

wards, who has mysteriously disappeared. Unknown to Marlow, of course, Edwards is actually a triple agent (Moscow as well as London and Cairo), and Cairo's omniscient Colonel Hamdy is determined to kill Edwards because Hamdy is himself a triple agent (Tel Aviv too). The Israelis have tipped Colonel Hamdy that Edwards is about to expose all their spies in Cairo, but they got that tip from Edwards' own boss in London, who is also, inevitably, still another Soviet agent. And so on.

Confusing? Yes. No connoisseur of the genre would accept less. Yet the best parts of Hone's espionage novel have nothing to do with espionage. His hero, far from being the traditional gun-and-karate spy, is a mournful reincarnation of the wandering Irishman, someone whose way of escaping from Egypt is to hitch a ride on a Land Rover with an Anglican clergyman who is setting off with beagle-like optimism to expand the parish in the Saharan sands around Tobruk.

Best of all, Hone provides a portrait of Nasser's Cairo that occasionally reads like updated Lawrence Durrell—a city of dusty cricket fields and sweet coffee and the khamsin rustling the jacaranda trees, a city in which the revolutionary press censor plays badminton on the roof of his apartment house and keeps a *suffragi* downstairs to retrieve the stray shuttlecocks from the streets below. ■ Otto Friedrich

## Damned Spot

PAPERS ON THE WAR

by DANIEL ELLSBERG

309 pages. Simon & Schuster. \$7.95.

In the summer of '65, Richard Nixon, the most prominent partner of a prominent Wall Street law firm, was passing through Saigon. At the time, South Viet Nam was preparing to elect members to its Constituent Assembly, and U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Nixon's former running mate, was worried that the wrong men might get elected. To find out why, Nixon visited the home of Major General Edward Lansdale, the U.S. coordinator of civil pacification efforts. Members of Lansdale's team were also present, including a 34-year-old former State Department expert in games theory named Daniel Ellsberg.

This is how Ellsberg remembers the gathering: "After shaking hands with each of us, Nixon asked: 'Well, Ed, what are you up to?' Lansdale replied: 'We want to help General Thang\* make this the most honest election that has ever been held in Vietnam.'

"'Oh sure, honest, yes honest, that's right'—Nixon was sitting himself in an armchair next to Lansdale's—'so long as you win' "

In spite of the lessons learned on

\*Major General Nguyen Duc Thang, Lansdale's Vietnamese counterpart, who later resigned in protest against Saigon corruption.

the playing fields of Whittier, President Nixon must now settle for considerably less than a win in Southeast Asia. Whatever "winding down the war" in Indochina eventually comes to mean, Nixon cannot have it look like an outright American defeat. Neither could any other postwar President, says Ellsberg in "The Quagmire Myth and Stalemate Machine," the principal paper in this cool, rigorously logical collection of essays, dramatic eyewitness reports and congressional testimony. Ever since the fall of Dien Bien Phu, says Ellsberg, the first law of political survival has been "Do not lose the rest of Vietnam to Communist control before the next election."

Even John Kennedy, badly burned by the Bay of Pigs, had to obey this law. Although he resisted advice to commit a large force to Viet Nam, he still

BILL POTTER



WAR CRITIC DANIEL ELLSBERG  
*Imperfect failures.*

had to send enough troops to ensure a stalemate. That the escalations of subsequent Presidents were made after considerable pessimistic advice and with one eye on the Gallup poll leads Ellsberg to dismiss the general belief that the U.S. sank slowly in the East like some hapless woolly mammoth in a tar pit. Perhaps Presidents overestimated the consequences of clear-cut withdrawal not only because of the advice they received but also because of their own timid estimates of what the American people could or could not face up to. If the Viet Nam stalemate is a tragedy, Ellsberg suggests, it is because its failures have all been "imperfect." He quotes Theodore Draper's wry observation about the Bay of Pigs as "that rare political/military event, 'a perfect failure.' "

Among the most serious imperfections that Ellsberg deals with are the increasingly flimsy veils of optimistic fic-

tions that Presidents have had to weave over the pessimistic realities in Southeast Asia. As the Pentagon papers showed, Presidents deceive and are deceived, sometimes by their own deceptions. Testifying before Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee, Ellsberg offered a frightening model: "When the President starts lying, he begins to need evidence to back up his lies because in this democracy he is questioned on his statements. It then percolates down through the bureaucracy that you are helping the Boss if you come up with evidence that is supportive of our public position . . . The effect of that is to poison the flow of information to the President himself."

In the Government, says Ellsberg, there is "a need not to know." Unpleasant realities are often ignored; critical data often go ungathered. He notes that in 1968, at Henry Kissinger's request, he drew up a list of all the conceivable options open to the U.S. in Viet Nam. They began with using nuclear weapons and ended with an immediate and complete pullout. But, says Ellsberg, by the time Nixon got the list, the last option had been deleted as inconceivable.

Throughout most of the book, Ellsberg is less concerned with laying blame than with attempting to analyze the process of Government decision making. Ultimately, it defies analysis because, as Ellsberg himself observes, bureaucrats seldom leave a clear trail. In many ways Ellsberg defies analysis too. He is the academic owl who became a Viet Nam hawk and eventually the dove who nested in the purloined Pentagon papers. His experiences as an armed researcher in Viet Nam now lead him to declare that "to call a conflict in which one army is financed and equipped by foreigners a 'civil war' simply screens a more painful reality: that the war is, after all, a foreign aggression. Our aggression."

**Complex Scenario.** Ellsberg even contemplates the possibility that he is a war criminal similar to Albert Speer, the intelligent, cultivated humanist who was Hitler's architect. He recalls attending a seminar on war crimes and thinking "that I was the only person present who was a potential defendant." It is difficult to take this possibility seriously. Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon papers for what he feels is the good of the country; he may also have been trying to rid himself of what he sees as a damned spot. But his view is too schematic and bears the cold stamp of the think tank. His being a war criminal could well be just another option in a complex psychological scenario.

Ellsberg, the antiwar activist, must be taken seriously. The issues he has raised about Viet Nam dwarf him as an intellectual celebrity. To view him as a potential martyr, or simply as a burglar, offers a too convenient way of avoiding the moral questions implicit in all wars. To avoid such questions goes beyond "the need not to know" to the need not to feel. ■ R.Z.S.

□ filed ~~Pentagon Papers~~

clipped to story on Ellsberg, NYTimes 23 Aug 72, this file.

From review of "Papers on the War," by Daniel Ellsberg:

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