. Apparently, Adams participated. So did one of the men CIA director Schlesinger has now brought into the agency from outside, Major General Daniel Graham — but Graham was on the side of comparative common sense.

★ ★ ★

AFTER the Tet offensive in 1968, it soon became apparent that the number of guerrillas had been enormously exaggerated.

By agreement, therefore, the CIA and the Army quietly reduced the guerrilla total on the official "order of battle" to only 60,000 men. Thus the military analysts had been wrong by a factor of three, and the CIA analysts had been wrong by a factor of five. It is at least better to be wrong by three instead of five — which is why the Adams testimony is garbage.