

VICTORY IN HADES: THE FORGOTTEN WARS OF THE OMAN, 1957–1959 AND 1970–1976

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Part II: The Dhofar Campaign 1970–1976

Section B

Introduction:

In section A of this paper, published in a preceding issue of *Militaria*, it was stated that a detailed analysis of the second Omani war required separate treatment from a discussion of the Campaign itself, in view of the complex and multi-faceted issues generated by the Dhofar Campaign. The Dhofar Campaign embodied both COIN (counter-insurgency) and conventional aspects of modern warfare, and there are important lessons for military theorists attached to both dimensions. With regard to the COIN dimensions, the Dhofar war has received comparatively little detailed study in relation to other COIN wars; the French Indo-China War of 1946–1954 and the Malayan emergency of 1948–1960, for example, have been the subjects of extensive study, as has the Mau Mau emergency in Kenya in the early 1950s. However, although the wars in the Oman have suffered from comparative neglect, these conflicts in the Persian Gulf are worthy of detailed study, in terms of their relevance to contemporary situations in certain parts of the world (and especially in Southern Africa), to a greater extent than the other fore-mentioned conflicts. Although the wars in Malaya and Kenya are frequently cited as classic models of successful counter-insurgency campaigns, their degree of relevance to the contemporary situation in Southern Africa is extremely limited at best. The victory in Malaya was only secured by heavy expenditure in terms of personnel and finance extending over a period of 12 years. The maximum strength of the Security Forces in Malaya (in 1952) consisted of approximately 40 000 troops (comprising some 25 000 British, 10 000 Gurkhas and 5 000 from other Commonwealth countries; in addition to a police force numbering some 40 000. Similarly, the Mau Mau emergency required, at the end of 1953, the expenditure of some 10 000 personnel (the maximum strength reached by the Security Forces), supported by 21 000 police.

As the war of the Zambezi salient (involving Rhodesia and the Lusophone African provinces) proved, however, nations with limited resources cannot afford to be absorbed into wars of attrition. (1) Moreover, the victory in Malaya was heavily dependent upon heavy and continuous injections of personnel from an external source (Great Britain and the Commonwealth); such external aid, as has oft been commented, certainly cannot be relied upon in any future COIN war in South Africa. Moreover, such external sources of assistance are very far from providing a guarantee of success, as the American involvement in Vietnam clearly proved. The study of the French Indo-China War in terms of its relevance to contemporary situations is similarly most misleading. The Vietminh insurgency pursued the classical path of revolutionary war as expounded by Mao Tse Tung (2), culminating in the conventional offensive launched by the insurgency forces against the entrenched defensive position into which the security forces had been forced by the classical dynamics of insurgency. However, the Indo-China War and the succeeding Vietnam conflict have been the only occasions in which these dynamics have been pursued to their logical conclusion. Many insurgent movements have succeeded without effecting the full programme adumbrated by Mao Tse-Tung. FRELIMO, for example, were endeavouring to initiate the mobile warfare phase when the Portuguese military effort collapsed. The Angolan insurgents were still involved in the guerrilla phase. The Algerian nationalists movement failed entirely in its military phase, both with regard to rural and urban terrorism. EOKA did not precipitate a conventional war against the British prior to its victory. The Kenya emergency is highly suspect in terms of its relevance to the South African context; in so far as the impetus to terrorists activity emanated principally from a tribal – as opposed to a political – source.

The Dhofar Campaign, however, is highly relevant to the Southern African context in terms of its COIN dimensions, for the following central reasons:-

- i The forces emanating from the external powers supporting the established government of Oman – the United Kingdom, Jordan and Iran – were extremely limited. This applies particularly to the United Kingdom, which had a key interest in ensuring that Oman's oil supplies and critical strategic position in the Persian Gulf were not seized by anti-Western forces. In a major respect, its position paralleled that of the United States in Vietnam, seeking to control the expansion of Asiatic Communism via its indirect surrogate, China, and its immediate protege, North Vietnam. In its close support of the Vietcong in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, mirrored the role of South Yemen in its relationship to the PFLO. However, the approach of the United Kingdom was very different from that of the United States. Its military intervention was principally restricted to a Squadron of the Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) – in addition, of course, to material and seconded personnel. Thus, the United Kingdom did not seek to eliminate the insurgency by a massive commitment of its own forces, utilizing the full resources of modern technological war (as did the United States). In other words, the British political-military establishment did not permit itself to be absorbed into a war of attrition. Indeed, the configuration of British foreign policy after 1971 entirely precluded any concept of heavy and extended commitment of its own armed forces in the defence of Oman. The capitulation in Aden clearly anticipated the total withdrawal of all British forces east of Suez; a decision finally implemented in 1971. Thus, to have launched an American-style intervention in Oman would have been inconsistent in terms of British foreign policy vis-a-vis the Middle East. Britain was clearly saved from the process of corrosion within its national fibre which frequently descends upon societies when large armies are despatched to distant theatres of war – in ever increasing numbers – and continually frustrated by the dynamics of insurgency compounded by hostile terrain. The Portuguese and American involvements in the Zambezi salient (3) and Vietnam respectively are obvious cases in point. With regard to Vietnam, the Vietcong profited enormously from the corrosion of national fibre within the USA.
- ii Such corrosion was reflected within the national sphere by anarchy on the university campus and urban insurgency within the depressed sectors of the cities. Within the specific context of the American armed forces, this corrosive process was exemplified by gross indiscipline (there were numerous instances of 'fragging', or the throwing of grenades at NCOs and officers), in addition to drug abuse on an extensive scale.
- ii It was clearly realized from the initial phases of the second Omani war that the COIN assault would have to be directed at the political-social fabric of Dhofari society; to an equal – if not greater – extent than the military aspects of the campaign. In other words, a vital aspect of modern insurgency was unequivocally apprehended; viz. that the revolutionary forces are directed primarily by the desire to undermine the political-economic-social base of the society under attack. This erosion provides the base for the military assault of the revolutionary forces. Hence, from the time of its arrival in Oman in 1970, the SAS adopted a programme which merged military with civil-political action; a policy which was continued on a more extensive scale by the Omani civil authorities.
- iii From the time of the accession of the Sultan Qaboos in 1970, there was the clear determination to win. Negotiations with the PFLO was never contemplated (although, of course defectors from the insurgent cause were extensively utilized in the firqats). In this respect, the response in Oman after 1970 represents the most marked contrast with the British response to EOKA in Cyprus in the late 1950s and the Marxist insurgency forces in neighbouring Aden during the late 1960s. It is germane to note within this context that those insurgencies which have enjoyed the most rapid success have largely been those in British controlled territories. (Admittedly, Malaya and Kenya represent important exceptions to this rule, but in each instance political control was relinquished soon after victory over the insurgent forces; in Malaya, the territory's independence was proclaimed in 1957, whilst the war was still in progress). A staggering illustration of this syndrome occurred in Aden in 1966. The Defence White Paper of 22 February 1966 stipulated that

'South Arabia is due to become independent by 1968, and we do not think it appropriate that we should maintain defence facilities there after that happens. We therefore intend to withdraw

our forces from the Aden base at that time.'

From the moment that Britain's total abdication of responsibility for South Arabia was announced, it meant that Britain lost all authority in the area.

The determination to secure total victory must, in large measure, be ascribed to the resilience of the Sultan Qaboos who, no doubt, was determined not to lose the throne to which he had acceded in such dramatic circumstances. The British political establishment was ready to lend limited military (thus ensuring a low profile) to an independent sovereign state; thereby avoiding the 'taint' of colonialism' which had attached to its defence of the Aden Protectorate.

- iv The Dhofar Campaign represented a decisive victory for the Security Forces. It should be borne in mind that the decade which witnessed this victory also bore witness to the final Vietcong victory in South Vietnam and the accession to power of insurgent forces in Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique.

Points (i) and (iv) clearly differentiate the Dhofar Campaign from the wars in French Indo-China, Algeria, South Vietnam, the Zambezi Salient and Angola. Point (i) further distinguishes the Dhofar War from the victories in Kenya and Malaya.

Having established this infrastructure of significance with regard to the contemporary situation in Southern Africa – in terms of immediate past and future – one is now in a position to elucidate the important principles of revolutionary warfare which emerged from a detailed study of the Second Omani War:-

1. The internal dynamics of insurgency: The Dhofari insurrection clearly reveals three important aspects of the internal dynamics of insurgency. The first is the penetration and domination of existing political factions opposed to the Government. The second is the destruction of traditional agencies within the society (social, political and economic and their replacement by Marxist-controlled institutions. The third is the subordination of the military to the political-administrative organizational infrastructure of the insurgent movement.
2. The external dynamics of insurgency: This facet of the war is related to the role of South Yemen (formerly the Aden Protectorate and

the Eastern and Western Aden Protectorates) as an 'exporter' of revolution; thereby implementing the 'domino' theory within the context of the Persian Gulf.

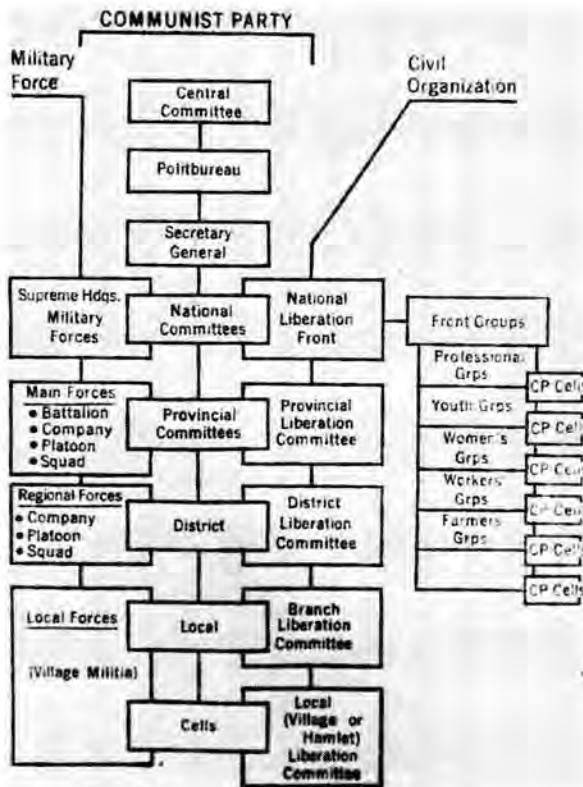
3. The subtle response of the Security Forces: The nature of this response, it is argued, was heavily dependent upon a clear and imaginative perception of the close interaction between the civil and military dimensions of revolutionary war (to the extent, in actual fact, that the distinction between the two dimensions entirely disappears).

The Internal Dimensions of Insurgency

These relate to what might be defined as 'interior manoeuvre'; i.e. the dynamics of insurgency within the immediate context of the insurgency itself.

It will be recalled that, in Section A of Part II, the supersession of the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF), the political movement which had initiated the insurrection in Dhofar, by the Marxist PF-LOAG (the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf; later PFLO – Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman) was discussed in some detail. This prelude to this seizure of control was an alliance between the DLF and PFLOAG. This process of initial participation in a 'common cause', ultimately yielding total domination, is emblematic of a universal pattern in Communist political warfare, centring upon the concept of the 'united front'.

In this operation, the Communists seek to consolidate and unite forces of discontent against the established government. The groups who comprise the united front need not agree with the objectives or goals of the CP. (It will be recalled that there was much suspicion of the PFLOAG by the Islamic traditionalists within the DLF). Nevertheless, the Party does offer its support. In this manner, the Communists maintain integrity, whilst becoming associated with other organizations. They have utilized the technique of the united front in most of their insurgencies. They form alliances with other groups, offering them the organizational support of the Party in return for a united front in support of some crucial issues. The rank-and-file of most organizations are willing to accept into their body anyone who professes to share their views. Many organizations have assumed that Communists would enter into their co-operative venture without subverting their organizations, whilst their cause



French rule. Predictably, it soon became Communist controlled. Ho Chi Minh officially dissolved the ICP in November 1945, with a view to more effectively disguising the operations of the ICP within the Front. In May 1946 he announced the establishment of the Mat Tran Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet Nam (Vietnamese Popular National Front), a broader front than the Vietminh (which many nationalists did not join), whose declared aim was 'independence and democracy'. In 1951, since the Front received most of its aid from Communist China, the Communists felt that their presence need no longer be disguised, and thus re-established the Communist Party within Indo-China. However, should some unforeseen event occur which led to their losing control of the Front, they wished to leave some official representation within the movement. The name Dang Lao Dong (Worker's Party) was carefully selected. One party document describes the reason for this choice of name:-

would benefit from the additional strength of the CP. Writing of this particular technique, Andrew Molnar (4) states:-

'By drawing a number of legitimate groups into a united front, the Communists can gain the prestige of speaking for a large and diverse group of people. Once on front, they seek to discredit the leaders of other organizations in order to capture control of their followings. Usually organizations join a mass front or coalition in order to achieve particular ends; the Communists join for the opportunity to subvert them. The theory is to fill power vacuums and to create new organizations to cope with new problems which are not being effectively handled within the context of existing organizations.'

One may demonstrate the united front technique with reference to Indo-China, South Vietnam and Greece.

With regard to Indo-China, in May 1941 members of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (ICP) formed the Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (League for the Independence of Vietnam; or, to use their popular name, the Vietminh). The organization was a broad coalition of political parties, all of which wished to 'free' Indo-China from

'It should never be admitted outside Party circles that the Worker's Party is the Communist Party and in its convert form for fear of frightening and alienating property owners and weakening national unity. To Party members and sympathisers, it can be admitted that the Worker's Party is the Communist Party, but to others it should be neither admitted nor denied.'

Repeating such tactics, in 1962 the Communists organized the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV). In order to control the movement, key members of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party journeyed to the South to control operations. Once firm control was established, a thinly disguised CP (People's Revolutionary Party - PRP) was formed, ostensibly independent of the North, but in effect an extension of the Lao Dong Worker's Party. The NFLSV was composed of a number of organizations. In addition to the Communist inner core - the PRP - two other political parties were represented within the movement; the Radical Socialist Party and the Democratic Party. There were also various 'liberation' associations, or front groups, comprising farmer's, women's, students' and workers' organizations; in addition to several minor groups; e.g. the Afro-Asian Solidarity League and Peace Preservation Committee, which orientated towards internal and external matters. The NFLSV, and its military arm, the National Liberation Army, comprised the Vietcong. The leadership of the NFLSV, the National Liberation Army and the PRP, was an interlocking one, the

communists holding multiple positions in all three organizations. Political direction and control of the NFLSV was exercised by the Lao Dong through the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSV). Greece exemplifies not only the united front technique but the calculated Communist association with national resistance movements during World War 2 (also evident in Malaya, Yugoslavia and the Philippines). In September 1941 the Greek Communist Party (KKE) initiated a nation-wide resistance movement. The Communists organized the Greek National Liberation Front (EAM) to enlist all sectors of Greek society. All citizens and classes that favoured resistance to the Nazis and 'free' elections after the war were welcomed. The EAM sought and won the support of some left wing political leaders and formed a coalition comprising the KKE, the Union of Popular Democracy (ELD), the Socialist Party of Greece (SKE), the United Socialist Party of Greece (ESKE) and the Greek Agrarian Party (AKE). Each of these parties had one representative on a central committee, which was the policy making organ of EAM. Although it appeared that the EAM comprised many parties, in point of fact the Communists controlled most of the power through the front's functional groups. The EAM organized the Greek's People Liberation Army (ELAS), the United All Greece Youth Organization (EPON), the National Mutual Aid (EA), and the Worker's National Liberation Front (EEAM).

The Portuguese coup of April 1974 exemplifies the most recent example of the united front technique. Within metropolitan Portugal, the umbrella organization corresponding to the NFLSV was termed the MFA (the Armed Forces Revolutionary Movement) comprising a number of political organizations and sectors of opinion (including, of course, the Communists). (5)

It was stated in Section A of Part II that the atrocities practiced by the PFLOAG (leading to many defections by former members of the DLF to Government forces) was principally orientated towards the elimination of the traditional Islamic religious and social mores within Dhofari society; these coercive measures compounding and supplementing the less obvious psychological and political assaults by the PFLOAG. This process is reflective of a tradition technique in Communist political warfare; viz. the penetration of the established political-social-economic agencies of the society.

Within the context of contemporary Southern

Africa, such terms as 'insurgency' and 'infiltration' are commonly employed. Usually such terms are interpreted within a strictly military context; e.g. the implanting of terrorists from a neighbouring state is the usual definition of 'infiltration'; whilst 'insurgency' is invariably defined in terms of para-military operations – ambushes, raids, sabotage, etc. – directed against key military/civilian installations, communications, the security forces, etc. However, such interpretations remain essentially superficial. The concept of infiltration within the context of insurgent operations is symptomatic of an overall and deeply rooted political programme. According to classic Communist doctrine, para-military attacks against forces must not be initiated until a viable power base has been firmly established within the society under attack.

Communist theory advocates that a small group of highly disciplined and motivated individuals, operating through mass organizations, can manipulate and ultimately control the support required to win the revolutionary conflict. Obviously, Oman, being an extremely primitive and isolated society, did not possess the institutionalized mass organizations traditionally favoured by Communist insurgency movements for this corrosive process (e.g. trade unions and educational institutions; as was the case in Greece, Malaya and the Philippines). Nevertheless, the central impetus and motivation remained the same in Oman as in more developed societies on the part of the insurgency movement. It is of interest to note within this context that the counter-propaganda propagated by the Government information services emphasized the assertion of the traditional Islamic religion in opposition to the iconoclastic approach of the PFLOAG/PFLO. Similarly, when it became apparent that the concept of a de-tribalized firqat was completely antipathetic to the norms and traditions of Dhofari society, this approach was abandoned by the Government forces; and the firqats were allowed to develop upon a tribal basis. The latitude permitted to the firqats – even to the extent of countenancing gross indiscipline – was similarly rooted in the acceptance of traditional social mores and willingness to work within those mores.

The Marxist erosion of the traditional agencies of society within Oman was directed towards the major social organizational form; viz. the village and the tribal structure. It thus closely corresponded to the policy pursued by the Vietminh in French Indo-China, known as 'pourissement'

('rotting'). Within this context, the following quotation (6) is highly relevant:

'The objects of "pourissement" were – and are – to destroy the functions of government in any chosen area, and to transfer the loyalty of the population to the terrorists. The methods are multiple – the assassination of government appointed headmen, schoolteachers and other local officials; the interruptions of tax paying to the government; the intimidation of the village council. The Vietminh developed this calculated policy of intimidation into a policy of encouraging nationalist feeling, political 'education' ('indoctrination' would, perhaps, be a more appropriate term), the provision of medical and welfare services, and the formation of a village militia – in short the creation of a 'state within a state', a favourite technique of Communist insurgency.'

The precedent of French Indo-China in this regard is extremely pertinent in Oman; especially as it points to the ultimate objective of 'pourissement' within all societies subject to insurgency; viz. the creation of 'shadow government'.

A negligent central administration is a vital ally in the initial phases of the insurgency process. It is germane to note that the Vietminh insurgency commenced shortly after the end of World War II, during which French authority in Indo-China had been seriously debilitated by the Japanese occupation. Similarly, the Portuguese exercised very little control beyond the main administrative centres in Mozambique and Angola. Shadow governments are usually initiated in towns and villages where little or no governmental control exists. Such places usually have none of the advantages of community action or organization (e.g. schools, sanitation facilities, medical services, police protection, courts, or political participation). In the initial phase of the subversive process, infiltrators live among the villagers or townsmen, carefully selecting young potential leaders, and then organize them into nucleus cells. Cell members then agitate, transforming specific grievances into support for the pro-insurgent cause. Later armed guerrillas and specific agitators visit the village. With the implicit threat suggested by the presence of the guerrillas, 'free' elections are held. Such elections are usually held when a systematic programme of terror – as discussed below – has effectively demonstrated the ability of the insurgent movement to replace the central government as the

administration. The candidates are the members of the covert cells. A shadow government is then established, masquerading as the representative government of the community. Through social organizations (e.g. catering to educational, medical, economic and labour needs) population control is then established, and initial resistance is transformed into varying degrees of compliance, as the inhabitants welcome the advent of hospitals, schools, co-operative schemes, etc. For those who continue to resist, information from covert agents and political police alert the insurgents to any organized opposition, which can then be crushed by the coercive machinery of the insurgent organization. Thus, the old power structure is assaulted, as drastic changes are effected within the community's political and economic institutions. As a multiplicity of new organizations require new leaders, young members of the village (usually those recruited by the underground) are allocated the responsibilities of power, usually reserved in the traditional system for the elders and wealthy.

As a village gives increasing support to the underground shadow government, the legal government may be prompted to retaliate or to launch a counter-attack. Villagers who were involved in the shadow government, or who resisted the government's return, may be punished. However, the government's return is frequently short-lived, with government troops generally leaving after a short period, because of the remoteness or apparent irrelevance of the village in overall government programmes. The Communists then return to resume their shadow government control, the personnel and apparatus of which remain in substance. Once the village is firmly under control of the insurgents, it is progressively transformed into a base for the military struggle. The villagers are persuaded, either through incentives or through the coercive measure available to the machinery of the shadow government, to provide food, money and a place to store arms and ammunition.

The village males are recruited into active service, farming their lands by day and initiating para-military operations by night.

The disruption of government control remains one of the primary motivations and objectives of insurgency. It is precisely this motivation which underlies the important component of terrorism within the tactics of the insurgent forces. The common aim of terrorists in all insurgencies re-

mains consistent; viz. the destruction of the existing organization of the population. Terrorist acts are perpetrated against government officials and key supporters, thereby rendering it most unsafe to be a government official and – through a programme of systematic assassination – crippling the very function of government. This theory that the subversive employment of terror intimidates and disrupts government was most evident in South Vietnam, in which the Vietcong seriously weakened control in certain regions by killing and kidnapping provincial chiefs, police officials, village guards and landlords (thereby continuing the tactics of their Vietminh predecessors in Indo-China). The Vietcong also disrupted the South Vietnamese social welfare and medical programmes. A highly successful malaria eradication programme, for example, was halted in 1961, due to high casualties among its personnel caused by terrorists. Simultaneously, the effective use of terror serves as a demonstration of the insurgents' strength. If the security forces are unable to curb the terrorists' threat, the citizen tends to lose confidence in a state whose inherent mission is to guarantee his/her safety. Through a demonstration of strength by effective assassination of government and village leaders, the Vietcong sought to convince the population that the regime in Saigon could not protect them. When, through this process, the machinery of government in one area had come to a virtual standstill, the Vietcong re-established social order by creating a shadow government, in the manner discussed above; with its own 'officialdom' to collect taxes, operate schools (thereby facilitating political indoctrination) and implementing 'population control' measures (e.g. establishing instruments of social coercion such as courts of law and enforcement agencies) as well as propanganda-orientated mass discussion, part of a systematic programme of indoctrination.

The political impetus to terrorism is vividly illustrated in the practice of 'armed propanganda'. In Vietnam, Vietcong agitation was effected by armed propanganda units and cadre agitprop (agitation and propanganda) agents, supplemented by relatively simple propanganda subcommittees. A Vietcong indoctrination pamphlet succinctly describes the non-military responsibilities of its soldiers in the political struggle:

'Because of their prestige, the members of the armed forces have great propanganda potentiality. If the fighter with a rifle in his hand knows how to make propanganda, to

praise the political struggle, and to educate the masses about their duty of making the political attack, his influence may be very strong. But if he simply calls on the population to join him in the armed struggle, he will cause great damage. He must say

'Those who do political struggling are as important as we who fight with rifles. If you do not take up the political struggle, we will be unable to defeat the enemy with our rifles.'

Armed propanganda companies, serving each province, although primarily military, were also responsible for psychological warfare. These units infiltrated by night those villages which by day were controlled by government troops. The armed propanganda units ranged in strength from a squad to a company. Their duties included agitation, recruitment and selective terrorism through the enforcement of death sentences. The possession of weapons endowed such teams with an air of prestige before a village audience. As a leading figure in the Philippine HUK movement commented:

'The people are always impressed by the arms, not out of fear but out of a feeling of strength. We get up before the people, backed by our arms, and give them the message of the struggle. It is never difficult after that.' (7)

The intention to demonstrate the strength of the insurgent movement is the reason why many atrocities are committed publicly. The FLN in Algeria favoured this tactic, also very common in Rhodesia. Witnesses to terrorist acts were not eliminated but spared, in order to confirm the FLN success. Similarly, Moslems who supported the French were warned by letters bearing FNL crest to desist from co-operating with the French; if any refused, the FLN execution order was attached to the corpse.

It will be recalled in Section A of Part II that, in 1970, the Sultan's forces controlled only Salalah; and, to an indeterminate degree, the coastal towns of Mirbat and Taqa. The territory under the control of the insurgents, it should be borne in mind, had not been seized by armed attack, but by the programme of 'pourissement'.

In section A of Part II a prominent feature of the insurgent organization clearly emerges; viz. the clear distinction between the political and military facets of the insurrection, and the para-

mountainy of the former. The PFLO (Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman, as it ultimately became) was the political wing of the movement; its military wing being the PLA (People's Liberation Army). This organizational infrastructure is clearly symptomatic of a universalized pattern in Communist insurgency warfare, and is closely related to the objective of establishing shadow governments.

The classical model of Communist insurgent organization prescribes an interlocking structure of three organizations (cf. fig). First, one has the hierarchical military structure descending in a chain of command as follows:-

Supreme HQ – Main Forces (organized into battalion, company, platoon and squad strengths) – Regional Forces (organized similarly into company, platoon and squad strength) – local forces (village militia).

The civil organization is structured according to a hierarchical basis also, as follows:-

National Liberation Front – Provincial Liberation Committee – Branch Liberation Committee – Local (village or hamlet) Liberation Committees.

It is this civilian administrative machine which provides the apparatus for the 'shadow government' after the process of infiltration has effectively destroyed the village's allegiance to the central government. The two parallel organizations are interlocked through the channel of a liaison organizing structure comprising:-

Central committee – Politbureau – Secretary General – National Committee – Cells.

The vitally important consideration to bear in mind is that the political arm of the insurgent movement invariably enjoys the ascendancy.

One may illustrate the functioning of the insurgent organizational infrastructure with regard to the Philippines and Greece.

With reference to the Philippines, the Hukbalahap (HUK) organization was clearly modelled upon the pattern of other Communist insurgent organizations. The chain of command included the Secretary General, a 31 man Central Committee, and an 11 man Politbureau. The Secretary General directed national committees for organization, education, finance, intelligence and the military. The military committee, com-

prised of members of the Politbureau, exercised command control of the army. Its policies and decisions were effected by the commander of the Headquarters who, with his deputy commanders and staff, formed the GHQ. Directly subordinate to the GHQ were the party regional committees (RECOS), which at one time numbered approximately 10 and were believed to be the highest headquarters in direct command of troop units for tactical operations. The RECOS functioned also as territorial and administrative HQs, with responsibility for propaganda and organization functions. Regional commanders represented the GHQ in their areas, supervising and co-ordinating military plans and political activities. They also developed tactical plans for implementation by their subordinate field commanders. At the regional level there were also organization committees in charge of establishing local Communist cells, observing the loyalty of party members, indoctrinating new members and supervising training. Young men who were HUK members were returned to their native villages to recruit for the local guerrilla force. They were to organize their villages for the HUKs by establishing committees of trusted elders. Each village committee was organized into two groups; one a non-military underground group, the other military. The majority of the male villagers were recruited and organized into the local reserves. They worked their farms by day and served as guerrillas by night. The non-military underground provided intelligence, food supplies and medical care for the guerrilla units. In the HUK organizational structure, featuring the chain of command of Secretary General – Central Committee – Politbureau, then descending through GHQ – Party Regional Committee – Village Committees, one has illustrated the interlocking structure of the political and military functions of insurgency.

With regard to Greece, the British estimated that the ELAS (cf. above) was composed of approximately 50 000 men, whilst the EAM possessed from 300 000 to 750 000 members. The EAM gave estimates of 85 000 for the ELAS membership and approximately 2 000 000 for that of EAM.

It is within the context of the creation of shadow governments that one realizes the reason for the insurgent subordination of military to political components within the administrative hierarchy. As the central motive for para-military activity is not the defeat of government military forces but the control of the civilian population, the direct-

ing agency must be political; as, once government control has been negated, the administrative echelons of the insurgency movement transfer their expertise and experience from the actual insurrection into the sphere of government.

The Greek resistance movement during World War II provides an outstanding example of how a small, but relatively well organized party can control a vast insurgent movement and exercise authority over a large segment of the population. In September 1941 the Greek Communist Party (KKE) initiated a nationwide resistance movement. The Communist organized the Greek National Liberation Front (EAM) to recruit and enlist all sectors of Greek society. The EAM organized the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS). By 1943 the EAM controlled a large section of Greece through an administrative hierarchy and local self-government. In each village there were four EAM groups; the EA (the National Mutual Aid Association), the EPON (the United All Greece Youth Organization); the Guerrilla Commissariat or ETA, and the general EAM committee. The Secretary of the EAM was termed the 'ipefthinos' (the 'responsible one'). It was his duty to check all travellers entering a village to confirm their identification, to recommend to training with ELAS, and to follow orders from his direct superiors. It was through the ipefthinos in each village that the Communists exerted control. Before the War, the Communists were the only party with extensive underground experience, and the majority of the organizers of the EAM were Communists. Thus, the Communists who organized the EAM within a village usually became the leading EAM functionaries. Through the election of higher level officials, the Communists further increased their influence. Village ipefthinos elected the members of the district EAM Committee. Each region in turn had one representative on the EAM Central Committee. Cities such as Athens, Piraeus and Salonika also had one representative on the Central Committee. The city representatives were elected by the neighbouring EAM committees, the EAM professional and trades organizations.

The 25 delegates on the EAM Central Committee represented political parties, the functional organization, the ELAS, EPON, EA, regions and large cities. Through the ipefthinos the Communists had a majority of the delegates of the EAM Central Committee, although they comprised approximately only 10% of the overall EAM membership. The EAM Central Committee appointed the two top leaders of ELAS, which had two

bodies; a high command which executed the military operations, and a Central Committee which formulated policy. All political issues, however, were resolved by the EAM, which controlled the armed forces through the officers known as 'kapetanios' (approximating to political commissars); whilst each ELAS unit was led by a military commander who was responsible for all military decisions; at a comparable level the 'kapetanios' were responsible for propaganda and morale within the unit, and relations between the unit and the civilian population. In the ELAS HQ there was a military commander, a kapetanios, and an additional EAM representative. Invariably, the kapetanios and the EAM representative were Communists. Although the military were in command of combat operations, the army was controlled by the EAM and, ultimately, by the Communist Party.

As in the HUK insurgency (circa 1946–1955), the Greek Communist organizational structure reveals three central features:— an administrative hierarchy, based on Central Committee – Regional Committee – District Committee – Village Committee; within this organization the subordination of the military component to the political (echoing the HUK chain of command, which subordinated the GHQ of the Military Committee to the Secretary General); and the interlocking military and political functions, embodied in the presence of the kapetanios and the EAM representatives within the ELAS HQ.

Similarly, in Malaya one encounters a parallel political-military organization during the Communist insurgency. One had an overt armed body, the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA), the ethnic base of which was, predictably, Chinese, and an underground force, the Min Yuen; in Yugoslavia (1941–1945) the National Liberation Army and the national Liberation Committee. The insurgency movement within Rhodesia revealed similar organizational patterns. One had the political movements – ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African's People's Union), owing allegiance to Mugabe (latterly based in Mozambique) and Nkomo (based in Zambia) respectively. The military wings of ZANU-ZAPU were known as ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) and ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) respectively. In the diagrammatic representation of the ZANU-/ZANLA forces contained in Maj Gen R. Reid Daly's account of the Selous Scouts (8) it is clearly apparent that, at every level of command,

the political representatives of ZANU held equal power with the representatives of the movement's military wing (ZANLA).

The External Dynamics of Insurgency

This refers to a process whereby vital Western spheres of influence are destroyed and absorbed into the orbit of the Eastern bloc through sponsorship of anti-western insurgency movements. The destruction of the Sultanate of Oman would have rendered oil supplies from the Persian Gulf virtually untenable, in view of Oman's strategic situation vis-a-vis the Gulf of Hormuz, discussed in Part I of this study (9). It would thereby have completed the process initiated in 1967, when Aden fell to a Marxist insurgency movement. Soviet objectives in the Middle East may be itemised thus:-

- i) To occupy the vacuum created by the departure of the British and to establish hegemony over the entire area.
- ii) In pursuit of this ultimate objective, to foster the emergence of client states (Iraq, Syria, the South Yemen); to frustrate Chinese penetration of the area; to reduce or remove American influence (but stopping short of confrontation).
- iii) To gain control over some or all of the major oil sources, both for the Soviets and satellite needs, and for the purpose of exerting leverage over Western Europe, Japan and – to a lesser extent – the United States, by making their imports of Middle East oil dependent upon Soviet 'goodwill'. (Although the Soviet Union exports oil, it does so partly at the expense of industry; the Warsaw Pact states require at least 100 m. tons per annum, in addition to the smaller amount imported from the USSR).
- iv) To restore the Suez Canal to its former position of dominance whilst simultaneously cementing its power in Egypt. This would enable the Soviet Union's powerful Mediterranean fleet to join forces with the weaker Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean and thereby enormously increase the USSR's strategic ability to disrupt the Cape oil route. Admittedly, Soviet influence in Egypt has suffered a marked deterioration in recent years.

Aden exemplifies the process whereby insurgency has implemented the first three objectives. First, it has ejected the British from a vital sphere of influence. Second, the marxist orienta-

tion of the United National Front (the name adopted by the former National Liberation Front after its accession to power) ensured the emergence of a client state most sympathetic to Soviet aspirations in this region (although the allegiance of South Yemen – formerly Aden – has shifted to China.) Third, it is most strategically placed to facilitate a profound Soviet threat to Western oil routes. A tanker leaving the head of the Gulf sails past Bahrain and Qatar, then between Iran and the Arab Emirates, out through the straits of Hormuz, along part of the Oman coast, then straight across the Indian Ocean, nearing land opposite Nacala, in Mozambique. It then follows the African coast to the Cape of Good Hope and strikes out into the Atlantic, either Westwards for the Americas or North West to skirt the bulge of equatorial Africa, before edging eastwards towards the European ports. It can thus be seen that the capture of the Aden Protectorate by the National Liberation Front (as it then was) has posed a serious Soviet threat to the route which traverses the Horn of Africa. The South Yemen not only possesses an excellent natural harbour but also actively supports insurgency in Oman and the Arabian Gulf. It should also be borne in mind that the island of Perim (a former British coaling station) in the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, at the entrance of the Red Sea, is now under control of South Yemen, and has extremely valuable naval facilities.

Such 'exterior' manoeuvre' is underpinned by the well known 'domino strategy'. The role of South Yemen in actively propagating insurrection in the neighbouring Oman counterpoints the sponsorship of the Vietcong in South Vietnam by North Vietnam; both clearly exemplifying the 'domino strategy'. This concept postulates that defeat by insurgent forces within any particular theatre of operations (i.e. abdication of power by the security forces, prompted either by military defeat, as in French Indo-China and South Vietnam; or by political capitulation, as in Rhodesia, Algeria, Cyprus or Aden) provides the insurgents' sponsoring power with a launching pad from which to extend its conquests. This concept powerfully influenced American strategic thought in the 1960s, and was a motivating factor in the escalating US commitment to South Vietnam. It has been heavily discredited during the preceding decade, due largely to the opinion forming power of the news media. However, the validity of the concept has certainly not been undermined by the realities of the geo-political situation. The defeat of the French in Indo-China provided the basis for insurgency within the neigh-

bouring state of South Vietnam (North Vietnam providing the supply and organizing base). The defeat of South Vietnam formed part of an overall strategic programme of conquest in Laos and Cambodia. Laos and South Vietnam were contiguous with North Vietnam, whose regime was less a satellite state of the Sino-Soviet bloc than the driving force projecting Chinese influence. Laos and Cambodia proved partially containable within the Western orbit of influence only so long as the main efforts of the North Vietnamese regime in sponsoring insurgency were absorbed in South Vietnam. Containment of Communist expansionism thus pivoted upon the success of the American commitment to South Vietnam. The example of South Vietnam thus provided a basis for the application of the domino principle to the Middle East (and, indeed, to Southern Africa also). The validity of the domino principle becomes obvious when one considers that, soon after the success of the insurgent movement (i.e. when it has captured control of the government) the state provides external training bases for insurgency within neighbouring states. Angolan insurgents were sent to Tunisia, where they undertook a seven month course with the Algerian Liberation Army (ALN), the military wing of the FLN. Upon their return, 18 were appointed officers and given the task of training the entire insurgent army. The role of the MPLA controlled Angola in providing sanctuary and training for SWAPO terrorists is well known. FRELIMO incursions into Rhodesia soon after the former's success in Mozambique are manifestations of the same programme. The PDRY support for the PFLO within Oman thus exemplifies a very common policy.

The Implications of the SAS Response

There can be little doubt that, although direct British military participation within Oman was extremely limited in terms of personnel, this direct intervention was critical in ensuring the success of the Sultan's forces. Within the specific context of the COIN dimensions of the conflict, the subtle response of the Special Air Service Regiment was a major contributory factor to this success. The essence of their approach, as intimated above, was a clear perception of the close interaction between the military and non-military facets of a COIN campaign. In other words, it was realized that the conquests of the PFLO would necessitate the 'counter-infiltration' into the fabric of Dhofari society. The civic action programmes initiated by the SAS (of which the

relief operation mounted on the island of Al Hal-laniyah, in June 1975 – discussed in Section A – was an outstanding example), and continued by the Civil Aid Department of the Omani Government, was the manifestation of this subtle awareness of the complex manifestations of COIN warfare. The necessity for such counter-infiltration becomes immediately apparent when one considers that the ultimate insurgent motive is not military attacks upon government forces (which occupy a very low priority indeed) but erosion of governmental control of the population, culminating in the creation of 'shadow governments' (cf. above). It should, however, be emphasized that such civic action programmes must always be integrated into a co-ordinated military programme. In other words, they must never be divorced from the overriding military objectives of regaining territory. In Oman the firqats played a leading role in re-establishing the infrastructure of government (e.g. providing wells and social facilities) after the adoo had been expelled from a particular region by military methods. The ability of the enemy to reoccupy territory lost by Government forces through a programme of 'pourissement' was thus obstructed. In short, civilian action programmes complemented and interacted with military policy.

In this respect, the British approach represented a refreshing and most imaginative contrast to the dismissal record of many powers when confronted with COIN wars. In his work, *Low Intensity Operations*, F. Kitson (9) speaks of the inadequacy of conventional warfare in coping with insurgency:

'At the moment many of the people (officers commanding units dealing with the insurgents) deliberately try to present the situation to their subordinates in terms of conventional war. They make rousing speeches about knocking the enemy for six, and they indulge in frequent redeployments and other activities designed to create the illusion of battle. But quite apart from the tactical disadvantages which accrue, e.g. lack of continuity, they actually manage to aggravate the strains on their subordinates because they are in effect encouraging the development of the characteristics which are unsuited to this particular type of operation, while retarding the growth of those which might be useful. In other words, they are leading their men away from the real battlefield on to a fictitious one of their own imagining.'

It is a syndrome most evident in French Indo-China and Vietnam. The French defensive mentality, extending in a shain of strategic thought linking Verdun with the Maginot line and culminating in Dien Bien Phu, is a notable example. (Perhaps Vauban has had an excessive impact upon French military thought). The particular American obsession in Vietnam was gross over-reliance upon highly sophisticated air power and artillery fire. This is symptomatic of a profound military conservatism which could not realise the hopeless impracticability of applying European models of warfare to radically contrasting environments. In his work, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, Norman Dixon (10) writes of this conservatism, as exemplified in Vietnam, and of the factors contributing towards it:

'To be more specific, there are three factors which predispose towards error in modern generalship. Firstly, thanks to Marconi and the thermionic valve, larger armies can now be controlled from much further away by minds which still have been selected and trained by an earlier form of warfare and are now prevented by sheer distance from obtaining any real feel for the battle. Secondly, the whole complexity of modern war has meant large staffs with a consequent multiplication of the sources of distortion in the flow of essential information. Finally, there is the sad irony that the best intentions of modern generals, particularly at the level of commander-in-chief, may be hazarded by the sheer wealth of technological resources now placed at their disposal. . . Any doubts as to whether the three factors of remote control, swollen staffs, and a wealth of resources make for the incompetence are removed by the contemplation of Vietnam.'

The writer categorises Westmoreland as 'a by no means unintelligent military commander, but bemused by the sheer weight of destructive energy.' He continues:

'Like the Boer leaders half a century earlier, the versatile General Giap and his commander in chief. . . made the huge professionally trained and over-equipped army of their enemies look utterly ridiculous, and their leaders helplessly irate. Unfettered by traditional militarism, lacking an excess of brute force, and without an obsession with capturing real estate, HO and Giap relied on poor men's strategies – surprise, de-

ception, and the ability to melt away. They relied on on the fact that Westmoreland would expend his energies swatting wherever they had last been heard of while they got ready to sting him somewhere else. And as Lyndon and 'Westy' got madder, so that vast tracts of South-East Asia reeled their rage, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong flitted around them and through them, puncturing the myth of American supremacy.'

Perhaps the most cogent illustration of the enormity of folly induced by the technological response to insurgency, as practised by American forces in Vietnam, is provided by the institution of the concept of the 'body count', and the single statistic that each unit in this 'body count' cost \$66 000 to place there. Further, although the air forces were composed of professional, long service, highly skilled technicians, the ground forces – by virtue of the draft and short (one year) tours of duty of Vietnam – had to be regarded as totally unskilled for the types of task required of them. The scale of industrial effort was such that it required between seven and nine men to maintain each infantryman and artilleryman in the field; thus, of the nearly half-a-million troops committed to Vietnam, by 1968 barely 80 000 were combat troops.

Admittedly, where advanced techniques of industrial warfare were appropriate, the Americans were outstandingly successful. Thus, in the conventional fighting which broke out on a large scale in 1972, when desperation drove the North Vietnamese into an armoured invasion across the de-militarized zone, American skill and technology, fighting in a three-dimensional cube within a specific area, rather than a line, was outstandingly successful, and North Vietnamese armour suffered severely. Tactical mobility through three dimensions has been developed by the US forces to a point much in advance of any hitherto achieved. However, where such techniques are singularly inappropriate, as in the long battle against the Vietcong insurgency (essentially an extension of the French Indo-China conflict of 1946–1954), the failure of the American military establishment to envisage, let alone execute, any alternative to its industrialized-technological approach to war, proved disastrous. The single outstanding characteristic of insurgency, or 'revolutionary people's war' is the elusiveness of the target. The sheer volume of the firepower at the disposal of the US forces reduced mobility, necessitating the establishment

of large 'fire bases', 'fire free areas', armament convoys, and the abandonment of the countryside to the enemy. Thus, as in Mozambique, the ground forces became increasingly locked up in garrison or escort duties. Since the countryside was Vietcong territory, right up to the barbed wire encircling the fire bases at night, every move outside the bases developed into a sortie, designed to draw the Vietcong into battle. Since the Vietcong existed within the 'sea' of the surrounding population, all the inhabitants of Vietnam became potential enemies. Thus developed the policy of defoliation; chemical warfare against crops; 'search and destroy' raids (in which any opposition – real or imagined – required an immediate call for airborne or artillery counter action; and, eventually, of punitive action designed as much to satisfy the frustrations of American troops as to serve any real military need. And thus, with the treatment of the infantry as unskilled labour rotated through units, rather than united into units, came also the constant deterioration of discipline and morale, to the point of 'fragging' and mutiny referred to above.

A similar pattern is evident in the Portuguese effort in Mozambique. That the Portuguese shared the failure of the military imagination exemplified in Vietnam cannot be doubted. Writing of Portuguese tactics in the African wars, Eduardo Mondlane, in his *The Struggle for Mozambique* (11) states:

Because the Portuguese troops are tied down in defending various settled positions, the guerilla forces always have the initiative in choosing the time and place to mount an attack. FRELIMO forces are fighting on their own ground, in a terrain they know. . . A defeat for the Portuguese means that the struggle is pushed into a new area, and that as a result they have to bring up more combat troops there, weakening still further their overall position. . . A defeat for FRELIMO is more easily retrievable, as it involves only a temporary reduction in strength in one area. . . On the military front, the Portuguese face all the problems of a regular army combatting a guerilla force. . . First of all, only a small fraction of the armed forces can be used in action. The colonial government must employ large numbers to protect towns, economic interests, lines of communications, and to guard the population confined in 'protected villages.' Thus, out of the 65 000 Portuguese soldiers in Mozambique, only about 30 000 are used

against our forces in Niassa and Cabo Delgado; and not even all these are free to engage in action against us, since many are pinned down defending strategic points and population centres in the towns. Secondly, the Portuguese are fighting on unfamiliar terrain against an enemy which belongs to that terrain and knows it well. Much of the land in these northern provinces is heavily wooded, providing good cover for the guerrillas in their bases. Often the only means of penetrating the bush is along narrow footpaths, where a body of men must walk in single file, a sitting target for ambush. In such conditions, heavily equipment like aircraft and armoured vehicles is of little use.'

Admittedly, Mondlane is pro-FRELIMO (he was President of FRELIMO between its formation in 1962 and his assassination in 1969). However, his portrayal of Portuguese COIN tactics contains a high degree of accuracy. (Nevertheless, this 'saturation' approach of the Portuguese in the Lusophone wars represents only one facet of their approach in COIN operations. As the war progressed far more flexible tactics were adopted (12)).

Western powers are not alone in this lack of judgement and expertise in coping with COIN conflicts. It may, indeed, be argued that similar stereotyped approaches marred the operations of the Rhodesian forces. Within this context, Thomas Arbuckle (13), writing in 1978, states:

'The real problem is that the Rhodesian military have misunderstood the nature of the war which they are fighting. They have failed to realize that the war is essentially political rather than military and that the guerrillas have no immediate need to be militarily efficient. The guerrilla's aim is to hit soft targets for maximum political impact and to keep the Security Forces off balance, spreading them out in the large rural space to allow him freedom to pursue his indoctrination, intimidation and political preperation of his rural base. . . political control of the countryside has ensured a secure base for the guerrilla enabling him to achieve superior mobility.'

'Making war on rebellion', T.E. Lawrence ('Lawrence of Arabia') wrote in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, is slow and messy like eating soup with a knife.' By 'war' Lawrence implied technological

war, with its appendages of communications systems, supply problems, etc. Lawrence is, in effect, prophesying the future technological failures to counteract insurgency movements, on the part of the French and Americans, in Indo-China and South Vietnam respectively, the Portuguese in Mozambique and the Rhodesian Security Forces.

The SAS role in Oman leads one to contemplate new conceptions of the military profile required in COIN operations; a profile in which attributes more commonly associated with civilian administrators (e.g. psychological awareness, sociological sensitivity linguistic skills, etc.) are as equally important as traditional military attributes. In effect, therefore, the demands of COIN warfare may well require new concepts in military education.

The Implications of the Conventional Dimensions of the Dhofar Conflict

Although the COIN and conventional aspects of the Dhofari Campaign are separately discussed in this paper, it should be constantly borne in mind that the success of the Government Forces in 1975 could not possibly have been attained unless a successful COIN campaign had been waged during the preceding five years. It was precisely this groundwork that ensured that the 'cordon sanitaires' established by the Security Forces (i.e. the Hornbeam, Hammer and Damavand Lines) did not suffer from the same fate as the 'de Lattre' line in Indo-China; i.e. subject to constant infiltration by the insurgent forces. In other words, the successful clearance of insurgent forces from the areas in question facilitated the firm establishment of military forces capable of patrolling the 'cordon sanitaire' and thereby rendering the concept of 'active defence' extremely effective. Moreover, the decisive drive by the Government forces to the west and south of Dhofar in 1975 would have been impossible had a powerful guerrilla force remained in their rear, continually disrupting communications and sabotaging key installations. However, the degree of interrelationship between COIN and conventional warfare contains further complex layers. A successful COIN campaign will compel the enemy to adopt a more conventional stance before the insurgents' conventional military forces are in a position to challenge those of the Security Forces. This position clearly emerged in Dhofar. In other words, the Security Forces can reverse the dynamics of insurgency and hasten

their enemy's advance to a conventional stance before the insurgents are ready to adopt such a position (i.e. whilst the Security Forces are in an aggressive offensive position). Once the PFLO-/PLA had adopted this conventional stance, they became extremely vulnerable to the advantages possessed by regular forces; viz. the flexibility which accrues from their superior communications, mobility, logistics and superior fire power. The implications of this interaction between conventional and COIN warfare are extremely important. It is often assumed that COIN and conventional warfare are entirely different and distinct facets of modern military theory. However, as Oman clearly illustrated, the latter may be complementary, in a decisive manner, to the former.

The second important consideration to emerge from the Dhofari Campaign within the conventional context is that, where a hostile force is actively supported and maintained by a neighbouring state, decisive victory over that hostile force may, in many instances, inevitably involve conflict with the neighbouring state. In other words, the expansion of the conflict may be unavoidable if permanent and enduring success is to be achieved. It will be recalled that the active support of the PFLO/PLA forces by South Yemen only effectively ceased after air and artillery attacks upon Hauf and its environs. This consideration leads one also to consider a further dimension of the interrelationship between COIN and conventional warfare.

It becomes apparent that the second Omani war only involved direct attack upon the PDRY (the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, as South Yemen is officially designated) in its closing stages (in the last month of the war, in actual fact). The degree of dependence by the PFLO-/PLA upon the PDRY (whence the movement had derived) was so heavy that one wonders if a concerted assault upon the PDRY at a much earlier point in time would have ensured a far earlier victory. In other words, if a COIN offensive within Dhofar had been counterpointed by a conventional war against the PDRY from the outset, the two dimensions of the conflict would have complemented one another.

The third important lesson to emerge from the Dhofar Campaign is the clear need for flexibility in planning. As was stated in Section A of Part II, Sarfait suddenly emerged as the principal area of operations – in its original intended role as a diversionary movement – following upon the un-

expected success of the Sarfait garrison in clearing the area between Sarfait and the sea. The new plan of operations was swiftly implemented; thereby pointing to the need to be free of stereotyped preconception when implementing strategic movements.

Finally, the second Omani war leads one to contemplate the limitations of technology even within the context of conventional warfare. Maj Gen Perkins comments upon this question in the following manner (14).

'Active operations such as those of the Dhofar war remind us again that the man is more important than his equipment. In peacetime we tend to be mesmerised by the latter. Its maintenance detracts from training and its handling on exercise from more important issues. During peacetime manoeuvres the most difficult part of the business is the co-ordination required to get APCs, helicopter, armour and other paraphernalia to the objective at the right time with everything working; when the infantry debouch the problem is virtually over. In war the real problem has just started. Similar considerations with different emphasis arise in the air and at sea. The crucial bit of business is the 10 per cent or less in the face of the enemy and we should keep it as simple as possible.'

Conclusion

It will be noted in the foregoing paper that the second war in the Oman is placed within a universalized context. The Campaign has been closely related to, and compared with, insurgencies in Indo-China, South Vietnam, Rhodesia, Mozambique, Malaya, Greece and the Philippines. The fact that a comparatively minor campaign in the Arabian Gulf can be placed in such a generalized context is extremely significant, in so far as it clearly points to a fundamental common blueprint in Communist insurgency programmes; characterized, of course, by local modifications in accordance with the political/social/economic environment in which the insurgent movement developed. However, of greater

significance is the fact that, although this blueprint attained decisive success in Indo-China, South Vietnam and the Zambezi salient, it met with a resounding defeat in Oman. (It encountered similar setbacks in Greece, Malaya and the Philippines; although, to reiterate, the precedents in these other campaigns are misleading within a Southern African context). This clearly exemplifies a fundamental characteristic of all insurgencies; success is far more dependent upon the reaction of their adversaries (i.e. the established government and security forces) than upon any inner impetus within the revolutionary movement itself. Precisely because this reaction on the part of societies attacked by insurgency has assumed such stereotyped patterns in the past two decades – frequently the manifestations of an arch-military conservatism, discussed above – the power of revolutionary movements has diffused the myth of inevitability. Oman clearly punctured this myth; and this, perhaps, remains the paramount justification for a detailed study of the Campaign.

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