grief inherent in the human condition.

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# Reflections on Ken Fuchsman's Discussion of Atrocity

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Dr. Fuchsman's paper is extremely well done and I have no major disagreements with his analysis and conclusions about the group and individual dynamics operating in soldiers during wartime; particularly in, to use Robert Jay Lifton's term, "atrocity-producing situations." Specifically, I thoroughly agree with the thesis that ordinary people are quite capable of engaging in atrocities when the circumstances encourage it. It is a lesson we have learned both from observing what happens in war as well as absorbing the findings of the research studies of social psychologists such as Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo.

Professor Fuchsman, along with Lifton, stresses the importance of the loss of comrades from enemy actions in wartime as an important stimulus in generating grief, which can lead to rage, and then to the taking of revenge on the enemy or any suitable substitute – such as civilians who happened to be in the area. I would just want to add that others, such as Vamik Volkan, would refer to this situation as an inability to grieve or mourn where the rageful revenge becomes a substitute or replacement for experiencing grief. The Italian psychoanalyst Franco Fornari calls this push toward vengeful violence, instead of experiencing grieving, "the paranoid elaboration of mourning."

I would like to add an alternate perspective based on my experience during the war in Vietnam. In contrast to Fuchsman, I am not a Vietnam veteran. I chose to leave this country for Canada rather than join or support in any manner a morally unacceptable, aggressive, and unjust war. Unlike Kenneth Fuchsman and Jonathan Shay, I did not have the experience of being part of a military unit engaging in combat, however, I suspect they are correct in saying that it taps into old and deep sources of bonding, attachment, and family ties. At the time I felt, and I feel the same way to this day, that had I been somehow plunked down in Vietnam and forced to choose a side to be on, I would have fought with the Viet Cong.

If you find this statement shocking think of the 1984 cult film "Red Dawn" where the Americans are the guerrillas fighting and killing the occupying Russian and Cuban invaders; or our views of the noble revolutionary war era Minutemen, who are seen as heroes who killed the enemy "redcoats" while hiding behind trees and rocks. We don't pay much attention to the feelings of the occupying troops who have lost their buddies as the results of these guerrilla actions. It's primarily a question of with whom one identifies.

Several months ago I watched a documentary film about the 82nd Airborne's campaign in Iraq to win the hearts and minds of the people of Fallujah. The film introduces you to the men of one platoon, ordinary likable enough young American boys. One day a platoon member gets shot while they are on patrol and the film captures the transformation of the ordinary boys into vicious killers bent on revenge.

Next I want to share some thoughts on the connections between guerrilla wars and atrocity. Many of the accounts cited by Shay, Fuchsman, Hersh, and Lifton in the paper emphasized the exacerbation of the loss and grief that occur when it results from a "guerrilla" attack – a mine, or a booby-trap, or a child with a grenade – along with the added confusion of not knowing who is the enemy and who isn't.

This is sometimes described as an additional provocation, increasing the likelihood of atrocity. For example, the quote from Seymour Hersh's book: "the VC were blowing us up with mines – sending little kids with grenades. It was getting ridiculous." Or Robert Jay Lifton's account concerning the events at My Lai which were preceded by significant losses resulting from "guerrilla" tactics. "There were shouts during the massacre of 'VC bastards, you dirty VC

bastards, that's for Bill Weber,' and 'Cry, you dirty gook bastards, cry like you made us cry.'"

In my view, what was "ridiculous," was the presence of armed American soldiers on the soil of a foreign country, where they didn't belong. I have no problem with understanding the feelings and reactions of these soldiers. However, I find it hard to be sympathetic toward the soldiers who are first shocked and then enraged that the enemy – those who are natives to the land they are invading and whose countrymen and family members have been killed or wounded by the soldiers – should have the audacity to fight back and do harm to their beloved buddies. To be angered that it is "guerrilla" rather than "conventional" military tactics being used by the enemy strikes me as a strange. For the Viet Cong to use "conventional" tactics against American troops with their massively superior land and air firepower would have been suicidally stupid. For American soldiers to expect the enemy to fight in a "conventional" manner which is to the advantage of the Americans and then to be outraged when this doesn't happen seems bizarrely narcissistic.

On reading this paper I was strongly reminded of Chaim Shatan's paper "Bogus Manhood, Bogus Honor: Surrender and Transfiguration in the United States Marine Corps." In this classic 1977 paper, Shatan (1924-2001), a longtime member of the Psychohistory Forum, describes the quite deliberately designed training procedures used by the United States Marines to create both the comradely bonding and the sanction to commit atrocities that are among the crucial antecedents to creating an atrocity-producing situation.

Also, I am very much in agreement with Professor Fuchsman's opening statement that "The problem of wartime atrocity goes beyond the rage-filled actions of soldiers in the field. More civilian casualties are produced by policies originating with presidents and generals than by outbursts of privates and lieutenants." Consequently, I am very much looking forward to his second paper in which he says he will explore the psychohistory of leaders who are responsible for policies that target civilians.

I agree that if one is addressing the issue of atrocities during wartime the subject of leaders, politicians and generals and the structures that support, encourage, and enable them needs to be explored. As Dr. Fuchsman says, decisions made by our "leaders" have been responsible for many more atrocities than the transgressions of individuals or small groups. The danger of focusing on the actions of individuals or small groups is that it can easily lead to the labeling of those involved as pathological deviants who are different from us, thereby avoiding examining the responsibility for the events in question on the part of those in positions of leadership. When we take into consideration that these leaders have been given power by us and are acting as delegates for our wishes, we cannot escape from sharing in the blame for the atrocities they have perpetrated.

Putting it another way, Henry Kissinger, Curtis LeMay, Harry Truman, or even FDR (if we take Richard Stennett and George Victor seriously regarding Roosevelt's responsibility for Pearl Harbor), are far bigger war criminals than Captain Medina, Lieutenant Calley, the Marines who raped and murdered at Haditha, or the interrogators who torture at Abu Grahib.

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# The Psychological Roots of Bush's Iraq War Obstinacy

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President Bush's behavior regarding his war in Iraq has become a prime source of psychological speculation. A large number of authors and military experts have focused on his purportedly continuous denial of the importance of significant negative events. We believe that the denial in this instance might be properly seen as an effect rather than a cause, and as not following the usual assumptions regarding its use as a defense mechanism.