

## *War Comes to Long An*, its Origins and Legacies: An Interview with Jeffrey Race

Jeffrey Race was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, in 1943. After attending that city's public schools, he graduated from Harvard College in 1965 with a bachelor's degree in government. While at Harvard, Race was a member of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), and he served on active duty in the United States Army in Vietnam during 1965–1967. He returned to Vietnam as a civilian in 1967–1968 to conduct the research that led to his classic 1972 study, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province*.<sup>1</sup> He worked as a contractor for the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the United States Department of Defense in Bangkok during 1968–1969, and received his doctorate in political science from Harvard in 1973.

Race spent 1973–1976 as a Southeast Asia fellow of the Institute for Current World Affairs and 1979–1980 as a research fellow at the Australian National University. He has lived primarily in Bangkok since the early 1970s, served as a political and business consultant, and lectured widely both in the United States and Asia. He is the founder and president of Cambridge Electronics Laboratories in Somerville, Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup>

The University of California Press recently published an “Updated and Expanded” edition of *War Comes to Long An*.<sup>3</sup> Prior to its release, Race met with Michael Montesano in Bangkok on February 20–21, 2010, for a wide-ranging discussion of the origins—personal and intellectual—of his book.<sup>4</sup>

Excerpts from that interview, meant to be read alongside the accompanying review essay on *War Comes to Long An*, follow.

### In Vietnam, Before *War Comes to Long An*

Q: *In May or June 1965, you graduated with your Harvard A.B., and you were commissioned as a United States Army second lieutenant.*

A: *Yes, the same day. In my senior year in ROTC, we had to make an election for our branch, and our first assignment. Since I was quite an electronics whiz, I chose the Signal Corps, and since I had studied German, I chose Germany, because there were a lot of signal units in Germany.*

Q: *What is a signal unit?*

A: *A signal unit operates communications equipment. Principally, that was its object in those days—running the telephones, the teleprinters, the communication centers. And also, a small part, and now an enormous part, is running all the cryptographic equipment. So it is a highly technical field, but it was a combat support branch, unlike finance or chaplains. There were a lot of signal units in Germany. And according to my profile, it would have been a logical assignment. So I expected—and this was probably around the end of 1964—that I would be going to run a signal unit in Germany. That was fine with me. I thought, “I will be there for two years, and I will come back to graduate school.”*

Q: *In political science?*

A: *Yes. And I would follow the pattern that normally eventuates in these circumstances: become a professor somewhere, and live happily ever after. But around March orders came through and I was going to be assigned to Korea. That was okay, except it was awfully cold in Korea. But that didn't matter. I had no objections. That was a region that I knew nothing about, and didn't understand. So that would be an interesting thing to do. Because, remember, I had never been outside the United States. But then came June, and I received new orders—because our assignments had already been finalized: “You will proceed*

*to a classified destination.” At this point, it took no deep insight to realize that the classified destination was Vietnam. In fact if we go back and look at the planning at that time, during the early months of 1965, the big decisions were being made about the commitment of American forces, and I was assigned to what was the largest signal unit in the US Army, the 69th Signal Battalion. This was the unit which was assigned to set up the communications network throughout Vietnam, for the arrival later of the great bulk of American forces. So the decision was already made in 1965, and the first tingling of that in my life was the order to proceed to a “classified destination.” I went to the US Army Signal Officer Basic School, at Fort Gordon, Georgia, for two months. Then we flew on a chartered airplane to Travis Air Force Base, and were bused to the Oakland Army Terminal, and boarded the USS Upshur, a cruise ship which had been requisitioned by the US military, and I spent twenty-three days on board to Vietnam, which was when I listened to my tapes.*

**Q:** *Where did you get these language tapes? Where did you get Vietnamese tapes in the United States in 1965?*

**A:** *I don’t remember how I found them, but I ordered them through the mail once we got to Fort Gordon. They were on reels, not cassettes. I got a tape recorder and I brought these tapes with me on the ship.*

**Q:** *Was anybody else on the ship studying Vietnamese?*

**A:** *No.*

**Q:** *So then you arrived at Vũng Tàu, and you literally waded ashore. From Vũng Tàu, your first destination was where?*

**A:** *Long Binh. This is quite an interesting thing. It had been a rubber plantation which was leveled by the engineers to provide, essentially, a green field. Before we arrived it was a green field, but when we got there, it was all laterite and mud. We were positioned there, preparing for our mission, and we had to be there for a little while, literally to acclimatize. And it was tough at the beginning. I had never been in a tropical climate.*

Q: *In addition to the tropical climate, what else surprised you? What did Vietnam seem like?*

A: *Well, this is an important point. In a sense it is a formative image. We were in a camp, essentially just a flat area, barbed wire around, and inside it was the United States. And outside, we didn't know. There were a lot of trees. It was a quiet area. We had no engagement with any one.*

Q: *Between Vŭng Tàu and Long Binh, looking out the side of the truck, what did you see?*

A: *You see, this is it. I saw something which I knew nothing about, and people were dressed differently. And they were speaking in a language which I was only beginning to understand, although on my first visit to Sài Gòn I figured out I had studied the wrong dialect, which was not a bad thing, actually. It was just another completely different, unknown world to me. So at the level of understanding that was important, because it was an objective that I set myself mentally to understand, as I went by ignorant of what was outside, not knowing how to engage with it. But the second thing that was important, and it was an impression one had immediately if one were thoughtful, which later became operationally important: the people inside the perimeter were essentially uninterested in what was outside the perimeter.*

Q: *And this was clear to you early?*

A: *Right, immediately, as soon as you arrived. It was just a different world and the people inside had no interest in the world outside. I thought that this was not a prudent way to operate, because, if you don't know what is outside, something adverse might occur. Let's just intellectualize as I do in the book. If we look at a positivistic model of the world, it has a structure and input-output relationships. If you want to affect reality, you have to understand the internal structure of that reality, because, if you want to affect the output, you have to know what inputs to vary. But if you are ignorant, and remain ignorant of the structure outside of you, you don't know how to influence it for your own safety. It seems quite a basic point, and something which my countrymen have yet to deal with up to this moment.*

- Q: *But let's talk about your perceptions at that early stage. You were a twenty-two-year-old second lieutenant. You were the youngest second lieutenant in Vietnam?*
- A: *Yes, by accident. Well, not really by accident. At Fort Gordon, I received orders one day transferring me out of the 69th Signal Battalion. Army policy was that you could not be sent to a combat zone without six months of service, and by the date of the movement I would have had only two and a half months of service. So some computer removed me from the movement order, because we were all on orders to board the USS Upshur to go to Vietnam. But that afternoon my colonel called me and said, "I have called the Military Personnel Center and had the order revoked because I want a Harvard man in my battalion." That line in my personnel record changed my whole life, and resulted in the book.*
- Q: *So you were a young second lieutenant and you were inside the wire in Long Binh, but it was already clear to you that the US Army and government were trying to produce some sort of output in Vietnam.*
- A: *Presumably they were trying to save our ally.*
- Q: *How quickly did you begin to form impressions of our ally? You have spoken about going to Sài Gòn for the first time.*
- A: *After a couple of weeks, we became acclimated. We were allowed in groups to travel outside the camp, and so I went to Sài Gòn. I didn't know anything about it. I thought, "Why not? Take a tour, practice my Vietnamese." I just talked to somebody on a street corner. I couldn't understand a word people were saying. They could understand me, but I couldn't understand a word. So I had to go back and hit the books again to comprehend the southern dialect. But everything was different. I never experienced anything like it. Of course, the immediate, overwhelming impression was that everyone was speaking a language you didn't understand. And that bothered me a lot. It didn't bother other people, but it bothered me. It was symbolic of something. If we didn't understand the language, we couldn't understand anything else about these people. So the day of wandering around Sài Gòn*

*was exciting in the sense that I couldn't understand what people were saying. But what was interesting was the ride back. We were in a truck and we were going at great speed through highly populated areas because we had been warned that it was dangerous, and "don't stop for anything." We were barreling down a narrow road and people were jumping out of the way, and I thought, "I am not comfortable about this situation." That is an impression that I have never forgotten—my first day in Sài Gòn.*

Q: *Blackwater convoys in Baghdad.*

A: *Exactly so. It has never changed. But it bothered me then. It seemed that bad things might come out of a situation like that. Within our bubble, we were behaving rationally: there were people out there who didn't like us, we had to go as fast as possible, somebody might be injured, military necessity, it was legal . . . It was appropriate if you were inside the bubble. But the intellectual proposition that presents itself is that one shouldn't allow himself to enter into, or to create, such a situation. And this of course goes into all the counterfactuals. Were there choices before? How do you avoid getting into a mess like that?*

Q: *Was there any notion in your mind who was making the choices that you would speed in your truck through provincial Vietnam?*

A: *I was sure that the Tsar had to know. Remember, New England, 1950s, everybody is honorable, everybody knows his job. "Trust your elders. Don't question." There were things wrong with the situation, but in the bigger scheme of things, obviously it had to be right. Otherwise we wouldn't have been there. Somebody had to have thought deeply about this, and known what he was doing before he sent us there.*

Q: *After how many months in Long Bình were you transferred to MACV headquarters?<sup>25</sup> This is at Tân Sơn Nhứt, right?*

A: *Yes, that is correct. Maybe it was about two months. That was my first assignment, a very technical thing. First of all, think about this now: I moved from this muddy camp, out on the edge of Sài Gòn, into the center of Sài Gòn, which, remember, was the Paris of the Orient.*

*I moved into a hotel in the center of Sài Gòn. I was driven every day to my office on the air field, which in fact was a shipping container with all this communications equipment, air-conditioned. And because I am an electronics whiz, I brought a bunch of phones with me. I set up hotlines to places all around, with beautiful Swedish Ericofons, so that I could be in touch with people. I found out how to call my mother in Boston, via a circuit at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. So I could call her every couple of days. But it was just a technical job that I had. I just went there and made sure all the radios were working. If an alarm came in, a fuse blew, I requisitioned the parts, we pulled the equipment out of the rack, then we put the thing back, and we tested the circuit. I wrote a report at the end of the day, saying all the circuits were working. There was no substantive component about the war. It was just a technical job. I knew where the radio links went, because we had circuit maps: "it is going to Pleiku, it is going down to the south." Things like that. But at that point I had never visited any of these places. My exposure to Vietnam was the base and the hotel room in Sài Gòn.*

- Q:** *It was a technical job, it was a job that required you to be at the office a certain number of hours a day, but then you had time of your own. What did we do with that time?*
- A:** *You learned about the country you were in. And this in fact was problematic, because everybody else in my unit had other objectives after work in Sài Gòn. But I reached out to try to find ways to engage the people around me, and so I didn't do the things that they did. There weren't a lot of resources. One of the things was the Hội Việt Mỹ, the Vietnamese American Association. So I joined that. It was quite nice. But essentially it was focused on a period which was gone, which was the gentle life of the cognoscenti in the Paris of the Orient. Vietnamese art, things like that. It was fine for what it was, but it wasn't everything I needed. Then, somehow, I quickly met two Vietnamese who were quite helpful. One was a lieutenant like me. I don't recall how I met him, but he was a very kind and a very gentle person, Huỳnh Kim*

*Cường. His family were Catholics from the North. He had been mobilized and had become an unwilling second lieutenant. He was my age, or maybe three or four years older. He had been a teacher before and his wife, I believe, was a teacher of French. So he was the model mandarin Vietnamese. He took a liking to me, we practiced Vietnamese, and I taught him some English. It was a nice friendship and a nice experience. He lived in a little shop-house in the center of Sài Gòn.*

**Q:** *Was there conversation between you and him about the American presence? About the political situation?*

**A:** *No, I don't think we discussed those things. I was just interested in . . . I mean, we would have discussed those only in the general sense that I would ask him questions, and he would answer questions that I had. But mostly, we were focused on language, and on how to deal with Vietnamese, and how to get on with people in that country. And remember, I had never been outside the United States before this. This was all new to me. And there was another person I met, an engineer, a kind of a strange bird for Vietnam. A Vietnamese, maybe also a northerner, but I am not sure, who had studied engineering in Australia, and headed an important technical section in the Post Telegraph and Telephone Department. And he was just like a foreigner, just like an American. He had spent a lot of time in Australia, and with him it was just like being with an American because he knew all the slang, he knew all the jokes. We had a lot of fun together. I dealt with him professionally almost every day, because I was one of the Signal Corps interfaces with the PTT. Because I already knew the language a bit, they put me in charge of dealing with Vietnamese. And so I would deal with issues of technical coordination between the military and commercial telephone systems. We became friends, and I would go to his house to have meals together. And this was another sort of entree into the system. Those were the first two. But then there was a third person I met, later on, a gentleman named Tôn Thất Thiện, editor of a newspaper called The Vietnam Guardian, which was sort of The Times of Vietnam.<sup>6</sup>*

Q: *How did you meet him?*

A: *I'll tell you the curious way I met him. I don't remember why, but something intrigued me about this man. Perhaps I read something he wrote, and I sent him a letter, presumably, I assume—I don't remember, I didn't keep a copy—saying "I am Jeffrey Race, and I am interested in learning about something or other. Could we meet?" I didn't get an answer, but then somebody, maybe Cường, told me that there was an advertisement in the paper from Tôn Thất Thiện saying, "Jeffrey Race, I don't know how to reach you, please call me at this telephone number." Cường was a high school teacher. Duyệt was an engineer. But Thiện was a deep thinker, a real intellectual. He could have been on a university faculty anywhere, and he and I had a lot of interesting discussions. I don't remember the particulars of any of them, but what impresses me in retrospect, what I didn't realize at that time, until I got to Thailand, is that culturally Vietnamese are really very different from other cultures. They are in the Sinitic tradition of deeply intellectual people who engage with ideas, and for whom ideas are important, and for which they will make sacrifices. Thiện was such a man. I had a chance to see people only in the evenings or on weekends, and it was only maybe for about six or seven months by the time I finally found him that I was still in Sài Gòn, and so opportunities were limited. And so I was not in any cocktail party circuit at all. But I just saw that these things were there. There were windows I could see, windows I could glance through.*

Q: *But what about Americans who were also windows onto something positive in Vietnam, Americans who were intellectually engaged with Vietnam, Americans who, like you, were trying to learn something about Vietnam? Meet anybody that first year?*

A: *No. But I just knew that I had to do something. I didn't know enough to be functional, and that is the reason I stayed the second year. The dictated path was that I would return to the United States, because the obligatory term of service in a combat zone was only one year. Most people followed that path, but I just could not see going back to the United States. This was the most exciting place in the world at the time.*

Q: *You knew that already.*

A: *I knew that. There were all kinds of issues about that. I was in a place in which my ignorance was so abundantly obvious that I thought, "I just cannot go on with my life until I stop being such an ignorant person." And the first thing I had to learn about was this amazing event in which I had been sent to participate. But I also knew, I just sensed something about Asia, that this was a very vital place that I must know more about. It went beyond Vietnam. So I put out feelers to stay a second year, and there would have been no problem to stay in a signal unit, because the Army was delighted to have people who wanted to stay and be shot at. But I didn't want to stay in the signal unit because it was too narrow. I wanted to do something which would allow me to engage directly with the society. The ways to get out of Sài Gòn were to go either to an American combat unit, or to a rural advisory team, which was a system which had been set up to provide a small number of Americans to be with Vietnamese, essentially civil administrators, but who by that time were all military. The Americans were to be with them as liaisons and supports. These were five-man teams, and there were about two hundred such teams all around the country. The difficulty was that I had the wrong branch to do that, because I was going to go into an assignment reserved for people trained in infantry skills, of which I had none. But because I had gone to Harvard, I was able to see people and I met a general who was on General Westmoreland's staff. He liked me and said he would talk to somebody at MACV headquarters about my interest in the transfer. He took my personnel record. The most important thing was that I knew the Vietnamese language. I was interested in things and had high motivation, which is something very important to the military—motivation. So it was arranged that I could transfer. It was an important institutional change. Essentially, I was leaving the Army and going into this advisory structure. And so I went on leave back to United States for about ten days, came back, and was assigned to Xuyên Mộc District, which was on the eastern edge of Phước Tuy Province.<sup>7</sup> I didn't realize at the time what an interesting area this*

was. Because this was quite a dangerous area, ours was the last advisory team to be emplaced. Because when they were fleshing out the system, they did the easy ones first. This would have been around October 1966. This was the beginning of the glimmerings that something was not quite right. Let me tell about this place first, historically why it was important. This area, I found out later, was a Việt Minh regroupment area in 1955. And that tradition continued. So these people were not wild for Nguyễn Văn Thiệu at all.

Q: Việt Minh regroupment?

A: The people who were going to the North when the country was divided. They regrouped in this area and then went on ships up to the North. Essentially these were all communists . . . No, they weren't communists. They were farmers who were strongly influenced by the Việt Minh, and that tradition continued. So the place that we went was the district office, which consisted of a cement building, and a market, surrounded by barbed wire a hundred yards away. And that was where we lived and worked, and everything else belonged to the other side. There was a major, who was my boss, who spoke French because he was from Louisiana. I spoke Vietnamese and was by this time a first lieutenant. We had an operations sergeant, who knew all the procedures and did all the work, how to call in artillery fire and things like that. And then we had a medic and a radio operator. The five of us were flown in by helicopter and landed inside the perimeter, because you couldn't drive there. It was actually a very pretty area, and the other end of the province had this wonderful beach.

Q: Was it the security issues that were beginning to convince you that something was not right?

A: No, I am coming to that. But just to set the scene, because it is important to understand: essentially it was like back at Long Bình. We were inside barbed wire. The whole country was out there. All the people were out there. We were inside the barbed wire, with the captain and about a hundred of the Regional Forces, the local militia. We were all inside the barbed wire.

Q: *A Vietnamese captain?*

A: *Yes, a Vietnamese captain, Đại Úy Đức, the district officer. And so we arrived in our helicopter, he gave us a room, and we Americans all slept in this room together. But of course, we came in American style, with our radios, and we brought a refrigerator, a gas-operated refrigerator. We arrived in the morning with the refrigerator, but we did not have the valve to feed the gas. So they sent a plane out, which dropped the valve on a parachute, down inside the perimeter. It was a nice thing to do. Some pilot said, "Okay, rather than go out to the bar, I will drop this as an act of mercy to these people out there." But it was just symbolic in the sense that we arrived with our gas-operated refrigerator and we forgot a part, and they sent a plane to drop the part inside the perimeter. Okay, so anyway, things were fine there, not much was going on, and the reason not much was going on is because it was understood that we were inside the perimeter, and they owned this district.*

Q: *What did you do all day?*

A: *Not much, but it was a good chance to improve my Vietnamese. For me, it was perfect: there were hardly any Americans. I mean, I wanted to stay in Vietnam a second year so I could get away from the Americans, the American bubble. So I interviewed, I talked to the captain. I will tell you about it in a moment, because that was the first clue. I talked to the soldiers, and I saw about life, I went out to the market, I talked to the villagers.*

Q: *By day the market was safe.*

A: *Yes, it was inside the perimeter. The market was always safe. They actually had defectors, and occasionally people were captured, and I interviewed them. I never met a real-live so-called enemy soldier until that place, and I interviewed these people. And working at my Vietnamese, asking, "Tell me about life, why you did what you did." So I was able to engage in conversations with people who were notionally on the other side.*

Q: *And the defectors were living in the compound.*

A: *They were brought in, and, yes, probably sent to Sài Gòn later. They might be locked up, and I could talk to them, and this was really quite hot stuff. Remember, I was just this little ignorant American, and I was actually talking to enemy soldiers. It was not authorized, it was not my job. I just did it, because I wanted to do it. Okay, we'll talk about Captain Đức. So Đại Úy Đức, like my friend Cường, was really a nice human being and a kind person. He was a career army man. And he liked me. He had a good sense of humor and we joked a lot. Our team got along fine with him. If he needed things, cement for example, to build something, something like that, we'd just call on the radio, "send cement." The Chinook helicopter would come and bring cement. Because this was the beginnings in this area of notionally expanding the government presence, and good works were one of the ways to do it. So, we got to talking about his background. I asked him, "Why are you here? This is a rather remote and dangerous place." He said, "I did not pay the bribe to the province chief, and so I got sent here." In fact, later he was killed in a military operation, just after I left. I remember the province chief very well. Colonel Lê Đức Đạt, a very oily character. You just looked at this man . . . He had a manner about him, which led you to understand that he had another agenda. Basically, being the province chief was a business for him. Now remember, I came from New England, and that conversation really irked me. I just never got over it. I said to myself, "Something is wrong with this situation. How are we going to make a go with this?"*

Q: *Did you discuss what you had been told with other members of your team?*

A: *No. Remember, there was nothing wrong with these other people on my team, they were all fine people, but they were just in a different place. They were typical Americans and did all the things they thought were right, according to what they had been taught.*

Q: *Did this first revelation that something was seriously wrong snowball?*

- A: *We did one operation with the Regional Forces. I didn't realize the significance at the time, but as I think back, this was symbolic. In the operation we went out some place, a few miles. Essentially, it was just a walk, and I didn't know the purpose of the operation, but some of the Regional Forces hit booby traps, and it was quite a depressing thing to see. I think they lost their legs, actually. Serious business was going on, but somehow it just did not seem responsive to the situation. That was my impression. I mean, from my talking to the defectors and the captured people, these people had issues, and I just didn't see how sending people out on patrol was doing anything about what was bothering these people. I don't recall the particulars, but something was obviously on their mind. It just didn't match somehow. The challenge and the response, if we say, that little microcosm there. We had people who were upset in this area, and our solution to their being upset was to send people out with guns. Something was wrong with that. And at this point I began to think, "Maybe the Tsar doesn't know." And then there was another operation, because this was the area of operation of the Australian forces, and we went out with an Australian unit, a mechanized unit. I remember we just went through a rubber plantation, and I was in an armored personnel carrier. We're just mowing down rubber trees. In fact, there was a system: you mowed down so many rubber trees, a report was made, you sent a check to the owner of the rubber plantation. Could we go between the rubber trees? It just seemed like there was a lot of . . . It seemed disproportionately destructive. Even though these people were getting checks, something was wrong with this picture. And then came 1967, when my term of service was complete, when I could leave. It was the middle of the year, some time in '67. So I was there almost nine or ten months on this job. My active service was up. I remained in the reserves. I thought, "What am I going to do?" Maybe around January or February, I realized, "It is coming to an end, but my adventure is just beginning. I can't leave this place, because the more I learn about this place, the more I find I am completely ignorant."*
- Q: *But the attraction was still positive? It was not traumatizing you? Not bothering you?*

A: *It was bothering me, but only in the intellectual sense. Closure on the problem—that was much later, because I hadn't even put the problem up yet. I didn't even know what the problem was.*

## Back to Vietnam: Research for War Comes to Long An

Q: *So you were a smart young man, who had been sent to this exciting place right out of college, and it was still fascinating. There were issues, but it was fascinating. And, well, you couldn't give it up. But you were sent back to the United States.*

A: *I had to figure out how to come back.*

Q: *Even before you left?*

A: *Yes. Because I couldn't leave any gaps. As I said, I am a systematic person. Nothing left to chance. So I read somewhere about a two-year program of study in Vietnam, run by the University of Washington. So I wrote, and filled out the application, and was accepted. It started in June, maybe July. I went back to Boston and prepared to return to Vietnam on this program, except it began with two months of language study in Seattle. Since I was already fluent in Vietnamese, I just stopped for a day in Seattle on the way to Vietnam, and met the people. When I arrived I found out that it was actually a Fulbright program. Because of the special characteristics of Vietnam, they couldn't operate as a Fulbright program for some bureaucratic reason. So I met the people, and we hugged each other, and I flew off to Sài Gòn. Maybe it was some time in August of '67. So I arrived in Sài Gòn, and the coordinating point was the Joint United States Public Affairs Office. I walked into JUSPAO and went to see the cultural attaché, who turned out to be very pleasant. I introduced myself: "I am Jeffrey Race, and I am the advance guard, because the other five people are back at Seattle." He said, "What are you doing here? We cancelled this program two years ago. You are not supposed to be here." I said, "I have a letter of appointment, I am getting three hundred dollars a month, and I am going to study." "We are going to fix that." Those were his exact words: "We will fix that." So, they sent a letter revoking the*

grant. They said, “We are going to cut off your money. You have to leave.” So everybody else in the program, except Bill Turley, went someplace else. Bill was supposed to go to Singapore. I think he actually flew to Singapore, but then he secretly came back.

Q: So, now you were in Sài Gòn. Turley was going to show up. Your plan had been to be in a fairly structured program, right?

A: No, it was not structured. You could do whatever you wanted.

Q: What did you plan to do?

A: Ah, that is an interesting question. I had a systematic plan to figure out what to do. But the first thing was to figure out how to stay. Money was not a big problem, since my social program when I was in the Army the first year did not involve a lot of spending. We were paid two hundred and twenty-two dollars a month as second lieutenants, and I banked two hundred and twenty-two dollars a month. There was nothing to spend money on if you didn’t have an intense social program. And in my second year, there was really nothing to spend money on, because there was no place to go. You could walk a hundred yards, and that was it. I had saved up five thousand dollars. So I had cash. But I needed some way to get credentials. When I had been in the signal unit in Sài Gòn, I worked with a civilian contractor name Phil Kiser who ran a company which maintained a lot of equipment for us. He lived in a rented house out at the airport, and I stayed with him when I went back. So he said “Okay, why don’t I hire you as my mail clerk to get the company mail every day.” I had a car, and now I could get credentials of some sort. I don’t remember what it was, but I could stay. Another problem was how to get mobility around the country, but JUSPAO had an excellent program for journalists. So I reinvented myself as a journalist. I went to Hong Kong, and somehow somebody introduced me to Derek Davies.<sup>8</sup> I went to see him, and he said, “Sure, write for us.” This was a wonderful thing, because first of all, you could go anywhere in Vietnam on American vehicles—land, sea, air—for free, anytime you wanted. You didn’t have to explain anything to anybody. You just flashed your JUSPAO press pass, and they said,

*“This way sir.” I was able to get PX and commissary privileges from the job I had with Phil Kiser. I had all the papers I needed. I had a little money from Phil, I think three hundred dollars a month. I had a car. So I could drive around. And I had the credentials that allowed me to go anywhere and see anybody. And I had the Vietnamese language.*

Q: *What is missing from the picture is the program: “What am I going to do?”*

A: *“What am I going to do?” I arrived back from Hong Kong. I won’t say that journalism was a good discipline, but the Review was different from most places. You could write long articles in those days. And I wrote some good articles, but other people wrote much more interesting articles than I did, about Vietnam, and about the Philippines. The Review was a wonderful publication.*

Q: *And how many articles a month were you writing?*

A: *Maybe one? Two? Because I was a freelancer, not staff. The point was not to make the money. And since I was not under a deadline, I could really think deeply about things before I sent them out. So, I was in Sài Gòn, and I was thinking, “There is something wrong with this picture. I am ready to go. What to do?” And your question is, “What did I decide to do now?”*

Q: *And how did you do it? Because this became the book, right?*

A: *This became the book, but it was not intended to be a book. I had no idea I was going to write a book. I just thought, “I am ignorant, I must understand something about this situation.” There was another factor, which is that I had read everything that was available in English on Vietnam, and nobody could tell me why this place was such a mess, or what was going to happen, or why we were doing the things we were doing, how the things we were doing were responsive to the problems. That was what bothered me most. I was asking people but nobody had any good answers to anything. I eventually got to know some people at what was called ARPA in those days.<sup>9</sup> Sam Popkin was there. He was working for ARPA. There was another fellow from Texas who worked*

*with somebody named Steve Enke for one of the research contractors. These were intelligent people, but they didn't know the language, and they knew nothing about the context of this war. They never talked to Vietnamese who were engaged. They were spinning wheels, but they were happy with their work, preparing for their dissertations. We talked, and as I said, I read everything, I talked to a lot of people. I just was not happy with the state of knowledge—my knowledge, first of all. I thought somebody must know, but it turned out when you asked all the people who ought to know, nobody knew anything either. And that was a very troubling situation to me. And the issue was—I thought back to the place I had been sent in the war—“We're inside the barbed wire. The square footage of our area, compared to the square footage of their area is rather disproportionate, like one to one hundred thousand. But we've got all the money, and the guns and the brains. Why are we sitting in this little tiny space? This is really the problem that has to be figured out.” But I concluded very quickly there was no manageable way to figure this out when the country was at war. So the only manageable option open to me was to analyze a particular place in terms of its evolution, from a time when the situation was stable, in a sense, to how it was right then, which was, “We can't go anywhere anymore without a gun.” Essentially it was a winnowing process. You couldn't do the whole thing. You had to do a piece. Administratively, in terms of how data would be organized, we'd take an administrative unit, and a province seemed like a reasonable administrative unit. And the next thing was, “What is a place that I can reasonably get to that's like that, in other words, that essentially was the government's and then they lost it, which is within driving distance?” And Long An Province was perfect. It was right next to Sài Gòn.*

**Q:** *And Long An Province had a reputation for being lost already?*

**A:** *You couldn't go to a lot of places even though it was right next to Sài Gòn. You could go to the capital, you could go to the district towns, but you couldn't go very far out.*

**Q:** *You decided, “This is what I am going to do.” You started working very hard, very quickly. Your time conducting research was short by today's standards.*

- A: *That is right. It was less than a year.*
- Q: *When did you make the determination that Long An was the place?*
- A: *It would have been around October of '67.*
- Q: *Had you been to Long An before?*
- A: *No. Knew nothing about it.*
- Q: *What was the first trip like?*
- A: *I don't remember, and I am not sure whether I made any notes. But I went there in my capacity as a journalist. My first stop would have been the province senior advisor, who was Jim Herbert. And he was a full colonel, and an avuncular person. He took a liking to me. I was like a son to him. I don't think people ever saw me as trouble, and that was one of the important parts of making this work: he liked me. He was not an intellectual, but he was someone who thought about things. He made remarkably thoughtful statements. For example I asked him at one point, "Why did they do it this way?" He said this was the best thing they could agree on, even though it was a completely dysfunctional decision. Probably, that was the reason I chose this province, because right away, the first place I walked in, he said, "Sure, stay with me." And we'd stay up late at night talking, and he'd take me around, or he'd call people, "Okay, Jeff is coming." He was crucial to the program, sort of an enabler. He made it easy. If you think about it, if he hadn't been there, then this might have taken years. But of course, the other thing was, I was good in Vietnamese. I could talk to anybody. And the Vietnamese, remember, even the ones who are not intellectuals in a sense are thinkers, and they like to talk.*
- Q: *They didn't assume immediately you were a CIA man?*
- A: *Yes, they did. I just told them no. I mean, some people were too polite to say anything like that. I think there was a general presumption about "CIA" or "spy." But I told them I had been in the Army. I had learned Vietnamese in the Army. Now I was out and studying this province. I had a set of questions which I asked. I can even remember*

*it. I can tell you about it, because it was actually quite important in the success of the research—the interview protocol which I always used. And it ended up in a particular way, which was terrifically useful. But the first thing when you saw someone was to establish a relation of trust. Even the people I interviewed who were captured, I had no trouble talking with, because I just . . . If you are really interested in people, mostly people respond well, even in difficult situations like that. These were people in chains, and you could still talk to them. So, when I went out interviewing people, I would usually start with the civil authorities, the district officer, the head of a local military unit, somebody like that, somebody in the village, the village chief, and then fan out. I will tell you how that process worked. You established your credentials by saying . . . I would tell them my history, my purpose, and I would tell them I would take notes. I asked them to help me. That was the key. I would put myself in a position of subordination to their knowledge of the situation. I would pose a question to them about the situation, and ask them to give me their understanding of how this situation developed. Or ask them about somebody's action, and their understanding of how this action was motivated. Listen to them. And I will tell you, frankly, a lot of these people didn't understand things very well, but some people did, and those were the gems that you looked for. Maybe out of ten interviews I'd get something valuable . . . All of them were useful as background, but you only got gems out of a couple, or insight out of a couple.*

- Q:** *It was crucial to your goal at this point that you interviewed people who were no longer active in Long An, former province chiefs for example?*
- A:** *Yes, and some of these were also very interesting interviews. I always ended my interviews in a certain way. During the interview I would challenge people. I would first let them talk about their understanding. Then I would raise things which might be different, or which they might not have thought about, or it might be my pet theories, and I might test that and get them to answer those questions. But I would always end the interview in the following way: I would tell them they*

*had been valuable, I had made a lot of notes, and I would ask them whether I could use their name. Sometimes they would say “yes,” sometimes “no.” I would say, “I want to learn more about this. Among all the people you know, who are the ones who know most about X?” And they would give me names. And that was the way, essentially, that the network spread out. That was how I got the names of the people in Sài Gòn.*

Q: *So, this was how, for example, you were led to Nguyễn Văn Ngừ?*

A: *No, he was the province chief when I was there. I got to see him ex-officio.*

Q: *And talked to him a lot?*

A: *Yes. He was the big guy in the province, Herbert’s counterpart.*

Q: *What did he make of the fact that you went to him and said, “We can’t go anywhere in your province, sir. I am trying to understand how, since 1950, this has happened”? Or didn’t you say that to him?*

A: *I am sure I asked him that question. I would be provocative, within the bounds of decorum. That was the whole point. This was no surprise to these people. They’re literally living under the gun. The key things were, first of all, the language, and, second, you had to come across as someone sincerely interested in their situation. If you did those things, I think in my whole time in Vietnam, nobody ever said, “I am not going to talk to you,” and nobody was ever uncooperative. I would be down there a few days at a time or a week at a time, and I would go back and write up my notes. And I would stay with Jim.*

Q: *At some point, this fellow Nguyễn Bé appeared.<sup>10</sup> When did you meet him? When did you start to get your hands on his writing?<sup>11</sup>*

A: *I probably would have read of him. He was an important figure. Of all the things that were going on, he was running the only one that seemed responsive to the situation.<sup>12</sup>*

Q: *This was his school in Vũng Tàu, the National Training Center?*

A: *I guess I went to see him quite a few times.*

- Q: *It occurred to you that the military approach, what you call the reinforcement strategy, was not working.*<sup>13</sup>
- A: *First of all, I didn't have those words yet. I just knew, I sensed from my time in military service mowing down rubber trees, and going on operations, seeing farmers, soldiers who were farmers the month before, getting their legs blown off, and not seeing anybody, and being in this sea of people who were not on our side . . . that that was not responsive somehow. So now, I was going out looking for responsive things. For example, I had been up in Huế. The Marines had a program, a completely different program. If I had been up there, I probably would've written about that. But I was down here in Sài Gòn, and Nguyễn Bế's was a national program. He was talkative, and he had written a lot of stuff. So it was natural to engage him. I just walked in. In general, I had no introductions, except in the case where somebody referred me, and sometimes I'd mention that person's name. Sometimes people would let me do that. But in general, I would just walk in on people.*
- Q: *Let's talk about Nguyễn Bế's influence on War Comes to Long An. That influence seems immense. The section where you begin to introduce his writings, it really tracks what you were saying. So what sort of discussions did you have with him? How much did he help you define the problem as you ultimately defined it?*
- A: *You see, he was the only one I met who engaged this issue in terms of the motivation of individuals to change their behavior. That was what was unique. In a positive way, rather than in a coercive way. If you're sitting in an armored personnel carrier mowing down rubber trees, if you are going on an operation with the militia . . . these were all coercive ways to change behavior. He was the only one who had a program to motivate people to change their behavior. It was more than building buildings, digging wells.*
- Q: *And more than military operations?*
- A: *Yes, that is right. It was about building essential human relationships.*

Q: *When did you come to the conclusion that it had to be more than military operations?*

A: *That is a no brainer, literally a no brainer. And, later you see, I formalized that in the chapter on lessons, when I talked about the concept of security.<sup>14</sup> You could use people with guns to secure a limited area, but you couldn't do it for an entire country. You had to positively motivate people, just in terms of the way numbers worked.*

Q: *And this is what Nguyễn Bé thought about it?*

A: *He was not the most systematic thinker about these issues. He didn't think about things the way that I do.*

Q: *What was his background?*

A: *I don't know. But these things are known, and described in detail, as I discovered later when I read Ahern's work.<sup>15</sup> The CIA was behind that program. They sort of found him and funded the thing and got it going. It was very controversial.*

Q: *You say that the CIA was behind that program. Did you encounter any Americans there, working at Nguyễn Bé's operation?*

A: *No, I never saw them and didn't know anything about that.*

Q: *No sign of Sauvageot for example? Was he active in Vũng Tàu at the center?*

A: *I knew Jean Sauvageot. Yes, he must have been there. Maybe that's where I met him.<sup>16</sup> We are still in touch.*

Q: *What about some of the others you mentioned in the book. Gerald Hickey?*

A: *Hickey was sort of a fixture.*

Q: *The village in which he first did research on lowland Vietnam was in Long An, wasn't it?<sup>17</sup> Or pretty close?*

A: *Yes, somewhere around there. Remember, Hickey was an anthropologist. I never studied anthropology, and I didn't really understand much*

*about it. He was very kind to me, sort of took me under his wing, and we talked a great deal, but he was just not interested in the kind of things I was interested in. He was an ethnographer and working by then in a different area, on different problems. But he was someone I could talk to. This is one of the problems of being in these remote places far from America—to find people to talk to. You could talk to him. You could talk to Jean Sauvageot. You could talk to Tôn Thất Thiện. You could talk to some of the people at ARPA. I was seeing people at ARPA at this point. It was important to have people to talk to about things.*

Q: *What about RAND?*

A: *They were there.*

Q: *Know anybody there? Ever encounter RAND types out interviewing defectors in Long An?*

A: *Never.*

Q: *How about one more fellow whose help you acknowledge in the book, Thái Quốc Thanh?*

A: *He was the intelligence officer in Long An. And he was quite helpful. Because, remember, one of the things I thought was important, and essentially was a triumph of this book, was to get the data, which means the numbers, because numbers are important for proving things about political behavior. And I had the sense, toward the end of the field research, that I was going to say something important. And some things that some people wouldn't like, and I thought the only way you could make statements like that was to have evidence, and so the evidence was crucial. I spent a lot of time going through files, literally tied up with string, getting numbers. And Thanh was one of the people who were quite helpful, because he was in charge of the archive, of what they called order of battle information.*

Q: *Including information on the other side?*

A: *Specifically on the other side. And also the documents, the captured documents.<sup>18</sup>*

Q: *The documents that had been captured had been stored in Long An?*

A: *Yes, in part. They were all over.*

Q: *And he gave you the run of these materials. Because . . . For reasons you make very clear in the book, the other side got it right, the other side understood the situation, understood the need for what you term in War Comes to Long An, a “redistribution of values,” and so much of the book is about their thinking.<sup>19</sup>*

A: *Yes. You couldn't make anything out of this unless you understood them. And then I got in in the middle of the war, which is the worst time to do it.*

Q: *So some of the information came from these captured documents. And then there were encounters with defectors.*

A: *Yes, that's right, both while I was in the Army and later.*

Q: *And you were interviewing a lot of the defectors while you were working on the book.*

A: *Not a lot, maybe fifteen or twenty. But one was key, a very high-ranking fellow.<sup>20</sup> It would have been difficult to achieve this without his contribution. I should say by the way that some of these people I went back to interview many times, after thinking about what they had told me.*

Q: *At the time you were interviewing the high-ranking communist defector, where was he?*

A: *He was in Sài Gòn. Somebody in the Vietnamese government, probably in intelligence, told me where to find him. There was a program called the Chiêu Hồi program.<sup>21</sup> And probably one of the managers of the program said, “So here is so-and-so.” His health was very bad. It's not good for your health living in the jungles with mosquitoes and leeches and being shot at. Maybe he didn't live much longer after I interviewed him. But he was a great resource. He was more intellectual. He was essentially smarter than a lot of these people. It wasn't*

*just that he had higher access, but that he . . . He was not just an actor, an executor, but he was a thinker.*

Q: *Was he among those who called your attention so early to the issue of land?*

A: *Land had been an important issue there long before I arrived. Remember Roy Prosterman's work.<sup>22</sup> They had a land reform program. There was a lot written about it, and so this was no secret. But, you see, the way the other side handled the land issue was different from the way the government handled it. It was this business about the contingent incentives.<sup>23</sup> That was the secret. Only it was no secret, but nobody wrote about it.*

Q: *One more question about this year of research. What were the circumstances of your contact with Nguyễn Ngọc Loan?<sup>24</sup>*

A: *I just walked into his office. He was the director-general of the police department. I went to get the documents. Remember, you cannot give powerful statements without evidence. He said, "You can see anything you want." He just told whoever was in charge of the archives.*

## Writing War Comes to Long An

Q: *You saw General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan before Tết '68? Where were you at the time of Tết '68?*

A: *This is an interesting story, one of the funny things that happened to me amidst a tragic situation. At a certain point, I advanced beyond the level of saying, "There's something that I want to understand for myself." When I went out and began to do the interviews, at a certain point . . . I will just say now that at a certain point, something crystallized. I realized in my head that I had something valuable, and I could write something which would help other people, and not just be for my private purpose, because I went back to Vietnam for a private purpose.*

Q: *A book, in other words? About when was this in the course of your year of research?*

A: *I think it was around November. After a couple of months of interviews, I figured out that I could get the data, although I didn't realize at that point that I would be able to get such extensive data, and such important data. But I saw that, given the way things were set up, I had the credentials from JUSPAO, I had the language, people were helpful to me, I had found a province in which the records were kept well, I could get data. But the important thing was that I realized something, which in fact is trivial. In fact it's the foundation of all religious traditions: that reality has a rational structure. And this problem had a rational structure of cause and effect, and cause and effect, and cause and effect, and I could understand that, in a way which had not been understood before. I realized that I could do that, and at that point, it was just a question of writing it up.*

Q: *Were you already writing during this year in Vietnam?*

A: *At some point toward the end of '67, I realized that, in fact, this could be a book. Now, remember, this was the 1960s. To write a book, this was a big thing, not like today when any little piece of rubbish can be put between covers and self-published. I didn't know whether I could publish a book, but I knew I could write a book, although I had never written a book before. But I had almost written a book, because I had written a one-hundred-page undergraduate thesis which was all just ideas.<sup>25</sup> But I had something much better: I had data. The important thing was, I recognized this would help a lot of people, because I knew I was not the only one who was troubled, and I knew that my government was spending a lot of money, and the people to whom I was talking to at ARPA, remember, who were getting a lot of money, didn't have any answers that I could find. But it is hard to write, particularly if you are not a professional writer. So, there came a day when I just said in the morning, "I am going to start this tonight, no matter what." And that was the thirty-first of January 1968. I was in Sài Gòn, living two blocks from Tân Sơn Nhất Airport, with Bill Turley and Phil Kiser. We had dinner, and I went up to my room, which had a window and shutters. And so I closed the window and the shutters, and turned on my air conditioner, and I started typing, until about two o'clock in the morning. I was probably doing an outline*

*and the first couple of pages of text. I already had a pretty comprehensive outline in mind. That was an important choice also—how to structure the book, given what I wanted to accomplish, which was essentially . . . It didn't rise to the level of iconoclasm, but it was going to be something different. So structure was important. I had quite an extensive outline, and I said I was going to write the first few pages. I had an alarm on my radio, and I always set it for ten in the morning to listen to the news. And I remember I woke up, and the announcer said, "The 173rd Airborne Brigade has just retaken the American Embassy in downtown Sài Gòn," and I thought in this dreamy state that that was rather an unusual headline. So I got out of bed and opened the window, and outside there was literally firing in the streets, and I saw smoke and flames at a distance, and helicopters were firing into Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base. And I realized that there had been an attack overnight, and I had never heard a thing because of the air conditioner. So that was Tết.*

- Q: *Did what the other side achieved in the Tết Offensive reinforce the sense that things were really wrong? Or was it incidental?*
- A: *It was incidental, because I was quite troubled by this situation already. Remember, I had not drawn any conclusions yet, but I began with the sense that something was wrong with that picture. And I had most of my data from this province, and I understood the reasons why the allies of the United States had lost influence in that province. And I saw that the structure of the American military and the strategy were not responsive to that, and that was ominous. This could become a disastrous situation. But this feeling solidified when, not long after that, President Johnson came on t.v. and announced he was not going to contest the coming election.<sup>26</sup>*
- Q: *What is going on at this point is, by January you have an outline. We know as researchers that, once you have an outline, you begin to hustle to fill in all the cells. So every day, you've got to get materials.*
- A: *Yes, I was hunting around to fill in the gaps. It was not like a dissertation. I was not writing a dissertation. It was just a fool's errand that I had sent myself on.*

- Q: *Was there a deadline to complete your research?*
- A: *No, not at that point. Remember, I am a perfectionist. Nothing is left to chance. I wanted to write a perfect study.*
- Q: *So you had begun writing by the first few months of 1968. In addition to Popkin, with whom else were you in touch during this earliest phase in the writing of *War Comes to Long An*?*
- A: *Steve Enke and the Texan and half a dozen other people. One was a bit of a bibliomaniac who had an enormous collection, everything that had ever been written on Vietnam in English or French, thousands of books. These were all smart people. There are really two issues, as I think about it now. The people who were on the government payroll were just responding to their paymasters. A lot of the ARPA work was very technical, both in Vietnam and in Thailand, where I later worked with this organization. You know, sensors and communication systems, things like that. But the social science work that was done was, I think, technically sound. I've read a lot of this material, for example, David Elliott's work.<sup>27</sup> They did the interviews. They were recorded properly. They asked the right questions. The statistical methods that were applied were technically correct. But the reason I was never able to feel good about this was that I just didn't feel they were asking questions that were material to making decisions about the American effort. They would invite me to their parties, and we would talk, and I would tell them about the things that I was working on. And I must have told them in some detail about my work, because the word got to Thailand, right? Although how, I don't know.*
- Q: *At the time that you were recruited to work with ARPA in Thailand, where were you in the process of forming your conclusions about Long An Province?*
- A: *This was probably May or June 1968. I was very far along in my writing. I had a lot of material. At this point I had quite firm conclusions about what had happened and what was important in driving what had happened. Maybe I was up to writing the fourth chapter, which is the key chapter in the book.<sup>28</sup>*

- Q: *Was the book already organized as, essentially, narrative and then an analytical chapter?*
- A: *Yes, that was one of the key decisions fairly early—how to do that. Because I had never written anything so long before, I had no guidance, no precedent on how to handle that, and there would be different ways to do it. One could for example just have written it as history, and let the reader draw his own inferences. I considered that. In other words, I could have done it without the fourth chapter—just explain everything as I went along, melding the inferences in with history in the whole book. But I decided not to do that because I thought that would be unfair to the reader, and also less persuasive. I thought I had something important to say, which had to be presented in the best possible way. And if you intermingled it with the historical description and the interviews . . . I thought it would be important to let the reader form his own ideas as he went along, and then give my own ideas as the analyst, which he might agree or disagree with. But since they would stand separately from the history, they would be easily verifiable or falsifiable, because the history would already be there.*
- Q: *Let's talk about the first three chapters, and their lengthy quotations from communist materials.<sup>29</sup>*
- A: *They won the war.*
- Q: *Also, you note, or explain, many other factors. You explain that they are in Vietnamese, and that you're making them accessible to English readers. And you explain that the communists see things the way you think readers should see things.*
- A: *Wait a second now. I say they saw things in a way which was effective. And if you want to understand why they were effective, you have to understand their way of thinking.*
- Q: *What is also very striking about the extensive quotation in those chapters is that one has the sense that you are asking the reader to go through, on a small scale, what you had gone through on a large scale, really come to conclusions on his or her own through direct exposure*

to these documents from the other side. And this has an impact on the reader, as he or she goes through those three chapters.

A: *I understand what you are getting at. Remember how I came to this: it was a blurred and a troubling situation whose structure I didn't understand. You cannot measure variables—you don't even know what variables to measure—until you understand the structure of the problem you want to analyze. And when you land in Sài Gòn, and literally it's just a buzz of people you can't understand, and they have strangely shaped hats, and their mannerisms are different, and at night you look out at the horizon and you see explosions, you know something is going on in this country. That is the way it was when I started. That was a dramatization of an intellectual problem. So, there was an issue in this place. But I didn't understand anything about why this war existed, why those people were so successful, why the people we were helping with a blank check were so unsuccessful. That was the intellectual problem. So, the question was how to structure that. And I wanted to take the reader from the fog into the clear. I wanted to walk you through the same process that I went through by talking to these people, and it would be clear to you.*

Q: *How much awareness of this approach, of what you had undertaken, was there among the social scientists at ARPA?*

A: *They just didn't do things this way. They were socialized into the procedures, and the approaches, and for well understood problems in which you wanted to answer a limited range of questions, their methods were very effective. Essentially, they were the methods of science. But my task was not their task. Their task, these people who were paid by the American government, or scholars who just went for some other purpose—like Gerry Hickey, ethnographers—came with a method to analyze well defined problems and came up with conclusions according to the existing state of science, social science, at the point which to some extent was quantitative and to some extent not. But my task was different: to understand a structure, which was unclear from the beginning. So when I began this, it was not even clear what variables to look at.*

- Q: *How clear were the variables by the time you left for Thailand?*
- A: *Things were very clear at that point.*
- Q: *In addition to time to write, and secretarial services, what contribution did this year as an ARPA contractor in Thailand, 1968–1969 roughly, make to the book?*
- A: *None. It is a compartmented act.*
- Q: *So some of the time was Thailand-related work for ARPA, while during the rest of the time you were able to work on this book? Is the social science that you were involved in at ARPA not rubbing off at all on the book?*
- A: *No. The science which I used in the book I just invented as I went along.*
- Q: *So, in the fall of 1969, you returned to the United States. And how was it that after all these experiences, your intention to continue with graduate school in political science, formed when you were an undergraduate, was still alive?*
- A: *It just seemed like the next logical thing to do.*
- Q: *You were still anticipating a career as a political science professor in New England somewhere at that point?*
- A: *Yes, and at that point I thought I had enough experience of the real world to make a success of graduate school. I had the choice to go back to graduate school after the Army, but I thought I shouldn't do that until I got some more experience outside. That was a good decision in retrospect.*
- Q: *Why not just get the book done first? You had the material, you had had some time in Thailand to write War Comes to Long An. Why not finish it first before throwing yourself back into coursework?*
- A: *It was essentially all done. I was just going through editing and adding maps and things like that. By the time I arrived back at Harvard, the work was all done.*

Q: *Was there a title?*

A: *Yes. I chose the title rather early, while still in Sài Gòn. I gave considerable thought to the title, because it is important. It seemed to encapsulate the issue I wanted to explain. The one weakness was that people wouldn't know the geographical location mentioned in the title, but that was, I thought, unavoidable. I thought this was a good title.*

Q: *In the fall of 1969 you returned to Boston to start the PhD program in government at Harvard. You began to take graduate-level courses. Did these challenge your faith in your manuscript in any way?*

A: *They had no relation to the manuscript. This was a discrete project in my life, pretty much over by the time I got into graduate school. At that point, we were just negotiating to find a publisher. In fact, I think hardly anybody knew that I was working on this project, except my dissertation advisors, because they had some recommendations about it. And when it came out, it was a shock to everyone. The people on my committee were Sam Huntington and Sam Popkin, and maybe one other person. But those were the two people I dealt with most.*

Q: *And you met Huntington for the first time when you returned to Harvard in '69.<sup>30</sup>*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *What did he make of the fact that you had done all this research in Vietnam and had a book manuscript?*

A: *He never said anything about it, but I found out later, only after he passed away, that he had written an absolutely thrilling recommendation about me, two years later, saying that even before I came to graduate school, I had written a book which was the work of a mature professor.*

Q: *Did you ever talk to him about the nitty-gritty of Vietnam? About the social science that you had developed in order to write this book?*

A: *No, I provided him a copy of the script, maybe in my second year. We never discussed it. He read it, because he was on my committee, and*

he and Sam Popkin said, “The rules do not allow you to turn in a published book. But if you add something, you may submit this as your dissertation.” This was important to me, because I didn’t want to spend ten years getting a PhD.

Q: Before we go back to this, let’s talk a bit more about Popkin. Popkin had spent considerable time in Vietnam. He was at that stage, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, beginning a much longer process of writing his own book about Vietnam.<sup>31</sup> He had a dog in the same fight, so to speak. What did he make of the manuscript?

A: In the tradition of Harvard, nobody bothered me very much. They said, “You have to add some things.” And in fact, it was an excellent recommendation, because the material which I added is what is in the new edition of the book, which introduces some important . . .<sup>32</sup> Essentially, some of the things that I wrote about were new concepts and some of the things people had thought about in other areas or in other fields before, like Mancur Olson. But I just didn’t know the literature. I discovered that when I went back to Harvard. I integrated the details of my research in Vietnam with a broader literature in the behavioral sciences. Also, I added some important things in retrospect about dynamic issues of the beginnings of revolutionary wars, and also some difficulties I had in the political science literature with the concept of mobilization, which was a hot topic.

## War Comes to Long An and its Social Science

Q: When you say that the book was essentially all done by the late summer of 1969, do you include the terminology used in the book?

A: Yes. That all came to me while I was doing it.

Q: For example, “contingent incentives,” “the assimilation of forces”?

A: Yes. This was all done in ’68.

Q: Can you tell us more about where this terminology came from? This is one of the most crucial, overlooked points in the legacy of the book.

*“The assimilation of forces,” “reinforcement strategy,” “pre-emption,” “contingent incentives.” Those four to start with.<sup>33</sup> “Power ratios” are also very important.<sup>34</sup> “Revolution as a social process” is also very important.<sup>35</sup> But the first four, really, how did these come to you?*

A: *They didn’t come until there was a long immersion in the details of the phenomena I was studying. And then, this event happens, which I spoke about a moment ago, which is that the structure crystallizes in my mind: the structure of this process. Remember, we are talking about cause-and-effect relationships in the behavior of human beings. This is what we want to understand. And at the beginning, it was just a nonsensical blur. The day I arrived in Sài Gòn I didn’t understand why these people were behaving as they did. Nothing wrong with it, but it was different from what I was used to. “Why is this system operating this way?” Then we go to another level of complexity, about the level of conflict in the war. I wanted to understand that, because my country was involved in this conflict, and a lot of resources and human lives were tied up. I wanted to understand this better. But I didn’t understand it, and I didn’t think that the people working over at ARPA understood it very well. And I wasn’t able to achieve any understanding by reading everything that was available in English on this war. I wanted to understand better. So I studied it in one delimited area. And at a certain point, and this is just the way my mind works—a gift that I have—the structure appeared. And I wanted to describe the structure to other people. This is my gift, that I can analyze very complex phenomena, and see the immanent structures. But then, you have to convey it in words. “Where did the words come from?” This is your question?*

Q: *The most interesting term is perhaps “contingent incentives.”*

A: *It turned out I wasn’t the first one to see this, because Mancur Olson thought about it earlier.<sup>36</sup> I didn’t even know about that. I had never read Mancur Olson—only later, only at graduate school. One of the puzzles about this, and essentially the mystifications of the war for people sitting in Washington in their swivel chairs was, “We are doing*

*all these wonderful things for these people, we're building the schools, we're digging the wells, we're giving them textbooks, we're sending them grants to study overseas—why don't they cooperate with us?" And that was an interesting question, if you approached human behavior at a simplistic level. And so I thought about it, and I asked people about development projects. "The Americans were here, and they did this, and you've got this school now." There were all kinds of comments. "They built the school, but they didn't provide us with maintenance, no budget for electricity," or things like that. But in fact, that was not the key thing. The key thing was that many of the incentives offered by the other side were contingent upon cooperation with them, whereas assistance provided by the government of Vietnam and its American supporter was not contingent upon cooperation. I thought that was a pretty important point to convey. So I had to find a way to express that. And the idea just came into my mind—"contingent incentives."*

**Q:** *You make a very interesting point in your article on "systematic distortion," a point that really flows from War Comes to Long An, that the basis of communist success in Vietnam was not organization.<sup>37</sup> In your mind, it seems rather to have been something much more important than that. Is contingent incentives part of this?*

**A:** *We'll leave out all the business of Marxist-Leninist understanding of the evolution of society. They made a lot of mistakes on that. But the psychology of the division of society into groups in conflict over the distribution of values is absolutely crucial to their enterprise, and their idea of forming coalitions. In fact, this was all common sense. And that was one of the great mysteries of this war: how could so many intelligent people, let's say in my government, make such stupendous errors of judgment, when all this was so simple?*

**Q:** *Did you ever ask yourself how the communists in the Delta operation-alized these commonsensical ideas so effectively?*

**A:** *I didn't ask them, but it was clear in their literature. They had meetings, review sessions, in which they would analyze villagers person by*

person, and assign individuals to categories, according to their way of dividing up groups of people. So it was a very scientific process. So the words I chose, “contingent incentives”. . . Essentially, it was the exact vocabulary to describe their strategy for motivating people.

Q: Let’s talk about another term of vocabulary, one that you mentioned just a moment ago, this whole notion of “values” and the “distribution of values.”<sup>38</sup> How did you come upon that latter term as a way to talk about the problem in South Vietnam?

A: I remember I struggled with that.

Q: It is very striking, because values hang somewhere between something very abstract and something very concrete. We are not talking about the redistribution of income, of land.

A: It is a higher level of abstraction. I struggled with that, to find the word, because it was a whole variety of things, some of which were tangible and some intangible. Because of the difficulty with that, I chose an inclusive term for things which ordinary people would seek, which could lie in several domains, which form essentially the matrix of things that we seek out in life to advance whatever goals or desires that we have. Those are the values.<sup>39</sup>

Q: What about “pre-emption” as opposed to “reinforcement”? Another very interesting set of usages.<sup>40</sup>

A: In fact, these are very important in understanding what happened, because the communist leadership began from a point where . . . Essentially they were starting from nothing, or almost nothing. They were almost wiped out in the South. They really were wiped out in ’59. There was a big debate within the communist leadership, between the leadership and their followers in the South. The question was, “How do you approach a group of people who are passive but they have some feelings and desires, to get them to join in a great enterprise, or to prevent them from joining in somebody else’s great enterprise?” So their choice was a set of policies, which if presented and credible, would then motivate people to join with them. There was certainly coercion,

because it was not just positive, but also negative. But it was a particular balance, a better balance under the circumstances than that of the central authorities in Sài Gòn. And so, the government then faced the problem from the opposite side, and as a choice opened, there was this pre-emptive strategy, which they didn't choose, essentially to win the cooperation of those people. I chose these terms in order to dramatize the choices which otherwise were sort of inchoate, and there was no good way to describe it. I have thought about how these things happen, and I can say that if you immerse yourself in the detail long enough, and you understand the actual process in the external reality, and then you think about it at an abstract level, at least the way my mind works, terms come into my mind. It is different from the process of creation, for example, of music. I've read something about Bach and Mozart. They heard things that had never existed in the world before. That is pure creation. For me it is different, because in fact there is a reality there, and when I study it long enough, sometimes I just realize, "Oh, that's the way it is." It is like a fog lifting, and you see everything. This was the way I saw these social structures. And then I assigned names.

Q: This is all very clear. The concepts with which I had the hardest time as I re-read the book were "power ratio" and "force ratio."<sup>41</sup> Can you talk about what those meant in the context of the book, and how you arrived at those ideas?

A: The modal analysis on the side of the Americans was very much in military terms, thinking that, as Napoleon said, "God is on the side of the big battalions." So they wanted to have large numbers of people carrying rifles. That seemed to me not to capture the reality. Other factors were involved. You had to look at things like absolute numbers of people, their levels of motivation, what kind of equipage they might have in terms of knowledge, technology, or weaponry. These were all essentially multiplier factors, which would decide the result of the competition between them, over large numbers of incidents and periods of time, which was what we were looking at. And so I developed this terminology to try to focus the attention of the reader on the factors which were important in the outcome of a conflict over significant

*periods of time and numbers of incidents. And the particular thing I had in my mind was the impoverishment of the analysis, by analysts of my government and its contractors, of the dynamics of these conflicts. Their analysis was highly militarized, highly focused on technical things, like weaponry. So they were missing important aspects of the situation.*

Q: *And the first hint of the dynamic in the book is this notion of revolution as social process?*

A: *This is the beginning of the analysis. We have to go back and distinguish two types of military conflict: there's the conventional conflict, and there's this kind of a conflict. In the conventional conflict, the support of the military forces normally will come external to the location of the hostilities. You come in with your military, you have your baggage trains with their petroleum, their food, their water, and so forth. And they use these to engage some other force, which is also in that area, using possibly local, or possibly external, support mechanisms. And the type of conflict that you can afford to fight in that competition differs as black and white from this, because you actually are fighting among the very people from whom you must derive your support, at least for intelligence, but probably for other things too, like shelter. So if you take all of the assumptions of a conventional war, and apply them to this kind of war, you end up with what we saw in the American effort in Vietnam. And if you look at it as a social process, then you focus on the fact that you must essentially either stay friends or make friends with the people among whom you have a violence program. Therefore, you must be more sensitive to the way the violence program works. The other side did, and our side did not.*

Q: *And this point is connected intimately to the assimilation of forces. Unassimilated forces have to live within the barbed wire, whereas assimilated forces don't?*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *How was it possible that American social scientists looking at the war effort failed to incorporate revolution as a social process into their*

*work? Was it because their paymasters were so narrow-minded, or their training so inadequate? Certainly revolutions had been studied. Insurgencies had been studied. How did you account at the time for the absence of, as you say, where it all begins, understanding revolution as a social process?*

- A: *I didn't think about it at that time. I only thought about it later, and I thought about it a great deal much later. Let me highlight the intellectual issue. When I was studying this war, I was under what I now see to be the misapprehension that the bad decisions resulted from the lack of understanding of the structure of the problem. In fact, in the perspective of decades, even if the people at the top had had perfect understanding, the decisions probably would have been no better. I thought when I wrote the book, and when I finished it, that such a situation could never recur, since the structure of the problem was so obvious that any sentient creature would understand it, and not make similar mistakes. And I never returned to the issue. But similar kinds of things recurred, and in fact, that is why the book has come out in a second edition, because people are very interested in it, and because decisions with very troubling consequences continue to occur, made by people who are very intelligent, have a lot of experience, have advanced degrees from very well-known universities—people who should know better. And that's the kind of issue that occupies me now. I have come to this conclusion retrospectively, from examining other situations since then, that even if we had had perfect knowledge about Vietnam, if we had had three RAND Corporations and ten Gerry Hickeys and four Jeffrey Races, this still would have ended badly, because the decisions at that time were not made based on data and scientifically valid relationships. Different people have different ideas why this was so. And I think different decisions were made on different bases. But we can say in general from facts which we now know based on recent research, like McMaster's book or the studies by Thomas Ahern, which the Central Intelligence Agency has declassified, that institutional rivalries were quite important.<sup>42</sup> Personal obsessions or limited personal experience drawing false analogies, for example to*

*things that worked in the Second World War, were formative factors. But scientifically validated relationships about behavior were not part of the decision-making process. That we can say definitively. That is something I am pushing for because I believe that you cannot, as a responsible policy maker, sacrifice the nation's treasure or human lives unscientifically. I have essentially lost interest in the specifics of things like Vietnam because there are much greater problems to intrigue and occupy me for the rest of my life. In fact, these problems like Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan are trivially easy to understand. And the pathologies of the decision-making about these situations are also trivially easy to understand. If you just understand a little about the factors producing human behavior, individuals and people in small groups, then it is easy to see how things go wrong, given the personal beliefs and desires of the people making these decisions. And it is at that level that these terrible problems must be addressed. These people essentially have attachments to some kinds of things that are personally important to them, which prevent them from using the knowledge they have. This is the way these people behave in these groups. Peer pressure is very important: getting invited to parties and having people say nice things to you determine the things you write in policy papers.*

Q: *Let's return to what has become the new chapter, in the 2010 edition of War Comes to Long An.<sup>43</sup> What were your difficulties with the concept of mobilization?*

A: *Well, it was a big issue for Sam Huntington and Karl Deutsch, and their insights were very important in the evolution of our understanding of change in societies when technology and communications change the way they did in the fifties and sixties. But they were never specific about the operational referents of mobilization. It was just a word. And this was my criticism of Huntington's work. I spell it out quite specifically in my dissertation, which has then been slightly improved, and that is the additional chapter in the book.<sup>44</sup>*

Q: *But in the article in the John Lewis book, which grew out of what has now become the additional chapter in the new edition of War Comes*

to Long An, much of what you say about Huntington's theorizing is actually quite positive.<sup>45</sup> You're very positive about the distinction that Huntington drew between parties and administrations, and how, actually, making something from nothing is much easier and in fact may only be possible if one works through parties.

A: Yes, of course, because of the limited absorptive capacity of administrative bodies. And it was the flaw in President Ngô Đình Diệm's approach and his brother's—that they were just working with a very limited organization and limited staffing tables and limited funding, and the ambit of the organization was circumscribed in many ways. So, by its very terms of reference, it couldn't respond to the desires of larger bodies of the population for involvement, and for the kind of rewards they felt they deserved and qualified for.

Q: So that component of Huntington's thinking about mobilization is sound, as far as you are concerned?

A: I had no problem with any of his work, except some of it was too vague, and I wanted to add an operationalization.

Q: And how did you focus on operationalizing it in this extra chapter that went into the dissertation? Is that where exchange theory comes in?

A: Yes.

Q: When we go back and read your chapter on exchange theory in the Lewis book now, or the new chapter of War Comes to Long An, what is so striking is that exchange theory builds the contingent incentive world of the individual into collective action.

A: Yes, that's what politics is all about.

Q: Not in the minds of today's rational choice theorists. The ongoing critique, the ongoing difficulty that so many of us have with rational choice theory is that the individual is taken as the fundamental unit of analysis, and a sound, or even remotely convincing, theoretical argument for the way in which individual preferences relate to collective action is missing.

- A: *This is where the concept of emergent structures comes in.*
- Q: *But Sam Popkin, years after War Comes to Long An came out, years after your dissertation was finished, wrote a book that failed to address this problem.<sup>46</sup> How do you account for being so far ahead of the curve on that?*
- A: *I can't explain that, and I feel no obligation to explain that, except to say that I was isolated from all of these things. Remember, I was out at the edge of civilization. No contact with the university. I just had to understand these things in my own terms that made sense to me. And when I went back, I didn't pursue this any more.*
- Q: *But emergent structures, and the notion of exchange theory, these came out of your reading back in Cambridge, Massachusetts? Or reading that you had done in Asia? The extra chapter we are talking about . . .*
- A: *The term "emergent structure" is a term from sociology. This is after I get back to graduate school. And exchange theory . . . In fact, this is a very important body of knowledge, which political scientists didn't appreciate properly. These were things I discovered when I went back to graduate school.*
- Q: *In coursework?*
- A: *No, these were not taught to us.*
- Q: *So, truth be told, your semesters of coursework in the doctoral program seem to have had little impact on the dissertation.*
- A: *That is correct.*
- Q: *Both editions of the book feature an appendix in which you present a graphic presentation of concepts, and in fact, in which there are actually equations.<sup>47</sup> I am wondering what the origins of this approach with numbers, equations, and the graphic presentation of concepts were.*
- A: *I was dissatisfied with expressing things only in words. Because in fact, notionally you could measure these things and test the propositions for*

*validity. And so I gave some initial ideas how you would quantify these things, what the relationships would look like, as equations. It was just a hint in case someone wanted to pursue it. In fact, I discovered later that this kind of analysis was used in sociology. But I never knew about that. I just thought, if you want to do it, this is the way you do it or could do it. It is an aid to a conceptualization and operationalization.*

**Q:** *Why did you decide to put those things in an appendix rather than in the text itself?*

**A:** *Because some people would take it amiss. First of all, some people don't like numbers. Second, it does not follow directly in the flow of the argument. It was essentially just to establish the structure of the input-output relationship, which I describe, which are inferences from the data and the interviews. In fact, this was a stand-alone thing, and later I came upon the concept, now quite common, of modularity. In those days, nobody thought this way. But that is just the way my mind works. I like to separate things out because they are more easily understandable and testable. And it just seemed like a better way in terms of the flow of the book because, remember, there are many components to a book.*

## The Publication of *War Comes to Long An* and its Legacy

**Q:** *Most of the dissertation was *War Comes to Long An*, and then there was this extra chapter, and this extra chapter was really about reading more now that you were back within reach of a good library, and thinking a bit more about the materials that you had collected in Vietnam. You say that you were working on your own, in isolation, but in the summer of 1970, "How They Won" came out in *Asian Survey*.<sup>48</sup> You came out of the closet, you had this book, this project under way. What was the reaction to "How They Won"?*

**A:** *The article is a capsulization of the fourth chapter of my book, which I mentioned before, which was my approach of crystallizing the lessons separately from the details, so that the reader could form his ideas*

*first, then challenge me, or I could challenge him, or whatever. At this point now, things were pretty hot in Vietnam and I thought I had something to say about that issue. There were some very big military operations in 1970 in Vietnam. I just thought I ought to speak up, and so, I don't remember how it happened, but I was able to get rather rapid publication of it, I think unusually rapid. I think they sort of speeded things up with the acceptance of my article. Some people took this article amiss, I think because by implication one could say that I thought errors had been made in American military strategy in Vietnam. I did think that, but I didn't say that. But it was implied. So people who had an ego investment in their organizations, or in their strategies, might be displeased. But the specific consequence that emerged was that I was invited to participate in an American Political Science Association panel on Vietnam in September of 1970 at the APSA meeting in Los Angeles at which a number of interesting things happened.<sup>49</sup> And remember, I was a little, unknown graduate student, and I was invited to join a panel with Sam Huntington, and Daniel Ellsberg, and Ray Tanter, and a number of other luminaries, and we had a very interesting discussion.<sup>50</sup> Then we had a dinner together, and there was some agonizing about the war. At this dinner I raised my hand and said, "I think the American Political Science Association should sponsor a study of the pathology of decision-making in the Vietnam War." And Dan Ellsberg then spoke up and said, "You don't have to do the study. It's already been done. It's in a safe in Washington." I didn't realize the significance at that time, but I think this was the first mention of the Pentagon Papers in public.*

Q: *Had you met Ellsberg before this session?*

A: *No. He at this point was just moving to MIT, where he had been offered a research appointment. We saw each other professionally and socially during the following year . . . One day I was riding back home on my bike, and he pulled up in his car and said, "I have got some stuff I would like to store, as I have to go out of town for a while." I said, "Sure," as my folks had a big home just north of Harvard Square. So he came in and carted a lot of sealed cardboard boxes to the basement.*

*This turned out to be the Pentagon Papers, as I discovered when I bought a copy of The New York Times in Montreal sometime later. Because he had come by to get some of these things just before I took my trip, and I figured out this must have been what was stored in the basement of the house, I thought: "This must be Dan. He is the only one who would do something like this."*

Q: *When War Comes to Long An came out in 1972, what was the reaction?*

A: *Well, I was still a graduate student, and I started getting letters addressed "Professor Race." I got a few letters from people in the military, who were very polite, because this is the military way of dealing with other people, but they thought that I was . . . They were not pleased.*

Q: *What was Colonel Herbert's reaction?*

A: *I sent him a copy. I don't recall that he specifically said anything about it, but we saw each other socially from time to time after that. He was a general at that point, working in the Pentagon. I think he was pleased, because he was one of the fathers of the book. It certainly would not have been possible at all, at least in this form, without his help. And you know, I think that he was . . . Remember, he was a military man, but he essentially had a civilian job, overseeing the whole American effort in that province. And he was not pleased, because the military units would come in and do a lot of "shoot 'em up" things. Maybe I was his vehicle for his making the point.*

Q: *What about the anti-war movement?*

A: *Well, you see, I had no contact with all those things. At this point, 1972, I was going abroad again. But I know, because people would send me things, that it was taken up by anti-war people in the form of "Even Jeffrey Race, former US military advisor, said . . ." So at the level of people who were approaching the war's policy issues in a bellicose way, they found things which were useful to support their point of view. People with an analytical approach, without any emotional component, also found it useful. In fact, I would say that in retrospect*

*that is my greatest satisfaction with writing this book—not the substance, although I am very satisfied with that, but the fact that it was an impartial resource for people on every side of this most important policy issue of our country at that time to benefit from.*

Q: *When I read reviews in academic journals, what strikes me most is their failure to mention your conceptual framework, what I see as your social science. Did you feel that it was good enough for people to use your book as a resource, without appreciating the analytical framework that you had built in order to come to your conclusions, without appreciating your social science? I haven't found a single review that addresses your social science.<sup>51</sup>*

A: *I noticed this. If we go back and look at what happened, the actual process was that I looked at the body of data and drew some conclusions about some important situations, which were powerful conclusions, which diverged from conventional wisdom at that time about many things. About military structure, about the relation of military and civilian activities, about US policy, about the US stance toward the Third World and processes of social change. And I took a divergent view on those things. But I did not clothe this analysis in the structure and terminology of social science as it existed at that time, because I had never studied those things at a graduate level. I just wrote what I saw to be common-sense analysis. And then I went back, and I saw that some people in other fields, for example sociology, had used allied concepts. And that was what I added in to my dissertation, which is now in the book's second edition. And so, I think that if that had been published at that time, or accessible at that time, there might have been a greater appreciation. In fact I think it is significant work.*

Q: *One of the reviewers of War Comes to Long An, John Lewallen in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, passed judgment on the book by writing, "The point that emerges from Race's account—a point he apparently missed, is that in order to win, the government would have had to become the revolution."<sup>52</sup> What he was really talking about here was the need for a different distribution*

*of values. You effectively call in the book for the redistribution of values, and you observe that the communist side was really making the redistribution of values possible. What was your global view about South Vietnamese society in the post-1945 period, which was the social context for War Comes to Long An?*

- A: *I think this is intellectual territory which has been well tilled, in the sense that Sansom was the one who actually did the basic work.*
- Q: *What did you find so important about his work in *The Economics of Insurgency*?<sup>53</sup>*
- A: *That this was a case in which the relative power and contribution of elites and non-elites were changing due to population pressure and technology.*
- Q: *This was in the 1950s.*
- A: *Well it was started long before that. Basically, it started with the French clearing the land and introducing modern agricultural methods. The genuine contribution to production by the elites diminished. There was essentially less need for these people. They maintained ceremonial functions. Other writers have gone on to point out that the French introduced important administrative reforms, which reduced the political powers of these people. So, essentially, this became a fragment of society that had lost economic and political roles but retained the formal functions of command. For example, they registered births and deaths and decided who performed military service. They were, essentially, the enforcers of the system. The superstructure which rested on them didn't have the basis that it used to have to support itself, until somebody else came along.*
- Q: *And the Ngô Đình Diệm administration rested on that superstructure?*
- A: *But the important thing is that they did not see that. I come back to the matter of the perception, and remember what I said about the communists. When they came in on the side of the non-elites, it was like the blind man being able to see. The non-elites didn't see either,*

*but they eventually, because of the revolutionary route, acquired an insight, or what they thought was an insight, into the situation and how to improve it by removing these relics.*

Q: *On page 273 of *War Comes to Long An*, you do note that in 1945 non-communists still had a chance to pre-empt the rural population with meaningful land reform. Was that really the last time in which a strategy of pre-emption would have been an option?*

A: *Counterfactuals are really tough things to analyze.*

Q: *Well, let me tell you where I am coming from here. The question is whether one can generalize that the late 1940s were a moment of opportunity for the societies and the politics of Southeast Asia to be reintegrated on a new basis.<sup>54</sup> I am talking about a region-wide framework. Can we develop that observation on page 273 of the book, about there still being a chance in 1945 for a very different outcome in southern Vietnam, into a more general point about the region in the immediate postwar period?*

A: *I am uncomfortable with making sweeping statements about counterfactuals. I think that one would have to look at the very specific context of every situation. And of course my statement is not scientifically provable: "What happened did not have to happen, except as a consequence of the limited understanding by the principal government participants and their foreign advisors."<sup>55</sup> There is no way to prove that. You can only put up a supposition and say, "If there had been a group of people who had had a certain conception of a way forward and had had the resources to effectuate that, then consequences would have differed from what they were." And that is true by definition. But whether they would have had the resources—intellectual, or foreign backing, or domestic—or whether the weather would have been right, none of these things has a scientific basis. These are in a sense thought experiments. But when Lewallen went on to say, "The point that emerges from Race's account—a point he apparently missed . . ." well, I don't think I missed any point. I believe I say in the preface that I am not recommending any policies to anybody. I am just trying to describe*

*what happened. Everybody has to draw his own conclusions. And this self-denying rule that I adopted is, I think, the basis for the ability of this book to benefit so many people from diverse constituencies.*

**Q:** *Does that help explain why War Comes to Long An has never gone out of print? How do you understand that?*

**A:** *Well it is a book that is entirely based on scientific evidence. This is a very strong argument for the virtue of a book in the field of social science. As a case study of political change, it's a significant work, regardless of whether it is in the context of war or controversies in American foreign policy or arguments about military strategy or organization. Just as it stands all by itself, the information is very valuable. There are a lot of numbers and a lot of interviews. Anybody who is going to argue against its usefulness would have an uphill case.*

**Q:** *To whom do you think it has been useful?*

**A:** *Well, if you look at the sales, there are two main constituencies. It is widely used in universities, in courses on social change. Maybe the second edition will be even more widely used because it integrates itself much better with the literature, both the pros and the cons, as I see it. The second constituency has been instrumentalities of the United States government which are involved in the issues which it describes.*

**Q:** *Counterinsurgency, basically.*

**A:** *They would be the military, military educational institutions, various kinds of training institutions within the government dealing with the involvement of Americans outside the United States.*

**Q:** *How did this enduring popularity of the book result in the decision to publish a new edition? At whose instigation did that come?*

**A:** *It came as a suggestion from some people when I was visiting West Point several years back, who said that this was very valuable because there is so much interest in these things after a long fallow period in which people thought, as I did, that nothing like this would ever happen again.*

- Q: *“This,” meaning American involvement in counterinsurgent warfare.*
- A: *Yes, because of the missions that were given to the US military, a lot more thought had to be given to these things. My book was a useful resource for that purpose. I began to be invited to talk at places like West Point or the Marine Corps University at Quantico. One of the officers I was talking to at West Point said that I should do some more work on this and publish a new edition. I talked to some people about it, and the decision was whether I should say something about contemporary events or whether I should do something else. I decided that I myself would say nothing about contemporary events but that I had some important things to add to it based on the work in my doctoral dissertation. And I would improve those, update some of the citations, add some things that I had thought further about, but that I would solicit other people to lend their thoughts to place this piece of work in a contemporary context. That is what the two forewords are.<sup>56</sup>*
- Q: *When you and I met in December, you remarked to me that War Comes to Long An is not a book about Vietnam or a book about counterinsurgency, but a book about process. And what did you mean when you called yourself “an accidental Vietnam scholar” during our earlier meeting?*
- A: *Yes. I wanted people to focus on a way of thinking about these things. If you think properly about things, and if you have data and you have scientific knowledge about the relationships between inputs and outputs in certain kinds of structures, then you won’t make bad decisions. I ended up in Vietnam because of my personnel record. I never intended to study Vietnam. But it was the place in which something interesting and important and exciting was occurring at the time that I was there, and I thought that it was worthy of study. But it could have been in some other country.*
- Q: *How do you account for the amount of sheer effort you put into studying Vietnam in order to solve the problem that you wanted to solve?*
- A: *That is just a matter of personal motivation. I have a very low tolerance for ambiguity.*

- Q: *So studying the Vietnamese language, staying in Vietnam an extra year, going back on your own, this was all personal motivation?*
- A: *This was just a personal quest of mine, to achieve some peace of mind about this. If I had not been in the war as a lieutenant and seen these things, I would not have done that. I have a strong need for structure. You can look at the way I organize my personal papers, or the kinds of electronic devices that I design. I design some unusual electronic products, sort of holes in the market. They did not exist, I needed them, I designed them, for myself. Later on they turned out to be saleable. In fact, it's a perfect analogy to the book on Vietnam: it was the book I wanted to read but could nowhere find, and so I had to write it. In my electronics business, for twenty years I was the sole source for an important telecom product, the Black Magic Telephone Ringing Generator.<sup>57</sup> It is a switch-mode power supply of a type which anybody could have designed. But nobody designed it, and I needed it. And it came just at the moment of the divestiture of the Bell System in the United States, and a lot of people needed this.<sup>58</sup> So I sold it. I was the only vendor for twenty years.*
- Q: *When you talk about your need for structure, writing this book served your need to structure what exactly? To structure your memories? To structure your understanding of the world?*
- A: *To structure my understanding of this problem.*
- Q: *But why not say, "Oh, that was a terrible problem, but I have a life to lead," and just put it aside and move on?*
- A: *I just don't have that ability.*
- Q: *I want to come to something you said in the article that you wrote about your participation in the ROTC: "While eventually coming to hold decided views, I had judged it unfair to impose on others so purposely hid them with a particular aim in mind—an aim ultimately successful."<sup>59</sup> This is very cryptic. What was that aim? What was the aim that led you purposefully to decide to hold back your decided views in War Comes to Long An?*

A: *I strongly felt that the military advice that my government was giving to its ally in fact destroyed the ally. We helped them to commit suicide. I didn't want my government to assume the moral responsibility for helping other governments to commit suicide. But I didn't think that writing that in a book on Vietnam would help that idea.*

Q: *How early did that emotive way of putting it come to you? How early did the notion that the United States was helping the Republic of Vietnam commit suicide come to you?*

A: *It wasn't an epiphany. But we'd have to say that, probably, the conversation with Đại Úy Đức was the beginning of that realization. I am here to hold hands with this sincere Vietnamese patriot who was sent to this remote location to die because he wouldn't bribe the province chief, who was getting all his weapons from the United States. It was a gradual process. And I think that it is important to realize that I didn't consider at the time that writing this book was anything profound. It was just common sense. Some people found it to be useful, and that is good. But I never had the sense that I was doing anything profound. I just had the sense that I was doing a workman-like job of building this brick wall.*

Q: *You told me when we spoke in December that you have never been back to Vietnam. Since 1970?*

A: *That is correct. Because I had completed my mission. I've been interested, but I am interested in many things. If someone had asked me, I would have gone.*

Q: *There is no question that War Comes to Long An is regarded by many as a classic. Yesterday, I gave you a copy of the introduction that Ben Anderson wrote to the newest edition of George Kahin's Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia, in which Anderson talks about two contrasting ways of thinking about what makes a particular work of scholarship "a classic." And, he writes, one view emphasizes "the awe that the text inspires, the other the peculiar pleasures that it affords."<sup>60</sup> Which of these sorts of classic is War Comes to Long An, a book that inspires awe or one that affords peculiar pleasures?*

A: *Neither. If I were to venture an inference why this book might be called a classic, I would give my own definition, which differs from either of his, because no one has fallen on his knees before me and said, "I kneel in awe," and no one has come up to me and said, "I couldn't put it down. It was such a pleasure to read." In fact a lot of it is quite dense, because I write that way. I think the features which mark this book are, first, that it was about something important to many people, and second, that the state of the debate on that important thing was heated, and that there were strong arguments on two or many sides about important elements of that disputation. This work resolved for me and many other people definitively many of the unclear aspects or disputes about what actually happened and why. But more than that, it established a path forward which people could follow with new work after me, in terms of ways of thinking about the problem. And you could say that those characteristics could define a classic in a field.*

Q: *Before we wind up, is there anything else you want to say or talk about?*

A: *I have written one thing which diverges from all of my other work, which is of a purely analytical nature. The one divergent piece is an article published in *The Yale Review* many years ago, in which I made some statements about the ethics, to a greater or lesser extent, of things that I had seen in the course of my research.<sup>61</sup> I think that is very important to do, but one has to choose the occasion carefully. But at the end of the day, after all the digging around in the data and interviewing and scientific analysis, giving conference papers, being a consultant, and seeing many disasters up close in many countries and sometimes participating in them in fact, the most important thing in the world is the voice inside each individual of what is right and what is wrong. Too many people don't listen to that voice.*

Q: *What led you to depart from your usual writing to write something like that?*

A: *When I grew up in New England, it was a magical time, a time which will never return. You could leave your home unlocked, and a seven-year-old child could walk to school unaccompanied, and you had fun*

*with your friends playing out in the yard. There was a very high level of trust in that society. Nobody behaved dishonorably. I cannot remember a single incident in my whole time growing up, eighteen years, when someone behaved dishonorably, not a single recollection. But then after experiencing my time in public service in Vietnam, and understanding the things that I came to understand as a scholar, I became very disappointed in the people who were leading my country. That's why I wrote that article.*

Q: *So, the ethics on which you were commenting in that article were the ethics of the Americans in Vietnam?*

A: *No, not the ethics of Americans in Vietnam. Certainly, mistakes were made in Vietnam. Let us just take the case of gratuitous violence: "It was worse than a crime, it was a mistake." But the people who did those things were military officers and their subordinates following terms of engagement which they had been taught were appropriate in the circumstances. And many of these people gave their lives following these hypothetically mistaken policies. The people I had issues with were the people who sent the military. The military was just a tool. That is the first thing that is taught in the military: obedience.*

Q: *This Yale Review article is the one in which you repeat the story of Robert Komer stopping Jim Herbert in a Pentagon hallway, and asking him whether this "Jeff Race," author of "How They Won," had ever been to Long An.<sup>62</sup> Why did Robert Komer ask that question? Why do you think he found it impossible to believe that you had ever been to Long An Province?*

A: *I never met him. But from my conversation with Jim Herbert, Komer saw a different reality from that which he saw in the pages I wrote.*

Q: *A conclusion that speaks rather directly to the purpose for which you wrote War Comes to Long An . . . On that note, then, I would like to thank you for two days of strenuous interviewing and will look forward to meeting you again soon.*

A: *It was a lot of fun, and I thank you.*

## Notes

1. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).
2. See also Race's autobiographical essay, "War Comes to Long An: Back Story to the Writing of a Military Classic," *Small Wars Journal* blog, March 1, 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/340-race.pdf>, accessible via "Publications of Jeffrey Race," [http://pws.prserv.net/studies/publ\\_01.htm](http://pws.prserv.net/studies/publ_01.htm) (accessed December 1, 2010).
3. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province, Updated and Expanded* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). This edition reproduces the original edition in facsimile and includes two new forewords and one new chapter, which are treated both below and in the accompanying review. Unless otherwise noted, the citations to the book that follow are to passages that appear on the same pages in both the 1972 and 2010 editions of *War Comes to Long An* (hereafter *WCLA*).
4. Michael Montesano is a visiting research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore; michael.montesano@gmail.com and michael.montesano@aya.yale.edu. The author acknowledges the generous cooperation, support, and friendship of Jeffrey Race and the advice and assistance of Ken Ballato, Haydon Cherry, Mok Mei Feng, Mok Zhi Rong, Nu-Anh Tran, and Geoff Wade in the preparation of this interview for publication. That this interview was undertaken at all is due to the initial suggestion and continued encouragement of Peter Zinoman.
5. That is, the headquarters of the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.
6. Educated at the London School of Economics and in Geneva, Tôn Thất Thiện was a non-communist nationalist intellectual who had lectured at Michigan State University in the 1950s, served as an aide to Ngô Đình Diệm, enjoyed exceptionally wide contacts with foreign journalists reporting on Vietnam, and would be appointed Sài Gòn's information minister in 1968. *The Vietnam Guardian* was an English-language Sài Gòn daily newspaper that appears to have begun publication in June 1966 and perhaps not to have survived to the end of the same year.
7. Today's Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu Province.
8. Editor of *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1964–1989.
9. The Advanced Research Projects Agency of the United States Department of Defense, established in 1958 and known since 1972 as DARPA (for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency).
10. See Race, *WCLA*, 242 ff.
11. Race, *WCLA*, 244n14, cites a number of Nguyễn Bế's Vietnamese-language essays on counterinsurgency. These essays are presumably available in the

- collection of materials dating from 1954 to 1968 that Race deposited with the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. See OCLC No. 14710740 as well as <http://catalog.crl.edu/record=b1059162~S1>. 102 pages of these materials are available online at <http://images.crl.edu/011.pdf>. In addition, the Virtual Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University (<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/>) contains, along with a photograph of Nguyễn Bé and several other documents relating to him, three English-language samples of his writing. See Nguyễn Bé, “The Village Self-Development Program,” January 1, 1969 (Item No. 0720310001); idem, “How Our Military Can Defeat the Communist Terrorist,” June 1969 (Item No. 2361206062); idem, “Memorandum to Jean A. Sauvageot from Nguyen Be,” reporting on discussions with leading members of the Vietnamese community in California, December 4, 1976 (Item No. 0720310011). An interview with Nguyễn Bé also informed the article, “In War Against Viet Cong Civil Action Groups Also Vital,” *The Japan Times*, September 24, 1967 (Item No. 2130912057), which described him as “a Sorbonne graduate.”
12. Dennis J. Duncanson’s critical review of *War Comes to Long An* brands Nguyễn Bé just one more in a long line of South Vietnamese counterinsurgency “essayists who owed their prominence in their day to talent-spotting by the very American advisers Mr. Race believes to have been impervious to the lessons Colonel Be taught.” In a tart allusion to François Villon, the review lists by name several other such “snows of yesteryear” among formerly lionized but later discredited South Vietnamese counterinsurgency theorists. See Dennis J. Duncanson, review of *War Comes to Long An*, *International Affairs* 48, no. 3 (July 1972): 529–530.
  13. See Race, *WCLA*, 154–155, and also the fourth section of this interview.
  14. Race, *WCLA*, 146–148.
  15. The reference is to a series of declassified histories of CIA operations in Indochina written by Thomas Ahern and available at <http://www.foia.cia.gov/vietnam.asp>. See also Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., *Vietnam Declassified: The CIA and Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), which discusses Nguyễn Bé and his role on pages 199–200 and 234–235, and includes two photographs in which he appears. One of these photographs, on page 200, shows him in conversation with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, with Mrs. Bunker, and with George Jacobson.
  16. See note 11, above, for an indication of Jean André Sauvageot’s continued patronage of Nguyễn Bé after the fall of Sài Gòn.
  17. That is, Khánh Hậu, just south of Tân An town. See Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), and the discussion of the 1958–1959 Michigan State University project on Khánh Hậu, under

- the auspices of which Hickey worked, in the notes to the accompanying review of the new edition of *War Comes to Long An*.
18. As Race notes in *WCLA*, xii, he deposited the bulk of his primary materials with the Center for Research Libraries. See OCLC No. 14710740 as well as <http://catalog.crl.edu/record=b1059162~S1>. Microfilm copies of this collection are available in the holdings of a number of university libraries.
  19. Race, *WCLA*, 176. The fourth section of this interview returns to the concepts of “values” and their “distribution” as these concepts figure in *War Comes to Long An*.
  20. Race called this person, a former deputy secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party’s Interprovince Committee for Western Nam Bộ who had been captured by Sài Gòn forces in 1962, “Le van Chan.” See Race, *WCLA*, 73 ff., 97–100, 110–111.
  21. An effort to induce individual insurgents to lay down their arms and “rally” to the side of the Republic of Vietnam.
  22. Roy Prosterman, a former Sullivan and Cromwell lawyer, was the leading American legal architect of the Nguyễn Văn Thiệu government’s Land to the Tiller program.
  23. See Race, *WCLA*, 174–175, and also the fourth section of this interview.
  24. As chief of South Vietnam’s national police, Nguyễn Ngọc Loan became infamous through the global circulation of a photograph and video footage of him shooting in the head a communist prisoner in civilian clothes on the streets of Sài Gòn on February 1, 1968, at the height of the Tết Offensive.
  25. Jeffrey Race, “Ideological Politics: A Psychological Study” (A.B. Honors thesis, Harvard College, 1965). The title of this thesis alone bespeaks the interest in the cognitive dimensions of politics that, as this interview makes clear, had such a significant impact on *War Comes to Long An*.
  26. In a speech delivered from the Oval Office on March 31, 1968.
  27. The RAND Corporation, for which Elliott worked, conducted considerable research under contract with ARPA. Race seems here to have such research in mind.
  28. Chapter 4, “Lessons from Long An: An Analytical Review,” *WCLA*, 141–209.
  29. That is, Chapter 1, “Long An at Peace, 1954–1955,” *WCLA*, 3–43; Chapter 2, “Preparations for War, 1956–1959,” *WCLA*, 44–104; and Chapter 3, “War Comes to Long An, 1960–1965,” *WCLA*, 105–140.
  30. Huntington had returned to Harvard’s Department of Government from Columbia in 1963, when Race was still an undergraduate majoring in that field. Too, during 1967, Huntington had spent two months in South Vietnam under State Department auspices, conducting research on the American war effort
  31. Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). See the

- accompanying review of the 2010 edition of *War Comes to Long An* for further discussion of Popkin and *The Rational Peasant*.
32. That is, Chapter 7, "Revolutionary Dynamics and Starting Mechanisms," 277–306 in the updated and expanded edition of *War Comes to Long An* (2010), discussed further in the fourth section of this interview.
  33. Race introduces, develops and applies these concepts in the most important chapter of *War Comes to Long An*, Chapter 4, "Lessons from Long An," 141–209. See also the accompanying review of the 2010 edition of *War Comes to Long An*.
  34. Race, *WCLA*, 144.
  35. Race, *WCLA*, 140 ff. and 207–208.
  36. See the reference to Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), in Race, *WCLA*, 175. The accompanying review discusses the use of Olson in Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*.
  37. Jeffrey Race, "Vietnam Intervention: Systematic Distortion in Policy-Making," *Armed Forces and Society* 2, no. 3 (May 1976): 377–396 (see page 390). The revised text available at [http://pws.prserve.net/studies/publ\\_01.htm](http://pws.prserve.net/studies/publ_01.htm) corrects serious typographical errors in the original published version. As note 17 on page 395 of this article makes clear, Race made this point (which is also made in *WCLA*, 165) to challenge the influential theorizing on the nature and effectiveness of the National Liberation Front of such scholars as Douglas Pike and Charles Joiner.
  38. Race, *WCLA*, 165 and 197.
  39. The discussion of "values" in Jeffrey Race, "Toward an Exchange Theory of Revolution," in *Peasant Rebellion and Communist Revolution in Asia*, ed. John Wilson Lewis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 169–204 (177), available at [http://pws.prserve.net/studies/publ\\_01.htm](http://pws.prserve.net/studies/publ_01.htm), suggests the influence of Peter M. Blau on Race's use and understanding of the term. See Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: Wiley, 1964).
  40. Frances Fitzgerald, "The Invisible Country," *The New York Review of Books* 19, no. 6 (October 19, 1972), trained specific criticism on this pair of usages and on the understanding of revolution-making that Race employs the related concepts to advance. See the accompanying review of the 2010 edition of *War Comes to Long An*.
  41. Race, *WCLA*, 144, 278, 280.
  42. H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997). On the Ahern studies, see note 15 above.
  43. Chapter 7, "Revolutionary Dynamics and Starting Mechanisms," *WCLA* (2010), 277–306.
  44. Jeffrey Race, "Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province: An Historical and Theoretical Analysis" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1973).

45. Race, "Toward an Exchange Theory of Revolution." This version of the chapter uses the case of Long An to develop its theory of revolution, and then applies that theory to the case of the then ongoing insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in that country's North. Race also treated that latter insurgency in an eye-opening article. See Jeffrey Race, "The War in Northern Thailand," *Modern Asian Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 1974): 86–112.
46. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*.
47. Race, *WCLA* (1972), 277–288. The same material appears in *WCLA* (2010), 307–313.
48. Jeffrey Race, "How They Won," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 8, Special Issue on "Vietnam: Politics, Land Reform and Development in the Countryside" (August 1970): 628–665.
49. APSA is the American Political Science Association.
50. Jeffrey Race, "The Unlearned Lessons of Vietnam," *The Yale Review* 66, no. 2 (December 1976): 161–177, also mentions the presence on the panel of Allen Whiting and Roger Hilsman (page 167). This article is available at [http://pws.prserv.net/studies/publ\\_01.htm](http://pws.prserv.net/studies/publ_01.htm).
51. As note 40 above suggests, a partial exception was Frances Fitzgerald, "The Invisible Country," which reviewed *War Comes to Long An* alongside David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885–1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), and Paul Mus, *Hô Chi Minh, le Viêt Nam, l'Asie* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1971). While finding much of merit in Race's book, Fitzgerald saw in its analysis "a tidiness that conceals a fundamental disorder"—a tidiness that, of course, derives above all from the social-scientific project of *War Comes to Long An*. John T. McAlister also made brief, and positive, mention of the importance of "the distinction between force and power" in the book and of Race's stress on "values" in his review of *War Comes to Long An* in the Sunday Book Review section of *The New York Times*, May 14, 1972, pp. 3 and 38.
52. John Lewallen, review of David Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, and Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* CDV (January 1973): 180–181. Frances Fitzgerald offered a similar comment on *War Comes to Long An* in "The Invisible Country" (see note 40). Writing of Race that, "Taken to its not very distant conclusion, his argument is simply that the GVN [Government of (South) Vietnam] officials ought to have turned communist and the American officials . . . ought to have turned Vietnamese communist," Fitzgerald considered (her own elaboration of) Race's argument an "absurdity," which for her "illuminates the central error of Race's approach." For Race's response and Fitzgerald's reply to that response, see "Common Sense," *The New York Review of Books* 20, no. 1 (February 8, 1973). The tone of Fitzgerald's treatment of *War Comes to Long An*—and indeed

- of her treatment of its author—serves as a telling and invaluable reminder of the context in which Race wrote and in which the University of California Press published the book.
53. Robert L. Sansom, *The Economics of Insurgency in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970).
  54. See J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands Indies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 141; and the review of the new edition of *War Comes to Long An* that accompanies this interview.
  55. Race, *WCLA*, 209.
  56. See the forewords contributed by Robert K. Brigham of Vassar College and Jeffrey Record of the Air War College in *WCLA* (2010), ix–xii and xv–xvii, respectively. The accompanying review essay briefly considers the import of these forewords to the new addition of the book.
  57. See [www.camblab.com](http://www.camblab.com), the home page of Cambridge Electronics Laboratories.
  58. An anti-trust suit filed by the United States Department of Justice in 1975 led to the break-up of AT&T nine years later.
  59. Jeffrey Race, “ROTC at Harvard: One Man’s Experience,” unpublished article, 2007; available at [http://pws.prserve.net/studies/publ\\_01.htm](http://pws.prserve.net/studies/publ_01.htm).
  60. Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, “Introduction,” in George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2003), v–xx (v). Kahin’s book was originally published by Cornell University Press in 1952.
  61. Race, “The Unlearned Lessons of Vietnam.”
  62. *Ibid.*, 173. Komer had had overall responsibility for American “pacification” efforts in Vietnam during 1966–1968; he later served as President Jimmy Carter’s Undersecretary of Defense for Policy.