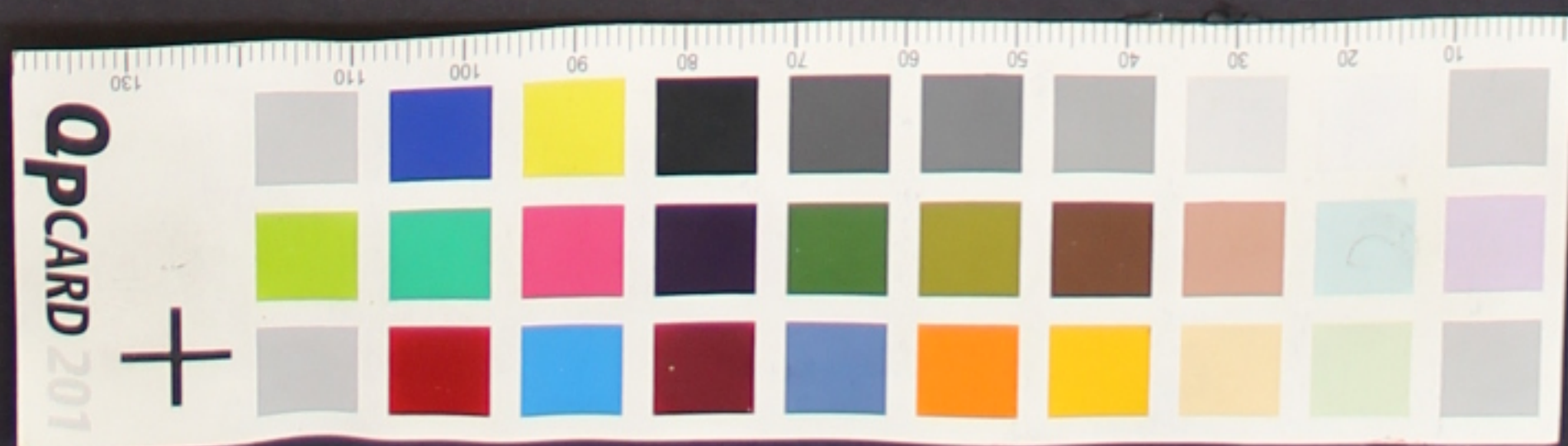


# LIFE

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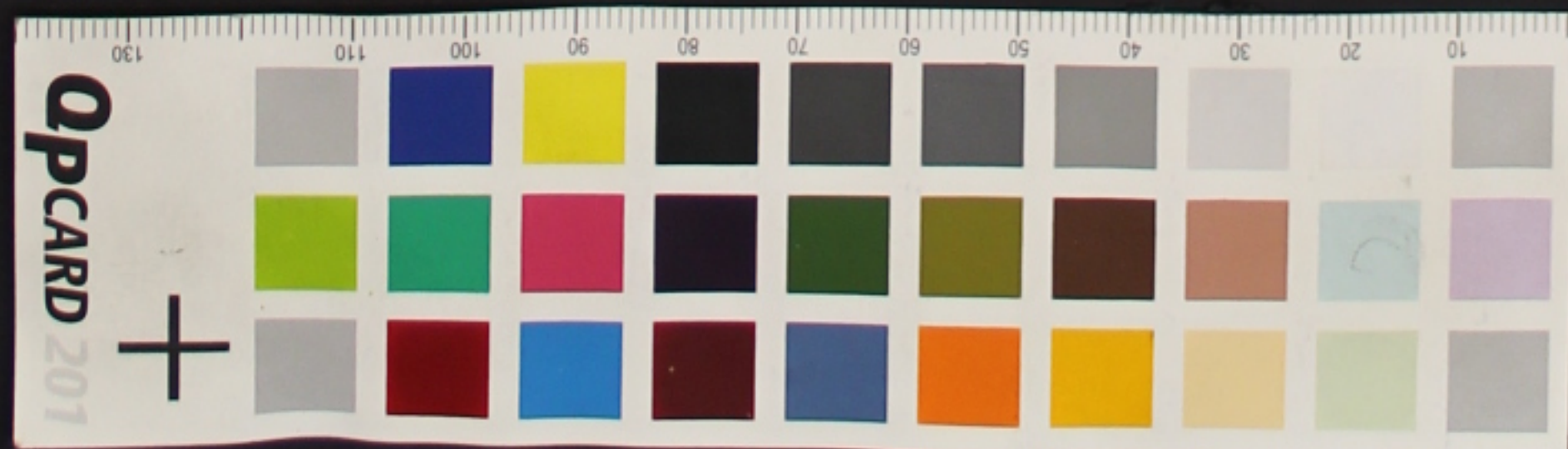
# Mini-War in the Least



# of the Lesser Antilles



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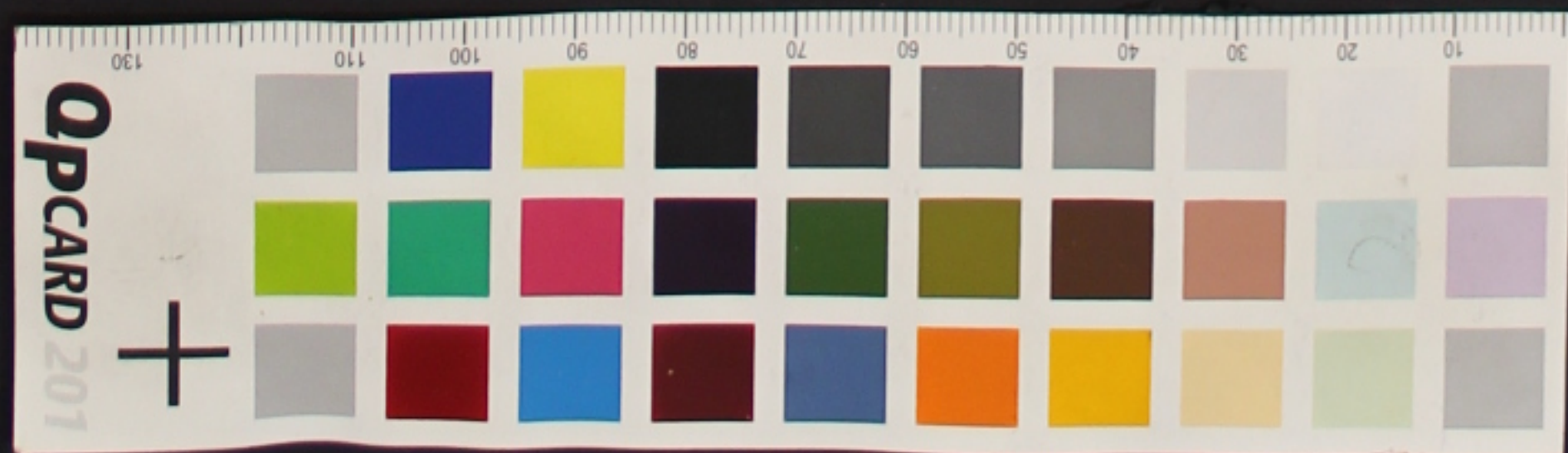
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ANGUILLA

Since there are no telephones on Anguilla, the island's president first learned of the invasion from reporters. We spotted the president—Ronald Webster, a 43-year-old former preacher—driving his white GTO Pontiac casually along the rutted dirt road. We flagged him down and jumped in his car to give him an eyewitness report. In our rented car—the only air-conditioned one on Anguilla—we had just passed the airport, where a huge RAF cargo plane was circling overhead like a fat buzzard, waiting for a herd of goats to clear the runway. When it landed, a trooper leaped out with fixed bayonet.

"We're a God-fearing people, a peace-loving people," President Webster said. "We were willing to negotiate peacefully, but they never even contacted us."

As we drove along people waved and shouted to Webster from their front porches or from along the road: "This is God's battle. This is God's battle." Webster honked his horn and waved back. "O.K., O.K. Take it easy, boys." He knew his people were losing the battle but winning the war, and he didn't want any of them hurt. "We don't want any bloodshed," said Webster, who had spread rumors before the invasion about his 252-man militia, which never showed up for the war. "I doubt if you could find 10 shotguns on this island."

At his headquarters, on a bluff overlooking the blue Caribbean, we left President Webster and drove off to inspect the front. A half-dozen parachutes, air-dropping supplies into the battle zone, dotted the blue sky. At a strategic bend in the road one soldier had dug a foxhole, but the only creature to challenge him was a cow grazing 20 feet away. His buddy sat nearby cradling his rifle. I didn't see any ammunition clips, so I asked him if his rifle was loaded. "No, but don't tell anybody."

Though not a shot had been fired, the British were running the invasion by the book. They searched every house for weapons—finding none—and looked under the beds for subversives and gangsters. They collected the island's resident Americans—a dozen of them—and brought them to the high school to confront a freshly landed team of Scotland Yard investigators. Americans, it turned out, were all suspect. A British diplomat—whom the Anguillans had deported the previous week—had charged that unnamed "Mafia types" were taking over the island. The Americans rounded up for questioning included a doctor, a Baptist minister and a businessman interested in putting up a Howard Johnson hotel.

BILL BRUNS

## Battle reports from the front and home front



The Anguillans watch British airmen unload cargo plane. Andrew Way (below) is Scotland Yard's chief on the scene.



President Webster (right) implores his people to remain peaceful. Below, a paratrooper fraternizes from his foxhole.



LONDON

Most Britons have had trouble piecing out the logic of the invasion. They are slightly embarrassed by it all—or plain mad. The government dubbed it "Operation Calypso"—though Anguillans don't sing calypsos. The press supplied less charitable labels: "Red Faces over the Caribbean," "War in a Teacup," "Bay of Piglets."

"At last Mr. Wilson has taken on someone his size," commented the Right Honorable Nigel Birch, the M.P. from West Flint.

Actually Anguilla had been brewing an ex-colonial tempest for the last two years and it was tragically inevitable that Britain would see it bubble over into a global embarrassment. Only Britain—beset by financial ailments at home and declining power abroad—could find itself invading an island that a month or two previously had declared its love for Britain and had indeed requested a return to the comforting rule of Her Majesty's government. Anguilla was being demonstrably pro-British because it couldn't stand to be legally bound to its neighbor islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, in a federation that had been rigged—well, by the British. Nearly two years ago the Anguillans had seceded from that arrangement, then staged a plebiscite to confirm the action. (A "yes" ballot bore the picture of a hat; a "no" had a shoe. The hats won 1,813 to 5.)

But the British never recognized Anguillan independence, and they justified the invasion with the treaty that permitted Britain to handle the federation's defense and external affairs.

"Why bully that island and let Nigeria and Rhodesia get away with murder?" said a pub drinker waving his *Daily Sketch* ("Red Devils Sail for Rebel Isle").

The analogy to Rhodesia has been a particularly thorny one for Westminster and so are the charges that the government will act against black rebels but not white ones. Officials feel that the cases of Anguilla and Rhodesia are as disparate as the two countries themselves and that Britain had a clear call to act in Anguilla under the 1967 West Indies Act which made it responsible for the defense of the Associated States. The *Evening News* hit the streets with the first combat correspondent's "frontline" report: "I say, chaps, the natives are friendly." The BBC called in a military strategist to explain the battle plan. A mock-up island was employed and model ships moved in a mini-reconstruction in the tradition of Trafalgar. "British troops have landed," said the announcer. "It's a phrase we thought we would never hear again."

JACK NEWCOMBE

