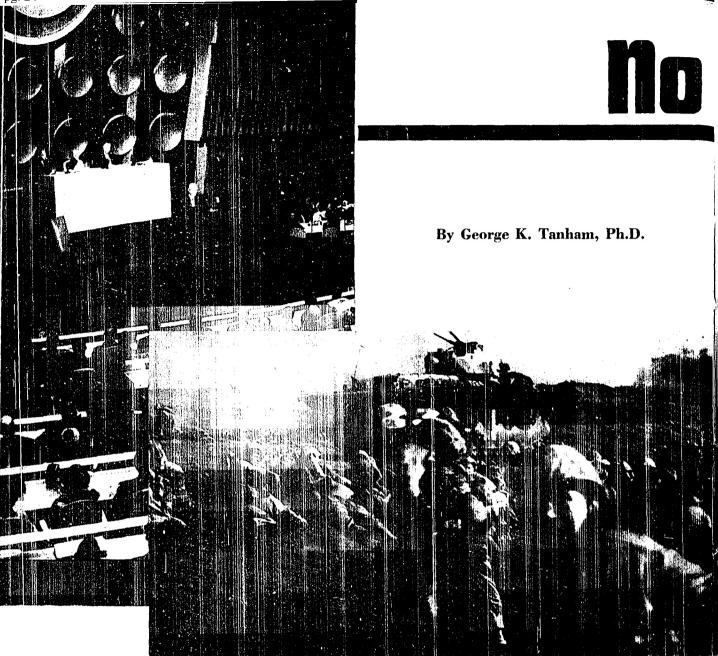
No easy way

Tanham, George K Marine Corps Gazette (pre-1994); Jul 1955; 39, 7; Marine Corps Gazette & Leatherneck Magazine of the Marines pg. 24



A STUDY OF HISTORY INDICATES that where there are intense rivalries between states, and no matter what the form of government or the nature of their societies, there will be war. The ancient rivalry of Persia and Greece, the Punic wars between Rome and Carthage, the long period of conflict between France and England and the Anglo-French wars with Germany are some of the outstanding illustrations of this historic fact.

In all these cases, the struggle was bitter and protracted, thus indicating no easy ways of vanquishing a determined opponent. Whether certain encouraging examples of international co-operation and the seeming necessity for world peace will overcome the historical factors which have almost always brought rivalries to violent conclusion, is a point heatedly debated.

It is true that there is an International Postal Union, a World Health Organization and an International Labor Organization, to name only a few of the specialized international organizations attempting to solve specific world problems and thereby promote understanding and unity. The League of Nations attempted, and the United Nations is trying, to solve the more difficult political, economic and social prob-

lems of the nations and the peoples of the world. No nation, particularly a great one, has or seems to be willing in the near future, to surrender one iota of its sovereignty, or to accept the will of others in matters of importance to itself. In the present United Nations, there is a majority bloc composed of governments more or less opposed to Russia. But when an issue affects them individually and significantly, they are not so amenable to majority action; i.e. France in the case of Tunisia and Morocco. A coldly realistic, not necessarily cynical, appraisal of the present situation does not seem to offer great hopes for

Marine Corps Gazette • July 1955



Super weapons and grandiose schemes never have been the answer to swift painless victory

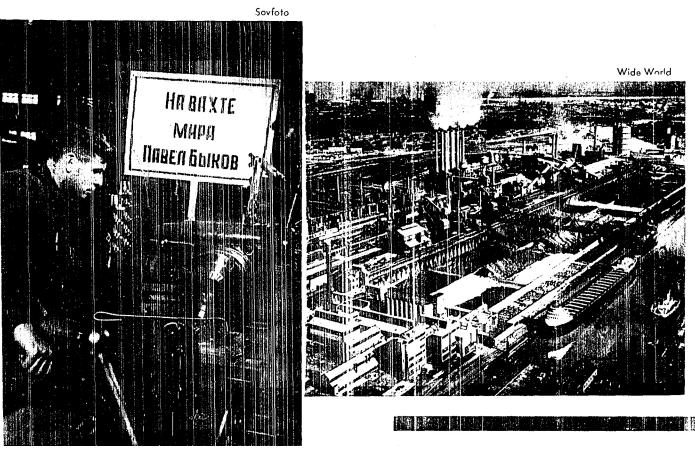
world peace.

Peace, however, is rarely if ever the aim of a nation's foreign policy, except in the sense of some far off millenium described in terms of its own way of life. In spite of politicians' claims that their goal is peace, there are other aims of policy which have greater priority and to which peace would be sacrificed.

Today most Americans, and certainly government policy, would forcibly defend America from invasion and therefore give up peace. They would also probably fight to preserve the democratic way of life in Western Europe. It would seem to be true that all countries have certain vital objectives, usually referred to in terms of self-defense, which they place above the goal of peace. Peace in our imperfect world is very similar to war in that it is merely the means to an end. For instance, the Soviet Union may decide that their objectives may best be carried out in peaceful times, but they may also reverse this decision if it seems that war will lead to the accomplishment of their most cherished aims. If all powers feel that peace is to their best interests, there will be no war, but when one or more do not, there will be war. Today there are conflicting aims of two great powers. Peace at the present appears to serve both well, but will it always? It seems unlikely.

Assuming then that there is a good possibility of a war between Russia and the US in spite of efforts for a settlement of serious differences, it behooves Americans to study carefully the best means of winning such a war. A very rough and brief comparison of the resources of war of the two nations will reveal the difficulties faced by an American government.

In the crucial factor of population, the Russians have the advantage of approximately 4 to 3; this advantage being reduced slightly by the fact that their population is spread out to a greater extent than in America and with far poorer communications. In resources, the US is rich and the exact nature of Russia's is not known, although held to be considerable. In industrial output the US holds a considerable advantage. In technical ability and skilled labor, the US holds some advantage, although time would seem to be whittling this advantage down. In summary, it might be safe to say that the US is ahead in the development of its potential while Russia has probably the greater potential;



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but in the time element she is somewhat behind, although not as much as is popularly believed. One disadvantage of a highly developed potential in war, is that the society is accustomed to a higher standard of living and, even in war, a greater civilian demand is made on the resources of the nation. This extremely rough analysis would seem to indicate that the US is not in an entirely favorable position to wage war against the Soviet Union, nation against nation.

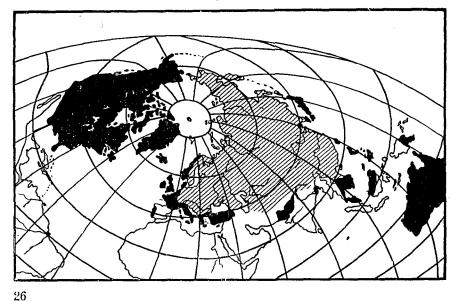
The US has attempted, through a system of alliances in Europe and a less advanced regional agreement in the Pacific, to tilt this generally precarious balance of power in her own favor. In Europe, NATO has brought together most of the nations not under Soviet control. These nations together could present sizable armed forces and considerable industrial power which would be adequate to tip the balance in favor of Western Democracy. Economic difficulties, social problems and political frictions within the countries greatly limit their military strength. Franco-German rivalry has held up German re-entry into European coalition, and the conflicting attitudes towards the colonies of several of the European nations has caused friction within the Western camp.

Dutch fear that all the Netherlands will not be defended by NATO, the English refusal to join the Schuman Plan and France's desire to retain the Saar, show how strong national feeling is and how difficult international co-operation, even among friends, can be. Nevertheless, NATO is providing a rallying point for the Western European nations, and may eventually lead to some real unity in co-operation with the European Economic Union. Certainly enough military strength has not developed so as to stop a Russian drive through Western Europe; but progress is being made, whether it is at a greater rate than in the Eastern bloc, can only be guessed.

In the Pacific an island defense system, centering on Japan, is being established in co-operation with Australia and New Zealand. French efforts in Indochina, United Nations' action in Korea and British efforts in Malaya are attempts to hold part of the mainland. There is still need for greater co-ordination in the Asian theater.

The USSR has pursued a similar policy of gaining allies to support and strengthen its position, but by means and methods not generally approved in the West. She has expanded her borders westward, annexing parts of Rumania, Poland and the Baltic nations, and has gone west in alliance with Czechoslovakia and most of the Balkan nations. Through the occupation of parts of Germany and Austria she has advanced still further west. Her allies, as is true of the allies of the US, have furnished her strength where she is already strong. They provide population, but (with the exception

Pacts and alliances align the world in opposition



of Czechoslovakia and parts of Germany) do not provide skilled labor and great industrial power. In the East, the Communists have taken over China and, although the exact relationship between the two powers is not clear, there is apparent cooperation. Russia has thus rounded out an empire, directed from Moscow, which runs from the China Seas to the Elbe River in Europe. It is a compact mass of much of the great undeveloped regions in the world — but with a frightening potential in power.

Two contrasts in these two systems of alliance should be briefly mentioned. In the first place, in Western Europe there is no common foreign policy towards the Soviet. Each nation carries on its own propaganda and takes its own stand on controversial issues. Defense measures are co-ordinated, but the battle of the cold war is left to each nation with only a degree of consultation among the Big Three. In the second place, there is little, if any, interchange of information, much less co-ordination between the European system and the Pacific system. This dual weakness is sharply in contrast to the Soviet bloc which not only has a common policy in Europe, but has world wide co-ordination of policy and action determined by the Kremlin and directed from there. Thus, the co-operative method adopted by the democratic powers which permits each member to retain all its sovereignty is, at present, a definite limitation on their efficient conduct of the cold war and is a handicap in dealing with the highly centralized Russian system. It is not suggested that all differences of allies can be erased, nor do the democracies desire a dictatorial system, but they must have a more unified effort in Europe and a co-ordinated world-wide policy which can deal with the highly centralized Soviet empire.

In a world so clearly divided into two major camps, and where power is still the lever of all diplomatic maneuvers, it is neither cynical nor warmongering to examine and appraise military strength, and to prepare for a limited war (such as Korea) and a possible world war. The private citizen can no longer grab his rifle and successfully de-

Marine Corps Gazette • July 1955

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H Bomb — we cannot rely too heavily on one weapon

fend his country today and return to work tomorrow. Preparation for war takes time, effort and money. In the case of the US, which for the first time is faced with an opponent of great military strength and even greater potential, it is especially necessary to study with open minds the problem of waging war and to apply imagination, intelligence and practical experience to its solution. It is not the purpose of this article to set forth a definite military program which will win a war, but rather to point out the dangers that exist in believing in a simple, quick and easy way to achieve victory.

The misery, horror and cost of wars have made men ever hopeful of discovering quick and easy ways to effect victory for their cause. Secret weapons have long been a favorite means, held forth by some as a way to sure and quick victory. The liquid fire of the Greeks and the secret weapons of Herr Goebbels have been held out to people as devices for certain and cheap triumph. This is not to minimize the part played by true invention, but merely to say that fanciful dreams are no substitute for tried and tested weapons and courageous field forces. New and daring tactics which were to have brought quick victory, but actually were merely dreams and hopes of a commander, have had disastrous results; the ill-fated Nivelle offensive in WWI being perhaps one of the best examples. Emphasis on one branch has often led to defeat instead of the hoped for victory. The Romans' insistence on the primacy of the infantry in spite of the success of the barbarian cavalry led to Valens' defeat and death. The French neglect of infantry and archers spelled disastrous loss at Crecy. The German intoxication

with perfect and complete plans for an entire war led to the brilliant Schlieffen Plan, but as soon as difficulties arose, the commanders were at a loss for modification of the plan and lacked the initiative to develop new plans and ideas to cope with the changed situation.

The lessons of history tend to prove that a people or a leader who relied too heavily on one weapon or one tactic was courting disaster in the long run. Victory has never had a simple key and, in all probability, does not today, in spite of the lure of some modern inventions. A more detailed examination of past 'keys' to quick, cheap victory would seem to prove worthwhile when considering the present world military situation.

There has been a general tendency in the past for some persons to seize upon new weapons and so overstate their potentialities as to create a very erroneous impression of their actual powers. This is the normal manner in which too great reliance is placed on one weapon, but not the only one. There is the opposite tendency to cling to the old weapons and to ignore or deprecate the new weapons and their capabilities.

In the first category, one might present the German Admiralty's claims for the submarine in WWI. During most of that war, the admirals begged that they be allowed to carry on unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allies. The civilian leaders were able to resist this pressure as long as there was good hope of victory on the land and to point out that a very dangerous consequence of this policy would be entrance of the US into the war and the generally unfriendly reaction of other neutrals. As the war dragged on a victory on

land seemed less certain and, as the navy developed better submarines and made stronger claims, the leaders were less able to resist the navy's demands. The German General Staff in September 1916 backed the stand of the Admiralty. This combined pressure led the Kaiser to decree unrestricted warfare for early 1917, after German peace overtures had failed. It was not a last desperate gamble, according 10 Hindenburg, but a step which it was thought would break the stalemate and bring victory to the Germans in a very short time. The Admiralty claimed that they would bring Britain to her knees in a few months before American help could arrive, if the US did decide to enter the war.

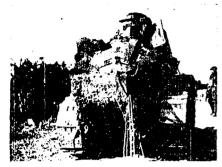
In this instance, the decision to base all, or a great portion, of one's. hope for victory on one weapon involved an extremely serious decision which eventually backfired and led to certain defeat; not only because America entered the war and sent help more quickly than was expected, but also because a defense was found against this weapon which defeated it and allowed American aid to pour to the Allies. The Allies had had experience with the submarines and suspected that the Germans might use them again, and so some preparations had been made. It is also true that, for some time, the British Admiralty opposed the convoy system which did defeat the submarines. All these facts must be considered, yet the central fact remains that a defense was found against this weapon which allowed Britain to continue the war and American aid to arrive in France in greater and greater quantities.

The weapon failed because there was a defense against it, and its failure was made worse by the diplomatic repercussions of its use. With America actually in the war, the Allies did not think of any outcome save victory. The mutinies of the French armies and the Russian withdrawal in 1917, were severe blows to the Allies, but had not the certainty of future American material and manpower aid been before their eyes, it is not improbable that some sort of negotiated peace might have taken place or the Germans might have even won the war.

Marine Corps Gazette

July 1955

Similar cases might be made for both the tank and airplane. After the introduction of the tank in WW1, many experts believed that it could win wars alone. These experts came into their own with the great German triumphs early in WWII;



WWI machine-to win by itself

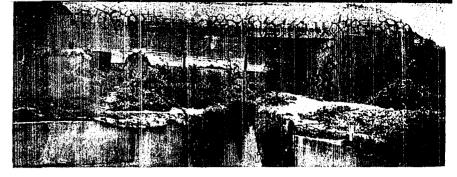
but slowly defenses against tanks were developed and the tank became part of a team of infantry, artillery and airplanes which waged a new kind of war, but neither bloodless, cheap, nor always decisive.

Both sides may have tanks and make quick advances, but war is not shortened or made any more pleasant. There is some feeling now that because defenses have progressed so far against the tank, that it is obsolescent; an extreme view perhaps, but indicative of the rate at which defenses can be developed against a weapon at one time supposed to be able to sweep all before it.

Controversy still rages around the airplane. Because it adds a third dimension to war and is a vehicle for various arms, it is more difficult to come to any definite conclusions at this time. It appears, however, that the offensive possibilities of air power are at the present time considerably ahead of defense. Defenses against airpower are, however, being developed and it seems that the airplane as an offensive weapon may meet defensive obstacles in the way of defensive aircraft, guided missiles, dispersion and underground installations that will limit its power and bring it into line with the other weapons of war. It certainly will not cheapen or lessen the horror of war; it may shorten it, but even here there are considerable doubts.

One example of the too great faith in old weapons may illustrate that point clearly enough. The best

28



Maginot line — the French misjudged the trend

example seems to be one which happened a long time ago, namely the Battle of Crecy. The long period of French supremacy in the art of war, as practiced by mounted and armored knights armed with lance and sword, had developed not only a mind closed to other forms of warfare, but also (because of the social position of the mounted knight) a contempt for the unmounted and unarmored soldier. Here the closed mind of the successful warrior coupled with a social snobbery led the flower of French knighthood to a disastrous defeat and to almost complete annihilation.

The English had developed the long bow and tactics to fit it. These were used with devastating effect at the battle of Crecy. In this case, a new weapon was used properly and successfully against a foe who stubbornly held to the older weapons. But it must be remembered that the long bow did not remain such a complete weapon and it soon fitted into the pattern of the older weapons. It played its part, but was not the key, for long, to quick and bloodless victory for it did not end the Hundred Years War. In some cases, battles may be won or lost because of one weapon, but it is unlikely that any one side can count on superiority in one weapon for an entire war.

Another tendency among certain military thinkers is to overconcentrate on one branch or one tactic. The failure to adapt tactics to the time and the situation is numerous in history, but two or three examples will suffice. One of the master states of war, Rome, fell into the danger of failing to change her tactics. The Romans maintained their famous legion organization with its great emphasis on infantry long after it was clearly shown what trained cavalry, especially light cavalry, could do. It is true that they tried, too late and with great lack of imagination, to remedy this defect. The barbarians had developed a new type of war which was slowly but surely to overthrow the Roman Empire, weakened, it is true, by internal difficulties and old age pains.

A similar example, and one known to most patriotic Americans, is the case of Braddock in the French and Indian Wars. In that war, the British attempted to use the old continental tactics in America where a different type of warfare had developed, based on Indian tactics of infiltration, dispersion and movement.

The French were quicker to recognize the value of the American methods and, in collaboration with the Indians, were successful for a time against the British. Soon, however, the British with their colonial allies, particularly George Washington, used the new methods and ejected the French from America. It is worth noting that the American tactics were adopted by Napoleon and used very successfully against the continental armies in Europe

Another common tendency is to put too great faith in one method of fighting. The classic example here, of course, is the French faith in linear defense after WWI. It was not so much that the Maginot Line was a mistake, but that its strength or supposed strength, created a feeling and belief that this form of warfare was supreme. Actually, the lessons of WWI had tended, superficially at least, to show the defensive was superior. Massed attacks on strongly entrenched positions gained little ground at great cost in men and material. If this were so, the French argued, why would not steel and concrete fortifications, armed with immense fire power, be almost

Marine Corps Gazette • July 1955

impregnable? In their great desire for territorial security and forgetful of the last innovations of WWI, the tank and infiltration tactics, the French misjudged the trend of modern warfare. They overlooked the tank and airplane and their co-operation with infantry and artillery which would form a force of tremendous shock power and mobility.

The French saw the Civil War in Spain through curiously twisted glasses and thought it proved their theories correct. When the invasion came in 1940, the French stood on the Maginot Line and advanced into Belgium to form another line. The divisions were lined up side by side, their many tanks were scattered and interspersed to act as pill boxes, and there were few, if any, mobile reserves. Tactical surprise was achieved by the primary attack through the Ardennes Forest and the drive to the sea. New tactics, which made use of all the latest weapons, smashed through the line and then rolled it up. Linear and passive defense has failed to provide a flexible and effective defense, but its proponents are not all dead.

An idea particularly attractive to many military men and civilians is the concept that a small highly trained and equipped army is the most effective and will serve to protect a nation. This view has been held by many British, including Captain Liddel Hart, and also by as able a prophet as General DeGaulle. The latter in his The Army of the Future, advocated a 100,000-man professional army which he claimed would have 3 times the firepower and 10 times the speed of the French troops put in the field in August 1914. The allure of this concept to the public is based on its cheapness and the lack of need for universal conscription. The military man feels that a few highly trained and armed professional soldiers can do the work of many non-professionals. The public and the military both abhor mass armies and the idea of total war. The proponents of this idea point to the sane and sensible warfare of the 18th Century where small professional armies fought gentlemanly wars.

There are two weaknesses in the case for the small professional army. In the first place, its proponents

Marine Corps Gazette • July 1955

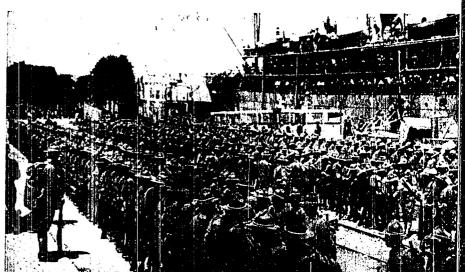
forget that there is such a thing as mass production, which is able to equip mass armies just as well as smaller armies and so give greater numbers equal per capita firepower and speed. Second, and most important, these men seem to forget that, especially in modern war, there are such things as casualties and that even elite troops are not immune to the modern bullet and shell fragment. The small army is likely to be too greatly weakened in one or two battles, even though inflicting much higher casualties on the opposing mass army. Therefore, although this theory has the attraction of cheapness and less participation by the average citizen, it must be rejected. The rejection of the case for the small army does not invalidate the theory that small elite military formations of very high morale have a definite place in modern war and can perform special functions. It would be well to remember that God is on the side of the biggest battalions and that in modern history a very small number of battles have been won against superior numbers (Frederick the Great's victories at Leuthen and Rossbach and Napoleon's at Dresden being perhaps the most noteworthy exceptions). There is an amazing tendency to standardize weapons for all armies in the 20th Century and, in fact, in all historical times. Certain weapons may give a temporary advantage, but in the long run, superior numbers with excellent equipment have won.

The failure of the public to be aware of these lessons of history lies, it is believed, in the fact that the

US has always been victorious in its wars. (One is apt to overlook the War of 1812.) Furthermore --- and this is not usually noted and even more rarely accepted-our victories have been a result of superiority in numbers and quantity of material. Perhaps this is stating the proposition too strongly, and it might be safer to say that in our modern wars, at least, we have had the privilege and luxury of superiority in manpower, weapons and supplies. America has not been faced with the problems of winning a war when it has not had such overwhelming advantages. In WWI, the US entered the war after the important combatants had been struggling for 3 years. From behind the safety of 3,000 miles of ocean, we made hasty preparations for war and dispatched troops to France. By the end of 1917 there were about 6 American divisions in line, but 1918 saw the total number of troops reach about 2 million, including service troops. The American aid tipped the scales in favor of the Allies. In this case, fresh troops, trained with the experiences of the war in mind, helped stop the last great German offensive and led Foch's counteroffensive which brought the war to an end. The fresh troops and the materielabove all, the almost unlimited supply of both available from America after the failure of the submarine campaign — was a great factor in the German decision to surrender. Certainly, in this case, America enjoyed her privileges of superiority of numbers and quantities.

WWII would tend to indicate that the same truths applied. By

Fresh troops and material tipped the scales in 1918



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The capability of moving our overwhelming might to a decisive area

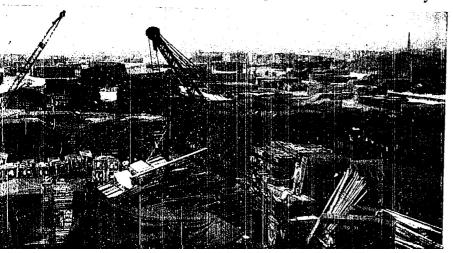
the time America entered the war, Germany was at war with the British Empire, Russia and the remnants of several other European nations whose efforts and colonial contributions were not insignificant. Italy was trying to assist Germany, but seems rather more of a handicap than an asset. Japan, by attacking the United States, did put pressure on the European nations holding colonies in the East, but brought the great military power of America, already being prepared by Roosevelt, into the war against Germany.

As early as 1942, it was clear, even to Hitler, that the resources of the Allies were so great as to preclude a German victory. Also by 1942, the Soviet armies had shown they could maintain themselves intact and even more, could push the Germans back.

The Italians were no match for the British in Africa and the Germans had to send help. The winter of 1941-42 was bleak for the Allies, but there were these encouraging signs: In the Pacific, Japan was successful, but as 1942 wore on, the US began to go on the offensive at Guadalcanal. Slowly, but surely, Russian numbers began to prevail in eastern Europe, American strength began to show in the Pacific and Anglo-American forces soon dominated the Mediterranean and Africa. By late 1943, Italy was out of the war and both Germany and Japan were pulling back and preparing for the final defense of the homeland. It is no slur on the fighting capacities of the Allied armies to say that they were provided with very excellent materiel and in the air, on the ground and on the sea, had more of everything and were themselves much more numerous than their opponents. There were local exceptions to this general observation, but they only contrast with the general superiority.

It must not be assumed that the Allies had all the troops and materiel that they needed or wanted. The global nature of the war and the many fronts made tremendous demands on all war materiels. The Pacific command felt that it was slighted in the allocation of manpower and materiel even though the basic strategic decision had been made to beat Hitler first. The troops in Italy in 1943-45 could well have received reinforcements and greater supplies. Even on the main front in France and Germany, there were shortages of ammunition in late fall of 1944 and the front was weakly held in some sectors; witness the Battle of the Bulge. Each of the armed services felt that it needed more manpower, and civilian authority had to insist on limitations in order to man the factories and other home

Allied resources were so great as to preclude a German victory



front activities. Therefore, even in a war where the US and its Allies had overwhelming manpower and industrial superiority, there were shortages and difficult decisions of allotment to be made.

Today America is confronted by a more formidable enemy than she has faced in recent history. Russia has successfully resisted two of the modern world's greatest war machines, those of Napoleon and Hitler and today appears stronger than ever.

America, unaccustomed to living in constant danger from a powerful nation, has reacted as one would suspect to this new pressure. Periods of confidence followed by months of a deep anxiety and agitation over fear and violent preparation, reveal the new international situation and the too even balance of forces in the world. This is a natural time for a people, seized by such worries, to clutch, perhaps too strongly, at simple and easy means to security and victory. History has shown us how, when victory seems not assured, a people will seek most eagerly the easy means profferred. The wide acceptance of Gen Nivelle's promises by a discouraged and tired France in 1917, and the Goebbels' assurances of secret weapons by a staggering Germany in 1943 and 1944 are the extreme cases showing how easily a people will grasp at alluring but untested means to victory.

It has not been the purpose of this article to propose a positive military plan, but to indicate some of the lessons of history which may be of some value in grappling with current military problems. The advent of new means of delivery, supersonic aircraft, guided missiles and the great destructive power of atom and hydrogen bombs have made even more complex and baffling the preparation and planning for possible war. Whether these new factors have altered the general lessons of history, only time can tell. Present leadership must decide what lessons of the past seem to be valid and whether new ideas and weapons seem to have altered certain historic truths. It would be well to bear in mind men's past experiences, but it would be foolhardy to ignore the recent revolution in means of waging war. US 🎓 MC

Marine Corps Gazette • July 1955

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