



election...or somebody else has . . . and then you can make a decision. . . . But in the meantime let's see if we can't find enough things to do . . . to keep them [Hanoi] off base . . . and upset them a little bit without getting another Korean [war] started."

Then, as later, Johnson tried to deal with Vietnam at the minimum political cost. McMaster, a young Army soldier-scholar and Gulf War combat veteran, draws on newly available documents and interviews to show how, from the start, this approach doomed both the U.S. effort in Vietnam and traditional military-civilian relations. Obscured in most of the literature on Vietnam, it is a chilling tale.

Because Johnson did not want to be accused of "losing" Vietnam, he rejected all talk of a U.S. withdrawal. Yet in 1964 he also did not want to jeopardize his election as a "man of peace" running against the hawkish Barry Goldwater. Nor, in 1965, did he want to mobilize the country for fear of forfeiting his Great Society programs. Johnson's civilian advisers, notably Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, tailored their proposals accordingly. They figured that "graduated pressure" would help LBJ politically while at the same time persuading Hanoi to back off its goal of "liberating" the South. Each seemingly small military step—covert operations, retaliatory air strikes, an incremental bombing campaign, the first U.S. troop deployment—was seen as an extension of diplomacy, sending a new "signal" to the North Vietnamese.

Was "graduated pressure" working? Johnson often worried less about that question than about a revolt by the Joint Chiefs. Like Kennedy, he scorned and distrusted the Joint Chiefs as old-fashioned and unimaginative. Their traditional role was to offer professional military advice untainted by poli-

tics. But LBJ wanted complaisance and agreement. And McNamara, eager to please LBJ and convinced that he and his civilian aides alone should shape U.S. strategy, kept the Joint Chiefs out of the loop.

For their part, the Joint Chiefs complained but, riven by interservice rivalries and parochialism, could not come up with a unified strategic plan. The Air Force's Curtis LeMay and his successor John P. McConnell, saw an intensive bombing campaign as the answer to Hanoi's support for the Vietcong guerrillas in the South. The Marines' Wallace Greene urged a coastal "enclave" strategy. Meanwhile, the Navy's David L. McDonald vacillated, and the Army's Harold K. Johnson, who had grave doubts about bombing, lacked the self-confidence to confront either his colleagues or the White House.

Soothed, divided, and isolated by the artful McNamara, the Joint Chiefs grew privately bitter but never challenged the evasive, temporizing, and finally deceptive assertions made by the White House. As the Vietcong guerrillas made steady gains and LBJ achieved his 1964–65 goal of avoiding a political showdown on Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs became known among junior officers in the Pentagon as "the five silent men." The price of their silence—and of Johnson's policy—was the eventual involvement of a force of more than 500,000 U.S. troops, and 58,000 American dead. McMaster concludes: "The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field nor was it lost on the front page of the *New York Times*." It was lost in Washington almost before the country knew it had begun.

—Peter Braestrup

### **RUSSIA: *People and Empire.***

By Geoffrey Hosking. Harvard University Press. 548 pp. \$29.95

Who needs another history of Russia under the tsars? The short answer is that we all do, for the fall of the Soviet Union casts fresh light on the whole of Russian history. Was Communist rule simply an interlude, and if so, between what and what? Does democracy stand a chance? Is the new Russia fated to be, like its tsarist predecessor, a conqueror and ruler of its neighbors?

A professor of Russian history at the University of London, Hosking was among the few Western scholars to take seriously the

strivings toward civil society and participatory government in Russia during the last years of Soviet rule. In this eminently readable history, he asks whether Russia has always been an eccentric country doomed to its own peculiar fate or whether it can follow a path similar to that of other nations. Without pressing the point, Hosking implies that, despite its uniqueness, Russia has much in common, if not with the United States, then with Germany, Austria, even Turkey.

Hosking highlights the supporting evidence. The Russian press on the eve of World War I was notably free and independent, he emphasizes, while the legal system instituted by Alexander II at the time of the American Civil War really did open the way toward the law-based society that Mikhail Gorbachev (who knew this history well) called for six score years later. Hosking also shows that in its waning decades the tsarist regime instituted “sweeping guarantees” of private property, in effect dissolving the patrimonial state that had ruled the land for centuries.

In such tsarist reforms, Hosking finds the underpinnings for optimism about Russia’s future. Yet these reforms were swept away when the Communists seized power and in effect restored the ancien régime in a new

guise. How was this possible? On this question Hosking is tentative. He argues that the new parliamentary system never really linked up with the emerging mass public and that the privatized economy was too young and fragile to survive the upheaval of World War I. Then too, the champions of the waning patrimonial order never gave up, effectively preventing the post-1905 system introduced by Nicholas II from functioning as a proper constitutional monarchy.

Underlying these failures is Russia’s history of empire, a theme emphasized in Hosking’s title and introduction but only sparsely developed in his text. A bolder historian, one more inclined to state a grand thesis, might have dug deeper. The logic is as simple as it is implacable: empire requires a large army, which in turn requires strict control of the population, including the serfs. Freedoms granted to some Russians will be demanded by others, not to mention by other nationalities under Russian rule. The preservation of empire is, therefore, the main impediment to reform. It is too bad that Hosking does not place the imperial experience at the very heart of his story, for it rings with solemn familiarity today.

—S. Frederick Starr

## *Religion & Philosophy*

### *THE COMPLETE DEAD SEA SCROLLS IN ENGLISH.*

Edited by Geza Vermes. Viking Press. 688 pp. \$34.95

Only a humorous God could beget such a tale: in 1947 a Bedouin shepherd, Muhammad edh-Dhib, discovers an ancient scroll while exploring a remote cave in the Judean desert south of Jericho. The find is reported, experts are summoned, and the news travels around the globe. During the next several years, 10 other caves are found, yielding some 4,000 fragments of ancient Ara-



maic and Hebraic texts. A team of scholars sets about deciphering the bits and pieces.

An anxious world waits for news of what the scrolls might contain. And waits.

Only now, 50 years later, is the full text of the Qumran scrolls (as they are more properly called) appearing in English. The scholarly squabbling and other maddening interruptions in the work—including the occasional Mideast war—are now the stuff of legend, ably retold by Vermes, who, as professor emeritus of Jewish studies at Oxford’s Wolfson Col-