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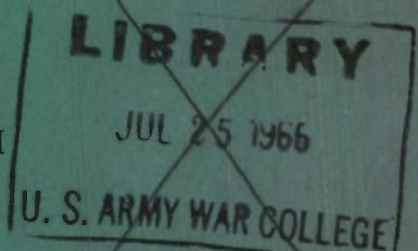
8 April 1966

## MILITARY LEADERSHIP AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL POWER

By

MARK M. BOATNER, III

Colonel, Infantry



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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT  
(Thesis)

Military Leadership as an Element of National Power

by

Col Mark M. Boatner III  
Infantry

US Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania  
8 April 1966

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## SUMMARY

History shows that national power can be magnified by military genius. The converse is also true.

America has never needed military genius to win a war because she and her allies have always had an overwhelming superiority of men, money, and machines. On the other hand, her enemies have postponed defeat many months because they had outstanding military leadership.

This national experience has established the "military manager" rather than the heroic military leader as a model. Will the military manager be the type of leader needed in a war that might be fought against somebody our own size?

Without waiting to see whether traditional generalship is obsolete in battle, we can point to failures of the military manager to furnish victorious leadership in the Cold War. He has failed to prevent civilian expertise from taking over the planning and operations of national security. And while failing himself, he is impeding the development of new military leadership that is needed not only in the councils of government today but also on the battlefields of tomorrow.

There may be time to repair the damage and to start developing a reservoir of leadership talent from which to draw the military genius needed to defeat America's enemies in cold or hot wars of the future. An essential first step is to start treating our military establishment as a permanent institution, not as a provisional organization for "crisis management."

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As Americans face up to the problems of world leadership in what one writer calls "the most catastrophically revolutionary age that men have ever faced,"<sup>1</sup> it is heartening to remember the trials survived by other great powers of earlier days.

Rome lived for 15 years with the threat of "Hannibal at the Gates," a period which first saw the annihilation of three Roman armies--150,000 men! Perhaps the best evidence of Rome's real strength is that she survived these crushing defeats and the subsequent years of frustration to produce in Scipio Africanus a military leader who learned war from the conqueror and who defeated him with an improvement over Hannibal's own methods.

Frederick the Great faced an alliance that outnumbered him 20 to one in population and three to one in trained soldiers. Seven years later, in 1763, he emerged victorious from a long, brilliant war of attrition, and Prussia had become a great power.

Turning to our own origins, it is hard to believe that the Continental Congress in the winter of 1776 could look to the new year without seeing anything but gibbets; they laughed nervously when some wag dubbed 1777 "the year of the hangman," and they bestowed dictatorial powers on the one person who

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<sup>1</sup>Barbara Ward, The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations, p. 13.

could save the infant nation. The man was Washington, and his brilliant riposte at Trenton and Princeton kept the American Revolution alive.

The Confederate States of America were outnumbered more than four to one in white population and hopelessly inferior to the North in economic and industrial resources, yet by virtue of superior military leadership they came perilously close to destroying the Union. Twice within the present century the Germans have come within a breath of victory against vastly superior potential power, and when the tide turned against them they were able to postpone defeat for years by superior military leadership.

In all these cases we see national power magnified by military genius. Napoleon, who for almost a generation personalized the threat to Europe, commented:

The Gauls were not conquered by the Roman legions, but by Caesar. It was not before the Carthaginian soldiers that Rome was made to tremble, but before Hannibal. It was not the Macedonian phalanx which penetrated to India, but Alexander. Prussia was not defended for seven years against the three most formidable European powers by the Prussian soldiers, but by Frederick the Great.<sup>2</sup>

In considering military leadership as an element of national power we must, therefore, look at our own situation from two points of view. First, will our system produce the military

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<sup>2</sup>Memoirs écrits à Sainte Helène, Vol. II, p. 90, quoted in J. F. C. Fuller, Generalship: Its Diseases and Cures, p. 30.

leadership that may be decisive if, for a change, we fight an enemy we cannot smother with overwhelming superiority in manpower, money, and material resources? Second, even if we should happen to maintain that overwhelming superiority, might we not some day need a leader to cope with a Great Captain who arises to lead our enemies--a Scipio Africanus to handle a Hannibal?



## CHAPTER 2

### IS THE GREAT CAPTAIN OBSOLETE?

The heroic leader went out of style as the cult of the Common Man came in. The hero, in the sense of a man honored for exceptional service to humanity, does not fit into a society that espouses egalitarianism. "Is there something in a democracy that is inherently hostile to the first rate?" asks one author, rhetorically.<sup>1</sup>

A generation ago, only eccentrics shared the view of George Bernard Shaw that the common man was of interest only insofar as he was capable of becoming uncommon. The hero has been succeeded, particularly in America, by the "celebrity"--a person we can idolize despite his obvious and well-publicized lack of heroic qualities.<sup>2</sup> Orrin E. Klapp's study of the changing American character further develops the point. "Deterioration of the hero is visible in several aspects of American life," writes Klapp. One aspect is what he calls "the cult of celebrities," and he observes that the latter are "characterized by ordinariness."<sup>3</sup>

While these authors are referring primarily to celebrities of the mass entertainment media, it is safe to say that our great military leaders of World War II were hailed by the public more

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Griffith, The Waist-High Culture, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 173 and passim.

<sup>3</sup>Orrin E. Klapp, Heroes, Villains, and Fools: The Changing American Character, p. 142.

as celebrities than as heroes. In America this can be attributed largely to the fact that we had not fought and won a hard war in terms of casualties, domestic damage, or economic strain. We did not need a hero.<sup>4</sup>

But it later became apparent that the Cold War had succeeded the shooting war, and that our leaders had lost the strategic initiative--we were scrambling from one trouble spot to another in the world to counter Communist offensives; the Russians forged ahead on the technological, scientific, and economic fronts; we were told that American children lagged behind their contemporaries of the Old World in physical aptitude; and that our systems of mass education and advanced education were inferior. Communist China was emerging as a world power and an enemy.

However much we may have since recovered from this succession of scares (and regardless of the real causes for alarm), we began to look closely at our society, our culture, and our capacity for the new, reluctant role of world leadership. This is reflected

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<sup>4</sup>On the basis of 1940 population totals, military deaths in World War II have been estimated as 1 in every 22 Russians, 1 in every 25 Germans, 1 in 46 Japanese, and 1 in 500 Americans. (Walter Yust /ed./, Ten Eventful Years, Vol. 4, p. 769.) Supporting his statement that however sad, our casualties "were by no means serious to the nation," Samuel Bemis points out that our traffic fatalities during the war were almost half as high as our battle casualties. (Diplomatic History, 3rd ed., p. 927 and n.) One authority estimates that total Russian loss of life during the war was at least 25 million! (Eugene M. Kulischer, "Russian Manpower," Foreign Affairs, October 1952, p. 71.)

in popular and scholarly works that began to appear. One of these reexamined the ideas of heroism as presented by Carlyle and Nietzsche. It advanced this proposition:

If believers in leadership have often been prepared to give up democracy, believers in democracy have been unsatisfactory in their dealings with the problems of leadership. In actual affairs--in the army or in schools--much is said about leadership, but most often it is all taken to be elaptrap, which it may very well be. Where, then, are we to look for serious ideas about democratic leadership?<sup>5</sup>

The author goes on to suggest that "we might do worse than learn from such men as Carlyle and Nietzsche," but we could also remember the views of Thomas Jefferson on the need for developing America's "natural aristocracy," which in a letter to John Adams in 1813 he called "the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

Election of John F. Kennedy to succeed President Eisenhower may perhaps be interpreted by future historians as a turning point in the American attitude toward "excellence." Certainly, the word became popular about this time. Before Kennedy's election, a university press had published a small collection of essays by distinguished authors entitled Is the Common Man Too Common? In 1961, John W. Gardner published Excellence: Can We be Equal and Excellent Too? Another collection of essays appeared the next year in a book entitled Excellence and Leadership

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<sup>5</sup>Eric Bentley, A Century of Hero-Worship . . . , p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

in a Democracy. Doubts about American leadership had been exposed by William H. Whyte, Jr., in The Organization Man (1956). The matter of "aristocracy," natural and otherwise, in the field of leadership was examined in such works as The Power Elite by C. Wright Mills (1956) and Elites and Society, by T. B. Bottomore (1964).<sup>7</sup>

As America undertook this agonizing reappraisal not only of her global strategy but also, by interference, of her leadership, many shortcomings were laid at the door of education. In the introduction to General Education in a Free Society: Report of the Harvard Committee, Dr. James B. Conant had written in 1945:

The war has precipitated a veritable downpour of books and articles dealing with education. \*\*\*There is hardly a university or college in the country which has not had a committee at work in these war years considering basic educational questions and making plans for drastic revamping of one or more curricula. Nor have larger group activities been missing.<sup>8</sup>

But the Cold War and evidence that Russia was surpassing America in certain scientific specialties brought on further examination and further indication that revolutionary rather than evolutionary progress was needed.

The following excerpts cast light on weaknesses or failures in the areas of leadership as an element of national power.

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<sup>7</sup>All these works are identified fully in the bibliography. Authors or editors not named above are: Krutch and others, Common Man; Graubard (ed.), Excellence and Leadership.

<sup>8</sup>Op. cit., p. v.



A general like Lyautey, who displayed rare talents of organization . . . reflected assiduously on leadership and trained a number of leaders in Morocco. According to him, the need and the function of anyone who would command was "the technique of general ideas." The conviction is sacrosanct with most continental European educators. Any leader must eschew imitation, revolt against narrow-mindedness, prove adaptable to new situations, and be able to generalize from his experience. Such men exist in more empirically minded countries, like the Anglo-Saxon. But it may be confessed that a circumscribed outlook, a sense of bewilderment when deprived of their usual and reassuring environment, a parochialism or a timidity, whenever the conversation turns on ideas or on general political or philosophical problems, too often mark most American men when in contact with their European counterparts. The influence which American leaders today should wield in world affairs has been sadly impaired thereby.<sup>9</sup>

This was written by a French-born Yale professor of Romance languages, but the same general conclusions are expressed by a senior British officer on the basis of his observations during World War II:

America's tendency is to favour rigid adherence to the written word and to dogma as against our more flexible practice of adhering to general principles and interpreting the precise wording of the written word in the light of experience and circumstances. This tended to give our leaders more scope than the American leaders in initiative and negotiation.<sup>10</sup>

In the concluding paragraphs of his history of the Cold War, Seton-Watson comments on the trend away from strong, individualistic leadership:

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<sup>9</sup>Henri Peyre, "Has Western Europe Any Lessons for Us?" in Excellence and Leadership in a Democracy, pp. 7-8.

<sup>10</sup>Air Vice-Marshal Kingston-McCloughry, The Direction of War, p. 226.

What is needed, it would seem, is . . . greater encouragement to individual thought, achievement and leadership. This does not of course mean that the existing leadership in the West, or the existing means of recruiting leadership in either the political or the wider social field, are not capable of being vastly improved.\*\*\*But it is surely possible . . . to dislike the syeophancy that seems to flourish in the higher reaches of American business. . . .\*\*\*If consumers' sovereignty is to be extended to all political life, including the control of education, defense, finance, and foreign affairs; if all original thought and all spontaneous initiative are to be treated as undesirable noneonformity, either eomie or pernicious; if the only valid loyalty is loyalty to the clique--then the outlook for Western mass democracy is bleak.<sup>11</sup>

#### INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP?

A question hovering in the background is whether life has not become too complicated for the Great Captain? Is this not why the much maligned "Organization" has become supreme, and why committee decisions or rule by consensus have come into vogue?

Before hearing expert testimony, it is perhaps worth presenting some very general views on this debate. First, are we guilty of historic myopia or allowing vanity to dominate our thinking when we talk about how much more complicated the world has become? The problems faced by the leaders of ancient history are simple in direct proportion to one's ignorance of ancient history. The Principles of War have enduring merit that varies in direct proportion to the depth of one's understanding of war. I submit these questions rhetorically, merely asking that they

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<sup>11</sup>Neither War Nor Peace, p. 464. The author wrote this in 1960.

be borne in mind when one encounters slighting references to "military intuition."

Second, a thing we know for certain about leadership in the past and can anticipate to a vastly greater extent in the future is that it is in the domain of the unexpected.

American leadership in such fields as industry and agriculture has been unsurpassed. Our gross national product, our rate of economic growth, and our food surpluses prove it. It is in the field of ideas where Americans reveal alarming shortcomings. Pointing out that many of the forward steps in science have been taken by Europeans or by Americans trained in Europe, one writer wonders whether by adopting "the strict Roman organization of life" we will not lose "the Greek fertility in new ideas."<sup>12</sup>

One reason for this lack of creativity, the same author maintains, is our proliferation of organizations.

An unusually able scientist is on the scrap heap sometimes at the age of 30 or 40: he becomes director of research of a large unit, or head of a large department, a dean, or an important committee man oscillating between his home town and Washington. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Going back more than a century to Tocqueville's Democracy in America, we find this foreign observer fascinated by what another writer has called "a nation of joiners":

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<sup>12</sup>Egon Orowan, "Our Universities and Scientific Creativity," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 1959, 15, pp. 236 ff., quoted by Peyre, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found establishments for education, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes. . . .If it be proposed to advance some truth, or to foster some feeling by the encouragement of a great example, they form a society. Wherever, at the head of some new undertaking, you see the Government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association.\*\*\*The English often perform great things singly; whereas the Americans form associations for the smallest undertakings. It is evident that the former people consider association as a powerful means of action, but the latter seem to regard it as the only means they have of acting.<sup>14</sup>

Henri Peyre speaks of "the mania for collaboration which has become characteristic of American science," and he reminds us that the epoch-making discoveries of science were made "through 'the lone musings of genius,' by solitary men who did not necessarily submit to the way of life of businessmen . . . surrounded by assistants and secretaries and dictating machines. . . ." Although the author is speaking of science, his comments pertain to creativity in almost any field. Likewise, the following observations can be applied to the discussion of whether individual military leadership is obsolete in today's complex world.

Cooperation is obviously necessary where the complexity of science has doubled every fifteen years: no scientist can be an island any longer. But he can still retain some individual personality in the presentation of results reached in a collective undertaking, and set nonspecialists afire, or a-dreaming, with the poetry of science.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Op. cit., pp. 376-377.

<sup>15</sup>Op. cit., pp. 14-15.



Official military leadership has no choice but to follow "the strict Roman organization of life." That more creativity could be permitted within the organization will be discussed below. But Peyre's comments should be kept in mind by the military man who deplores the invasion of his intellectual field of grand strategy by such writers as Brodie, Huntington, Kaufmann, Kissinger, Osgood, Wholstetter, Schelling, and Kahn.<sup>16</sup>

Tocqueville asked, in 1840, why Americans had avoided individual effort and had "carried to the highest perfection the art of pursuing in common the object of their common desires. . . ." He concludes that strong individual leadership is a characteristic of aristocratic societies, but that "Among democratic nations . . . all the citizens are independent and feeble; they can do hardly anything by themselves. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

The egalitarian principle continues to be evoked by advocates of "club effort" as opposed to heroic leadership, but the "joiners" are fortified now by a new proposition: modern problems will be reached too late if the committee method is used; and while a modern Napoleon might have more complicated problems to solve, he also has more sophisticated means available to help him.

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<sup>16</sup>See bibliography.

<sup>17</sup>Op. cit., pp. 379-380. Underlining furnished.

Even in the days of Napoleon there were those who believed in the council of war approach to military decision.<sup>18</sup>

Science and technology have made tremendous advances, but does this mean that collective minds are more necessary today than a single outstanding leader? This leader must be supported by every scientific and technological aid possible. Even more important, and likely to be forgotten, is that the mind of this leader must be made more effective. As marvelous as electricity and solid state circuitry are, they are crude in comparison with the most immature human brain; as advanced as science is in "the state of the art," it has not approached the potential of the human brain.

One would look to the textbooks on leadership to argue the case for collective (as opposed to individual) leadership in the modern world, and one would not be disappointed.

Times are changing: perhaps we are developing a social environment that lends itself to better leadership.\*\*\*Dead and gone are the redoubtable fighters for labor of the 1930's. . . ; dead also are the top-billed warrior actors on the industrial side of the bloody drama. . . .We are ready, I believe, for an era of a new kind of leadership.\*\*\*Jungle leadership no longer has any place.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>See Jomini's condemnation of this method in The Art of War, American edition of 1862, pp. 58-60. The Aulic Council, which gave detailed instructions from Vienna to field commanders, is specifically mentioned by Jomini. In Tolstoi's War and Peace is a famous council of war scene on the eve of Austerlitz; this starts on p. 279 of the 1942 edition. (Book 3, Chapter 11)

<sup>19</sup>Roger Bellows, Creative Leadership, pp. 8, 9 and 14.

Another textbook deplores "autocratic leadership," which "requires a special kind of public--the hero-worshipful public, which is impressed by pomp and authority."<sup>20</sup>

It must be pointed out that both excerpts have a moralistic note of hopefulness that man's good sense will eventually create a reasonable world. If the authors would agree that such a world does not yet exist when the Communists openly brag "we will bury you," then they might see the need for "old-fashioned leadership."

A more convincing argument for collective leadership is furnished by Hanson Baldwin in his introduction to Command Decisions, the U.S. Army's official study of the 20 major strategic decisions of World War II.

There are four great lessons that emerge from these pages [writes Mr. Baldwin].

The first is that grand strategy in modern war--at least in democratic states and among allied coalitions--is the product of many minds. Napoleon, with his hand thrust in his coat, could no longer survey the modern battlefield and choose the opportune moment to order a cavalry charge. War today is a management process; most decisions, at least at or above the general officer level, emerge from group or committee discussions and consultation. One-man generalship--though still a factor--is far less important than it was in the days when the range of weapons was a few thousand yards and there was nothing more lethal than bullets, shells, and sabers. (There are, of course, exceptions to the current practice of "war by committee"; Hitler's dictatorial decisions were sweeping and absolute.)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Emory S. Bogardus, Leaders and Leadership, pp. 20-21.

<sup>21</sup>Op. cit., pp. xi-xii.

This expresses accurately the sentiments of those who would bury the Great Captain, but it cries out for rebuttal on several key points. Mr. Baldwin himself says elsewhere that "World War II was won by the Allies primarily because of overwhelming material superiority--essentially a product of American industry."<sup>22</sup> Look at the havoc wreaked by "Hitler's dictatorial decisions" before our "management process" brought to bear and destroyed him with "overwhelming material superiority." We no longer have the latter superiority. As for the generalship of Napoleon, the picture presented by Mr. Baldwin is familiar because it appeals to artists. No artist can depict the detailed map studies conducted by Napoleon to determine where he would fight his decisive battle, nor the tactical sense he employed to determine when and where to commit his reserve to clinch the victory. Resurrect Napoleon, give him modern weapons, modern means of command and control, and no student of his career would accept that he could be beaten by a committee.

John W. Gardner, long a champion of excellence, supports my main argument that these revolutionary times call for revolutionary improvement of American leadership: "We achieved greatness in an era when changes came more slowly than now.\*\*\*Today, problems of enormous import hit us swiftly.\*\*\*We can no longer afford to respond in a leisurely fashion."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>23</sup>Post, p. 7.



The author expresses the conviction that management techniques have led toward the art of "How to reach a decision without really deciding." This is putting leadership into the hands of men who lack the confidence to lead, and it threatens to destroy the effectiveness of men with natural gifts of leadership.<sup>24</sup> Getting into what he considers to be the core of the problem, Gardner continues: "Indeed, it is my belief that we are immunizing a high proportion of our most gifted young people against any tendencies to leadership. It will be worth our time to see how this anti-leadership vaccine is administered."<sup>25</sup>

Society itself starts the process, he says. Mass society and the dispersion of power give the individual little encouragement toward becoming a leader himself.

The writer then asks, "are leaders necessary?" "Is the very notion of leadership somehow at odds with the ideals of a free society?"

These are not foolish questions. We have in fact outgrown or rejected several varieties of leadership that have loomed large in the history of mankind. We do not want autocratic leaders. . . . We do not want leaders, no matter how wise or kind, who treat us like children.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 8. The so-called Womble Report stated in 1953: "Personnel are no longer inclined to accept responsibility commensurate with their rank, primarily because they lack authority to adequately and fully discharge those responsibilities." U.S. Dept. of Def., Ad Hoc Committee. . . , p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Loc. cit., p. 9.

But at the same time that we were rejecting those forms of leadership, we were evolving forms more suitable to our values.\*\*\*We can have the kinds of leaders we want, but we cannot choose to do without them.<sup>26</sup>

Mr. Gardner concludes his provocative essay with the note that we must turn more of our energies from "tending the machinery of our complex society" toward development of leadership that contributes to "the continuing definition and articulation of the most cherished values of our society, . . . in short, moral leadership."<sup>27</sup>

This moral leadership is needed in the armed services not only at the uppermost level, to restore military expertise and judgment in the direction of national defense, but also at subordinate echelons. It is needed to restore the "confidence in itself," which Gardner finds lacking throughout American leadership,<sup>28</sup> and it is particularly needed to develop the greatest possible reserves of new leadership potential.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>27</sup>John W. Gardner, "The Antileadership Vaccine," Annual Report: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1965, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

## CHAPTER 3

### WASHINGTON'S MUFED MILITARY MEN

The American military leader emerged from World War II with unprecedented power. In 1956, C. Wright Mills prefaced his examination of "The Warlords" and "The Military Ascendance" with this sweeping observation:

In the twentieth century . . . the old march of history once more asserts itself. All over the world, the warlord is returning. All over the world, reality is defined in his terms. And in America, too, into the political vacuum the warlords have marched. Alongside the corporate executives and the politicians, the generals and admirals--those uneasy cousins within the American elite--have gained and have been given increased power to make and to influence decisions of the gravest consequence.<sup>1</sup>

Quite apart from the top command and staff assignments at home and abroad that put tremendous authority of a military, political, and economic nature into the hands of the generals and admirals, the highest public and private offices were filled by them. Well-meaning, well-known, and perfectly sane Americans permitted their names to be associated with reports that the armed services were taking over control of the country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Power Elite, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>See New Evidence of the Militarization of America: A Report Issued by Pearl Buck, Louis Bromfield, Albert Einstein, W. J. Millor, S. J., Victor Reuther, Ray Lyman Wilbur, and others. A 64-page pamphlet, this appears from the introductory material to be published by The National Council Against Conscription as a sequel to an earlier report entitled The Militarization of America (1948).

The facts were quite different. Although "the military establishment," as represented by the Department of Defense, has achieved a constantly growing power position in America, "military leadership" in terms of influence on national security has slipped from the hands of the generals and admirals.

One authority points out how the country can entertain the "false and dangerous" image of military domination when, actually, military power has virtually been eclipsed:

This concern is rooted in the traditional American tendency to view civilian in quantitative rather than institutional terms. Before World War II the United States solved the problem of civilian control by maintaining only minimal military forces. Since World War II, however, substantial military forces have been necessary, and about 10 per cent of the gross national product has been devoted to military purposes. Hence, it seems logical to assume that civilian control is threatened. The strength of civilian control, however, depends not on the size of the armed forces but on the strength of the political institutions and ideology of the country.<sup>3</sup>

The decline in military influence is discussed by Huntington under five headings. The first is "decline in political influence of the top leaders of the military profession." Since the Truman administration was politically weak, says the author, it needed the help of the great soldier-statesmen-heroes Marshall, Eisenhower, and Bradley to secure Congressional and popular support of its policies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, "Power, Expertise and the Military Profession," Daedalus, Fall 1963, p. 794.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 796.



General Eisenhower's election as President gave him complete ascendancy over other military officers: he was the supreme military authority, and the other generals and admirals had virtually no voice in the councils of government. As Huntington has written elsewhere:

. . . Eisenhower became its [the nation's] most effective instrument in the reduction of American military strength.\*\*\*The first three military budgets submitted by his administration all cut back the size of the armed forces, all encountered resistance in Congress, and all were approved on the personal assurance of the President that they would provide adequately for the national defense.\*\*\*The opposition was disarmed from the start. As one Democrat sadly remarked, "How in the devil can a mere Senator argue about military matters with General Ike Eisenhower?" The result was a rift between the President and his erstwhile professional colleagues, and the identification of America's most popular military officer with the most anti-military philosophy of business liberalism.<sup>5</sup>

Other changes resulting in decline of military influence are summarized by Professor Huntington:

2. The decreasing role of military men in the civilian agencies. The development of the Cold War . . . caught the government unprepared with personnel to staff its new foreign affairs activities. The [qualified] civilians . . . were heading back to their peacetime jobs.\*\*\*The obvious source was the military.\*\*\*

Unlike Truman, Eisenhower was able to enlist the services of large numbers of businessmen for his administration.\*\*\*Under Kennedy this tendency was intensified. In Kennedy's first two years no professional military officer was appointed to a top civil position in the government.

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<sup>5</sup>The Soldier and the State, pp. 372-3.

3. The increasing expertise and influence of civilian groups in the formation of military policy.

\*\*\*During the Eisenhower Administration, their role was largely critical. In the Kennedy Administration, they moved into the White House and the Pentagon. They were able, in a sense, to beat the military at their own game.

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. . . the civil servants in the Department of Defense also quietly gained in power and influence.\*\*\*Continuity of service gave them experience, knowledge, contacts and power.

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In addition. . . , the top political leadership of the Department of Defense is becoming more knowledgeable in military policy and strategy.

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4. Centralization of authority over military policy in the executive branch.

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5. Continued divisions among the military. The above-mentioned factors . . . might have been counterbalanced by other changes on the military side of the equation. By and large, however, they were not. In particular, the single most significant factor abetting the rise of civilian influence was the continued division of the military against itself. Interservice controversy, intraservice divisions, interprogram rivalries all helped to weaken the voice of the military. On a few, if any major issues did the military professionals develop a coherent military viewpoint.

Split among themselves, they invited civilian intervention into military affairs. When they were able to compromise their differences and agree on a common program, the result was often so obviously a political compromise that civilian leaders were justified in tearing it apart on grounds of sound military logic.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., pp. 797-801. Loss of intellectual leadership by military men in the field of strategy was foreseen more than a decade ago by Adm. John D. Hayes, President of the American Military Institute. In 1954 he wrote: "While military men are shying away from their own heritage, the academic profession is showing increased interest in military history." In a prediction that has come true, he added, "If the trend continues it might well be that this /academic profession/ will be the group rather than the military profession who, in the future, will be asked for advice on military-political problems." (Ordnance, November-December 1954, pp. 442, 444.) A few months later he asked in an editorial, "Why is the U.S. Military profession today unable to produce writers?" (Military Affairs, Spring 1955, p. 64.) I picked up the theme in an article entitled "Should Army Officers Write?" (Army, February 1956, p. 37.) Lt. Col. George S. Pappas addresses himself to the problem in an Army War College thesis of 1966 identified in the bibliography.

### THE MAN-ON-HORSEBACK SYNDROME

Before examining the need for more military influence in national security affairs in a world of revolutionary change, we should consider the factors militating against acceptance of this need. In more straightforward language, by strengthening military leadership do we endanger our democracy--will the military take over?

First it is necessary to distinguish between "militarism" and what Alfred Vagts in his classic study calls "the military way." After defining the latter as the efficient application of military means to attain specific objectives, he writes:

Militarism, on the other hand, presents a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions, and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes. Indeed, militarism is so constituted that it may hamper and defeat the purposes of the military way. Its influence is unlimited in scope. It may permeate all society and become dominant over all industry and arts. Rejecting the scientific character of the military way, militarism displays the qualities of caste and cult, authority and belief.<sup>7</sup>

Looking around the world at the number of states now under military control, with more and more evidence that the army is the only institution capable of maintaining authority in many underdeveloped nations, one sees the principal reason why the American military leader is not a threat to American democracy.

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<sup>7</sup>History of Militarism, p. 13. Vagts has a chapter on the post-1918 militarism of civilians (pp. 451-483).



With our Anglo-Saxon heritage of anti-militarism and of strong civil institutions, the non-political tradition is strong in the American armed services. It is rooted in our revolutionary origins and the example of George Washington.

Sherman was particularly adamant in stressing the divorce of the military from politics. Three of the six Commanding Generals before him had become presidential candidates. With him begins the tradition of political neutrality which, with the sole exception of Leonard Wood, was to be maintained by subsequent Commanding Generals and Chiefs of Staff until after World War II. "Let those who are trained to it keep the office," he wrote of the Presidency in 1874, "and keep the Army and Navy as free from politics as possible, for emergencies that may arise at any time." On party politics, "no Army officer should form or express an opinion." The essential components of the military ethic . . . were succinctly expressed in Sherman's two most quoted phrases: "War is hell" and "I will not accept if nominated and will not serve if elected."<sup>8</sup>

Morris Janowitz starts his chapter on "Military Honor Redefined" with these observations:

The professional behavior of the military has profound political consequences. But, traditionally, officers have not fought primarily because of an explicit political ideology. On the contrary, the political interests of the typical officer have been intermittent at best. Only at the higher ranks and among its elite members is there a more sustained concern with the political purposes of the military establishment.<sup>9</sup>

When the same author undertakes a study of "Political Beliefs" he starts with these introductory remarks:

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<sup>8</sup>Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State, pp. 231-232.

<sup>9</sup>The Professional Soldier, p. 215.

According to the definitions of military honor, the professional soldier is "above politics" in domestic affairs.\*\*\*Under democratic theory, the "above politics" formula requires that, in domestic politics, generals and admirals do not attach themselves to political parties or overtly display partisanship. Furthermore, military men are civil servants, so that elected leaders are assured of the military's partisan neutrality.<sup>10</sup>

Alfred Vagts digs deeper into the "common assumption in the civilian world, as well as a pretense on the part of the military, that 'soldiers are so little politicians generally.'" Commenting on the well known instances of military men who have passed from military service to high office in the civil government (Napoleon, Washington, Eisenhower), he goes on to say:

But there is another aspect generally neglected by students of both civil government and armies. This is the subject of the various connections, often underground, between military officers and politics. On the one side, these connections bear upon the immediate business of armies--such as organization, supplies, the promotion of officers, public relations, and class affiliations. On the other side, the connections between military men and politics have a bearing on the general public policies to which the military and warfare are popularly supposed to be subordinate--ends of which armies and war are popularly imagined to be the mere means or servants.<sup>11</sup>

Vagts then proceeds to examine military officers as politicians under several subheadings and convincingly supports this thesis.

Returning to the question of whether strong American military leadership might threaten our democratic system, we can tentatively answer no. Military and civilian traditions both oppose the "man

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>11</sup>Op. cit., pp. 293-294.

on horseback." While the soldier is not always innocent of political sense or political ambition, his professional training tends to make him ineffective as a politician and therefore not dangerous as a candidate for high elective office. Only when normal parliamentary procedures fail is military rule palatable to a people as an expedient; America faces no such crisis. In fact, the danger to "the American way" lies in precisely the opposite direction.

## CHAPTER 4

### ENTRENCHMENT OF THE MILITARY MANAGER TRADITION

Having traced the rise and fall of military influence in Washington, the question now is what sort of military leadership tradition are we evolving?

Three particularly sound and thorough students of American military leadership are T. Harry Williams, Samuel P. Huntington, and Morris Janowitz. Huntington says:

T. Harry Williams argues that the United States has two military traditions. One is represented by the friendly, folksy, easygoing soldier who reflects the ideals of a democratic and industrial civilization and who cooperates easily with his civilian superiors. This "Ike" tradition is exemplified by Zachary Taylor, U.S. Grant, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Opposing this is the "Mac" tradition, embodied in Winfield Scott, George B. McClellan, and Douglas MacArthur--brilliant, imperious, cold, dramatic officers deriving their values and behavior from an older, aristocratic heritage and finding it difficult to subordinate themselves to civilian authorities.<sup>1</sup>

Commenting that "Williams' dichotomy is obviously real and significant," Huntington elaborates:

. . . in a sense, it is restricted in scope, failing to encompass important elements of the American military tradition. . . .\*\*\*The true opposition is not between the Taylor--Grant--Eisenhower line and the Scott--McClellan--MacArthur line, but rather between both of these, on the one hand, and the professional strand of American militarism (which might be described

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State, p. 367, citing T. Harry Williams, "The Macs and the Ikes: America's Two Military Traditions," American Mercury, Vol. LXXV (October 1952), pp. 32-39.



as the Sherman--Pershing--Ridgway line), on the other. \*\*\*The differences between the Ike type and the Mac type are the differences between two kinds of politicians: the charismatic, inspirational, unbending, political leader who leads because he is superior to his followers, and the flexible, earthy, unpretentious political leader who leads because he is representative of his followers. That the Ikes generally have been more successful than the Macs in their political pursuits indicates only that the American environment generally is more favorable to the Ike type, irrespective of whether he is civilian or military.<sup>2</sup>

Janowitz is interested in the social as well as the political aspects of the subject. Observing first that "The rule-breaking military of unconventional background has a long history in American military affairs," he lists several in this category who made their names prior to World War II: Washington, Anthony Wayne, Francis Marion, Andrew Jackson, Grant, Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, Pershing, MacArthur, and "Billy" Mitchell.<sup>3</sup> Before examining subsequent leaders, he comments as follows:

These innovators, whose perspectives are not captured and blocked by the traditions of the profession, bear the responsibility for adapting the military to new tasks.

In the military establishment the fighter spirit itself tends to become extinguished. Those who make a successful career of seeking to renew it are also innovators, in a sense, although they may draw their stimulus from the past rather than the future. As one advances in the military hierarchy, with its endless routine and prolonged periods of peace, it takes an act of strong assertiveness and individuality to maintain the fighter spirit. A successful military establishment must be run by military managers, but must include in its very elite a leaven of heroic leaders.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 367-368.

<sup>3</sup>The Professional Soldier . . . , p. 151.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-154.

In analyzing the leaders of World War II, Janowitz states that "the military managers maintained positions of effective authority" and that "The dominant image of the military manager was embodied in such men as" Eisenhower, Bradley, and Marshall, "the prototype."<sup>5</sup> Note that these three generals are the very ones named by Huntington as "the great soldier-statesmen" and "popular heroes" whom Truman brought into his administration, and that decline of military influence in America dates from their tenure. All three are tagged "civilianized generals" characterized by "detachment . . . toward the military profession."<sup>6</sup>

Janowitz reaches these conclusions about the Army leadership of World War II:

The members of the top elite, taken as a whole, do not present a picture of Prussian-type staff officers, but rather of civilianized military managers. The heroic leaders were conspicuous . . . but they were decidedly in the minority. While generalizations about such a relatively small group are hazardous, two observations seem possible. First, more often than not military managers . . . tended to come from the families of lower social status or more marginal circumstances. Heroic leaders could often be identified with the survival of "aristocratic-like" traditions, if only as perpetuated by service-connected family backgrounds. Second, these men--whether military managers or heroic leaders--were characterized by powerful impulses to dissent and to challenge the structure of military authority as it had evolved during peacetime.<sup>7</sup>

Nor should it be pretended that this complex civil-military bureaucracy is not attractive to many persons in uniform whose

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., pp. 155, 157, 161.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 160-161.

competitive nature is better suited to the carpet than the open field. An official Army study states baldly:

It is likely that the Army, as a bureaucratic organization, attracts into its ranks a fair proportion of men who are happiest when they are working in a situation which does not require them to take much responsibility or exhibit much initiative. For /such/ men . . . the Army can provide a haven which accords substantial prestige and at the same time offers excellent possibilities for rationalizing failure to achieve rapid success or very high earnings /in civilian life/.<sup>8</sup>

The authors support this conclusion with the findings of another group:

. . . as a bureaucratic system, the military--and especially its administrative segments--would seem to attract and support men who find comfort in relatively formalized and hierarchical relations with others as well as in security, regularity, and specificity of work operations.<sup>9</sup>

In a remarkable book entitled Dialogues sur le Commandement, André Maurois has created a series of dialogues between a young French lieutenant on leave in 1923 from the pacification campaign in North Africa, and his former professor of philosophy. In an amiable but astute analysis of military leadership, the professor confesses that he prefers the prosaic generals "like Tolstoy's Kutuzov, who sleeps through the war councils, and wins the day by sheer immobility," "Joffre, and his impressive inertia." The lieutenant speaks for the other brand of generalship:

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<sup>8</sup>Snyder and others, "The Retention of Army Career Personnel . . ." p. 26.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 26 n., citing Henry S. Maas, Charles F. Prince, and George E. Davie, "Personal--Social Disequilibria in a Bureaucratic System," Psychiatry, Vol. 16, No. 2, May 1953.

Only when danger is on the top of us, we pouch our pride and call on the blunt but efficient man to take the reins.\*\*\*In peace time baseness can thrive in the Army as elsewhere. Unless he is lucky enough to get sent to the Colonies, your soldier becomes a civilian, a politician, a sycophant. . . .In such circumstances the man of character stands aside in disgust, and bides his time.<sup>10</sup>

The military profession has always had its own special problems in attracting, retaining, and advancing the sort of man it needs at the top in wartime. There is considerable evidence that service in the intermediate grades destroys natural ability needed for command in the higher grades. The problem of eliminating "dead wood" exists at the beginning of every mobilization,<sup>11</sup> but the deadening effect of this leadership has meanwhile been endured by a generation of subordinates!

Colonel G. F. R. Henderson, the military scholar who wrote the classic study of "Stonewall" Jackson, says this about Jackson's leaving the army in 1851:

'He believed,' he said, 'that a man who had turned, with a good military reputation /Jackson had won two brevets in the Mexican War/, to pursuits of a semi-civilian character /teaching at Virginia Military Institute, in his case/, and had prosecuted his military improvement, would have more chance of success in war than those who had remained in the treadmill of the garrison.'

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<sup>10</sup>American edition, Captains and Kings, pp. 7, 12 and 46-47.

<sup>11</sup>For a comprehensive summary of this problem on the eve of World War II, see Mark S. Watson, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations, Chapter VIII.



It was with a view, then, of fitting himself for command that Jackson broke away from the restraints of regimental life; not because these restraints were burdensome or distasteful in themselves, but because he felt that whilst making the machine they might destroy the man.<sup>12</sup>

Henderson adds this footnote:

That Jackson's ideas were sound may be inferred not only from his own brilliant Civil War record but also from the fact that many of the most distinguished generals of the Civil War were men whose previous career had been analogous to his own. Amongst these might be mentioned Grant, Sherman, and McClellan. \*\*\*The men who saved India for England in the Great Mutiny were of the same type.<sup>13</sup>

It is an unfortunate fact that the good battle commander may be a misfit in a peacetime army. Consider the Union officers with brilliant peacetime reputations who failed miserably as field commanders in the Civil War: "Old Brains" Halleck and "The Young Napoleon," George B. McClellan. Officers finally selected for top command, and who won the war, were ones who, without this challenge, would probably have failed: Grant, who left the army in 1854 to avoid a court-martial for repeated instances of drunkenness (due largely to his inability to endure the futility and monotony of peacetime service); Sherman, whose emotional instability and outspoken criticism of official policy almost led to his relief from command in 1861; and Phil Sheridan, a comparatively old lieutenant when the war started, and under court-martial charges in 1861 for violation of regulations.

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<sup>12</sup>Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, p. 43.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 43 n.

George Washington, Robert E. Lee, and Douglas MacArthur are probably the only other examples of famous American military leaders who could have excelled in the top command position either in peace or in war. But the problem is this: if we again need leaders like Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan--not to mention that other unconventional genius, Stonewall Jackson--will we have the time to find them and elevate them to critical command positions? It took three years to discover the generals to lead the Union Army to victory against the brilliant Confederate generals who commanded almost from the beginning. In the two world wars we had years in which to mobilize, and by the time our forces were committed to battle there was no requirement for brilliant generalship. Military management of our overwhelming resources, and diplomatic relations with our exhausted allies, were enough.

However, there is no reason to believe that prosaic military leadership will be good enough to win a hard war against an enemy of our own strength. This is, of course, in the realm of speculation, but our prosaic tradition of military leadership is already doing damage that may be irreparable.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE FAILURE OF AMERICAN MILITARY LEADERS TOWARD THEIR SUBORDINATES

We have traced the evolution of American leadership tradition to the current style of military management, as opposed to the dynamic, inspirational style. We have presented evidence that the "military manager" is now supreme--that the hero is undemocratic and obsolete. We have borne in mind that the current leadership tradition is based on a century of fighting with overwhelmingly favorable odds. Whether the "civilianized general" is what we need to win future wars is debatable, but his failure to maintain influence in the formulation of national security planning was recorded in Chapter 3.

Now let us see the record of the military manager in providing military leadership to his subordinates.

C. Wright Mills, in his study of The Power Elite, gives this picture of how military leadership is perpetuated:

In contrast with the inter-war careers and activities, the warlord of post World War II who is slated for the top will have spent a crucial tour of duty in the Pentagon. . . .The army's lieutenant colonel or the navy's commander in his thirties will probably make his jump, if at all, in or quite near the Pentagon. Here, as a cog in an intricate machine, he may come into the view of those who count, here he may be picked for staff position and later be given the forward-looking command. \*\*\*What will the future warlord do in the Pentagon, where there seem more admirals than ensigns, more generals than second lieutenants?\*\*\*He will read reports and brief them as inter-office memos; he will route

papers with colored tags. . . .He will serve on one of the 232 committees.\*\*\*He will try to become known as a "comer," and, even as in the corporate world, somebody's bright young man.<sup>1</sup>

The cream of this crop will serve in "the forward-looking command" just long enough to satisfy the requirement for promotion, whereupon they will hasten back to the staff positions where they are so badly needed to handle the crush of paperwork generated by a burgeoning military bureaucracy. Today's knights win their spurs on the carpet, not in the field, and a former Chief of Naval Operations has described the process in much the same terms as did Mills (above):

. . . they pick up the papers from one side of the desk and pass them on to the other side of the desk and are the recipients of directives to produce studies. They change the attitudes which they have learned over many years of estimates of the situation to studies of cost analysis and cost effectiveness! To all these unsung heroes of the Pentagon . . . I give my testimonial because, gentlemen, they really put it out and do they take it!<sup>2</sup>

Thus, under the leadership of the military managers and as directed by the big business experts who now direct them, has the spirit of "the organization man" taken over the armed services. In fairness it must be acknowledged that long before this development of the 1960's the Great Captains had had to cope with

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<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., pp. 196-197.

<sup>2</sup>Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr., in speech at farewell dinner given to him by the Navy League and reported in the Army, Navy, Air Force Journal and Register, 3 Aug. 1963, p. 2.



bureaucracy. The military rank and file would wish for one such as Lord Wellington, who once responded as follows:

My Lord,

If I attempt to answer the mass of futile correspondence that surrounds me, I should be debased from all serious business of campaigning.

I must remind your lordship--for the last time--that so long as I retain an independent position, I shall see that no officer under my command is debarred --by attending to the futile drivelling of mere quill-driving in your Lordship's Office--from attending to his first duty--which is, and always has been, so to train the private men under his command that they may, without question, beat any force opposed to them in the field.<sup>3</sup>

A mystique exists in the military profession and certain other callings that has no place in commercial organizations. It accounts for why soldiers consider themselves a "band of brothers" even though one wears a colonel's eagles and another a captain's bars or a corporal's stripes.

Part of this mystique is the personal rapport between the leaders and the led. And one of its most important features is the leader's inspiration of his men. The law demands respect from a subordinate, but something more is needed to win real respect and leadership.

The question "Do you admire or respect your immediate superior?" was recently put to a rather special group of 94 lieutenants. All but three were college graduates, and 14 were

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted in David Klein, The Army Writer, p. ix.

Regulars. About 75 per cent expressed satisfaction with their pay, living conditions, fringe benefits, and their status as Army officers. But to this question about their superiors, a stunning 95 per cent answered "No." The man who undertook this informal survey had these summary remarks:

Poor leadership on the part of immediate supervisors, combined with an "excitability factor" inherent in the system and the general mediocrity of the officer corps, formed the universal source of dissatisfaction. \*\*\*There was a fundamental concern over the lack of foresight, planning, and common sense among supervisors resulting continually in difficult situations (flaps). "We learn poise and calm . . . no matter how serious a situation, yet all day (and much of the night), every day, our supervisors are in a frenzied state and expect everyone else to be so too. . . ."4

Almost precisely the same conclusions have been reached by a number of official studies. The Womble Report of 1953, first of many on retention of capable career personnel, singled out the evils of oversupervision, reluctance of leaders to accept responsibility, and commented bluntly that "loyalty must flow downward and laterally as well as up."<sup>5</sup> An official survey of American lieutenants in Germany in 1956 revealed three primary reasons for leaving the service (other than prior plans for a civilian career): over-supervision, numerous crash programs interfering with training and maintenance, and "Gradual realization that a lower standard of ethics is being employed by their

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<sup>4</sup>Lt. Mahlon Apgar, IV, "Why They Leave," Army, March 1966, pp. 55, 56. The author is a Distinguished Graduate of the ROTC who is studying at Oxford after completing three years of active duty.

<sup>5</sup>Op. cit., p. 4. and Tab F, p. 2.

superiors than had been expected." This last charge included false certificates generated by the requirement that officers certify personally to a superabundance of reports, and hypocrisy associated with the extraordinary efforts made to impress important visitors with much-rehearsed training and field exercises.<sup>6</sup>

These evils are well-known to officers who have served with troops since World War II, but they have become immeasurably worse since automatic data processing has been applied in such areas as "Materiel Readiness" and "Combat Effectiveness Reporting." Today's troop units are subjected to a crowded schedule of training tests and inspections, Command Maintenance Management Inspections, Technical Proficiency Inspections (on handling atomic weapons, including those in infantry battalions), Strategic Alert Inspections, and many other demands of the new world situation and the new business management. This is the nature of "the forward-looking command" to which "the future warlord" aspires. At several echelons above the lieutenant colonel commanding his battalion to qualify for promotion are others qualifying at the brigade, division, and army corps level. One bad break in this brief but vital command assignment can wreck one or more of these commanders. With this atmosphere it is easy to see what is meant by the "excitability factor" referred to by the lieutenants mentioned above. But this same

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<sup>6</sup>Snyder and others, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

group had some even more interesting observations:

There was agreement that the colonel-general group was highly respected. . . .However, there was complete lack of respect for the middle ranks, especially the lower field grades /majors and lieutenant colonels/. These were viewed as the source of the aforementioned leadership actions causing dissatisfaction. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Official censorship can block publication by military personnel of anything critical of "policy" or that is derogatory about the service.<sup>8</sup> This barrier and the generally inarticulate nature of U.S. military men (see page 55) combine to suppress the complaints of officers about current leadership. A rare exception is the article, "The Courage of Your Convictions," published recently by an Army captain. It is interesting not so much for expressing the grievances silently suffered by less articulate company grade officers as for the fact that it evoked a reply by a champion of the very leadership it found deadening. The captain describes the frantic preparations to stage well-rehearsed demonstrations in the guise of training--precisely the "frenzy" and hypocrisy so repugnant and disenchanting to the lieutenants mentioned above. But he also touches another nerve:

There is a critical need in our Army--in our country --for independent thinking young men. Far too many juniors feel they must wait until they become more senior to stand up and say what they believe is right. They don't know that by the time they become senior it

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<sup>7</sup>Apgar, loc. cit., p. 56. Note that the officers objected most to the leadership closest to them.

<sup>8</sup>See work of Pappas identified in the bibliography and comments in Chapter 6, below.



will be too late, that they will have become conditioned "yes men," and unable to think for themselves. What's worse, they will expect their subordinates to wait as they did to improve and reevaluate things that should have been improved and reevaluated at all levels yesterday.

Though there is a need for creative thinking at all levels in the Army, it is at the lowest echelons where the need is most vital. We need many more original thinking lieutenants and captains than we do generals. The vital need is for imaginative platoon leaders and company level officers. . . . This is the level where our officers who will be around for the next thirty years are molded.<sup>9</sup>

In this excerpt we find echoes of Clausewitz, as commented on by Freytag-Loringhoven in The Power of Personality in War, and the maxim of Napoleon that points out the need for inspiration among the qualities of a great general.<sup>10</sup> In Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure, J. F. C. Fuller wrote, "When we study the lives of the great captains . . . what do we discover? That the mainspring within them was originality, outwardly expressing itself in unexpected action."<sup>11</sup> But here is what one senior Army colonel, a Ranger leader in the Pacific during World War II and a battalion commander in the Korean War, took the trouble to write:

"The Courage of Your Convictions" is an inspired piece of writing but one which I feel should be tempered with damned good judgment. In the parlance of the Far East, the Year of the Tiger in this Army has passed and as the Captain clearly intimates we are strongly pushing the Year of the Rabbit.

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<sup>9</sup>Captain H. C. Lyon, Jr., op. cit., Army, July 1965, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>Freytag-Loringhoven, op. cit., passim. Lanza, Napoleon and Modern War, p. 147.

<sup>11</sup>Op. cit., p. 80.

My experience . . . clearly indicates that outspoken, independent-thinking juniors can never get to be seniors unless they carefully assess the attitudes and philosophies of their superiors and conduct themselves accordingly. Courage of one's convictions is indeed a most admirable quality but one not displayed too frequently these days. I have seen some young officers who possess this attitude cut to ribbons on efficiency reports because of an expression of views or disagreement with the staff of their commander.

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A junior has a helluva long way to go before he can show this type of courage and survive to even get to the next rank, much more selection to general officer rank.<sup>12</sup>

The quality of rugged individualism is admired in America and, in theory, is encouraged among leaders. We reiterate with pride the remark of Steuben, the Prussian drillmaster, who wrote the following from Valley Forge to a European comrade in arms:

. . . the genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians or French. You say to your soldier, "Do this, and he doeth it"; but I am obliged to say, "This is the reason why you ought to do that: and then he does it."<sup>13</sup>

But a more accurate reflection of our true attitude toward rugged individualism in subordinates is contained in the remark attributed to Samuel Goldwyn: "I want men who aren't afraid to disagree with me--even if it costs them their job." Note, however, that the advice of the colonel to the author of "The Courage of Your Convictions," includes being a Yes-man to even "the staff of

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<sup>12</sup>Colonel Robert W. Garrett, "Courage or Discretion?" letter to the editor, Army, August 1965, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Steuben MSS, N.Y. Hist. Soc., quoted in John McA. Palmer, General Von Steuben, p. 157. The peculiar use of quotation marks is as given by Palmer.

their commander" (underlining added). In testimony before a Senate Committee, Chairman of the JCS Gen. Omar N. Bradley gave these answers to Senator Styles Bridges:

Senator Bridges. If it reaches the time in this country where you think the political decision is affecting what you believe to be basically right militarily, what would you do?\*\*\*Would you speak out, tell the American public?\*\*\*Don't you think that is your duty, your loyalty to the country to do that?

General Bradley. No, sir; I don't think so.\*\*\*

Senator Bridges. Should not you speak out?

General Bradley. I would; yes, to the constituted authorities; yes.

Senator Bridges. But you would stop there?

General Bradley. Yes.<sup>14</sup>

Based on four years in the Secretariat of the 14-nation Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), it is my conviction that French, British, and German high commanders expect much more individualism from subordinates than do American generals. The latter tend to wrap themselves in a cocoon of aides and military assistants, avoiding personal contact with "action officers." As part of that insulation, being in the Secretariat, I had frequent occasion to help repel the efforts of non-U.S. "action officers" who wanted to discuss their work

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted by Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr., "Should Our Military Leaders Speak Up?" New York Times, 15 April 1956. Reproduced in USMA Dept. of Social Sciences, Readings in International Relations, Vol. III, Part V, 1965, p. 97.

with the American Supreme Commander or his Chief of Staff. In my dealings with very senior French, British, and German admirals and generals, on the other hand, I found they wanted important business handled through their military assistants only if they were not personally available.

The American colonel who served as Secretary, and who frequently passed on instructions to "action officers" from the military assistants of SACEUR and the Chief of Staff, was incensed by the persistence of a British colonel in wanting to talk personally to SACEUR about an assigned project. "This Limey said he 'wanted to get into the general's mind,'" reported the American incredulously. "Haven't the British ever heard of 'completed staff work'?" The extreme to which the latter was carried by Americans is exemplified by this experience: An American officer worked off and on for three years on a highly confidential project for an American full general without once having an opportunity to discuss personally with this general whether he was doing exactly what that general had asked for; the military assistant through whom the instructions were relayed, admitted that he was not quite sure of what was wanted, but during the three years he himself never again discussed the project with his superior.

This tendency of the leader to isolate himself is not restricted to the military profession but is more a result of bureaucratization. It is evil because it deprives subordinates of the leadership they need to perform their own immediate duties



most effectively and to benefit from intimate contact with superiors from whom they can learn. But it also is evil because it deprives the top leadership of a realistic, accurate outlook. A Wall Street Journal reporter commented on the fact that higher headquarters were basing their decisions on an unreal picture of the situation in Vietnam:

The further you proceed from Washington's policy making peaks, down thru the bureaucratic jungle in Saigon, past the painstakingly prepared, richly documented "briefings," and on out into the countryside, the more you are likely to encounter candor, a questioning spirit, honest diversity of view. The more you encounter genuine, close-up expertise. Ultimately, the richest lode is found at the bottom of the bureaucratic pile, among a small but growing band of youthful American political warriors. . . .<sup>15</sup>

The record of leaders of the "military manager" type in inspiring their subordinates is therefore a record of failure. Military prestige emerged from the victory of World War II at a low level, as evidenced by the crop of derogatory war novels,<sup>16</sup> the Gallup Poll conclusions of 1955 that the officer ranked in prestige between a public school teacher and a farm owner,<sup>17</sup> the Doolittle Board, and the Army-McCarthy hearings. Yet the impetus for improving the officer's status came primarily from the press

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<sup>15</sup>Philip Geyelin, "Void in Vietnam: U.S. Knows Little About Its Foe, Not Much More About Ally," loc. cit., 24 August 1965, editorial page.

<sup>16</sup>See Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State, pp. 461-463, for "The Literary Image of the Officer."

<sup>17</sup>Public Opinion Surveys, Inc., Attitudes of Adult Civilians Toward the Military Service as a Career, Princeton, 1955. This is charted in Janowitz, The Professional Soldier, p. 227.

and Congress,<sup>18</sup> not from his own leaders. "Hanson Baldwin and others called public attention to the plight of the military," writes Huntington,<sup>19</sup> and George Fielding Eliot asked the Army whether it had lost its soul:

It's about time for the people of this country to make up their minds whether they want a reliable fighting army or a uniformed bureaucracy. They cannot have both. The strength of an army--its soul, for that matter--resides in its fighting units.<sup>20</sup>

But the author and the forum were backwards: here was a famous civilian journalist writing this for the service journals, not a famous general writing it for Harper's or Atlantic.

Uniformed bureaucracy had only begun to grow when Mr. Eliot worried about the Army's soul. When good things started happening to the Army, it was civilian leadership that deserved the credit: the Kennedy administration expanded the strength that the Eisenhower administration had cut back.

The officer corps, meanwhile, had within its own camp no heroes, and certainly no martyrs.

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<sup>18</sup>Huntington, op. cit., pp. 460-461.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>20</sup>"Has the Army Lost Its Soul?" Ordnance, July-August 1953, reprinted in Military Review, November 1953, pp. 7-14.

## CHAPTER 6

### REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP IN A REVOLUTIONARY WORLD

Military reforms usually are prompted by disasters, not by intellect. The Romans finally eliminated the Carthaginian threat after learning from bloody experience. The Prussian Army watched Napoleon annihilate the best armies of Europe before they marched against him in 1806. Heirs of Frederick the Great's tradition, and many of them veterans of his triumphs,<sup>1</sup> they had to suffer the humiliating defeat at Jena to discover that Napoleon had revolutionized warfare. Colonel Ardant du Picq was virtually unknown in the French Army prior to its lightening defeat in the War of 1870, but his contemporaries then understood that in his Battle Studies Du Picq had advocated fundamental reforms in an army that had become obsolete.<sup>2</sup>

Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller were ignored in their own country, England, and De Gaulle was ignored in France, when they advocated the concept of armored warfare based on World War I experience, but the vanquished listened and built panzer forces that scored incredible triumphs in Poland, France, and North Africa.

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<sup>1</sup>"In the period after Frederick the Great it seemed literally true that, in Prussia, old soldiers never died," writes Gordon A. Craig. "By 1806, of the 142 generals in the Prussian army, four were over 80 years of age, thirteen over 70, and sixty-two over 60; while 25 percent of the regimental and battalion commanders had passed the age of 60 also." Politics of the Prussian Army, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>See Earle (ed.), Makers of Modern Strategy, pp. 207-218.

The spirit of reform is conspicuously absent in the American armed services. "After all, we never lost a war," is the conversation stopper encountered by the military professional who suggests the need for any drastic improvement. Pearl Harbor ranks with the most humiliating defeats of military history, but in American memory it has joined the Great Depression of 1929 as one of those unfortunate things not likely to be repeated. Of the American defeat at Bladensburg with the loss of fewer than 20 killed, one writer has said: "History shows no other case where the capital of a great nation was delivered to the enemy after such small loss."<sup>3</sup> This disgraceful performance of 1814 has conveniently been forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

It is good for a soldier to know that no matter how good he is at his profession he can be beaten. While the combat commander must dispel from his mind all mental reservations about success once he has issued his orders,<sup>5</sup> he should have no illusions about his own shortcomings or those of his men. After his first, undistinguished campaign against Austrian General de Traun in 1744, Frederick the Great commented:

No general committed more faults than did the King  
/meaning himself/ in this campaign. The conduct of

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<sup>3</sup>Mitchell, Outlines of the World's Military History, p. 440.

<sup>4</sup>Glenn Tucker, Poltroons and Patriots: A Popular Account of the War of 1812, p. 550.

<sup>5</sup>See, in particular, the comments on optimism as the mark of a good general in Freytag--Loringhoven, The Power of Personality in War, pp. 14-21. Clausewitz, On War, pp. 32-36, and Fuller, Generalship . . . , pp. 23-51, support this generalization.



M. de Traun is a model of perfection which every soldier who loves his business ought to study and try to imitate, if he have the talent. The King has himself admitted that he regarded this campaign as his school in the art of war, and M. de Traun as his teacher. Bad is often better for princes than good; and instead of intoxicating themselves with presumption, renders them circumspect and modest.<sup>6</sup>

It has been said of the British that in the days of their military greatness they tended to lose every battle except the last. Of what is perhaps the most demanding position of leadership today, the U.S. Presidency, it has been said that greatness is determined by the ability to grow in the office. Never having had the advantage of losing a war, and having had the disadvantage of fighting recent wars with an overwhelming advantage on his own side, the American military leader is slow to recognize the need for self-improvement.

Toynbee's analysis of how civilizations break down may perhaps have few lessons for a nation that has not yet completed its second century of existence. But this historian concludes that when a people respond successfully to one challenge they tend to "rest on their oars" and succumb to the next challenge. "Growth is the work of creative personalities and creative minorities" who lead the uncreative masses forward; and the only way the latter can stay with their creative leaders, since they cannot comprehend, is by "mimesis," a mechanical and superficial process of imitation. This "drill sergeant" role into which the

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Great Captains, p. 57.

leader has been cast may, in turn, destroy the very qualities that originally qualified him to lead.<sup>7</sup> Toynbee traces the history of war from David and Goliath to 1938 to show how the innovator of a new military system has rested on his oars and allowed the next innovation to be made by his enemies.<sup>8</sup>

The author also points to the disturbing connection between idolatry and breakdown, showing that an intrinsically superior military system may be defeated by an inferior system "which has no point in its favor except that it has not yet had time to be idolized, because it is an innovation. . . ."<sup>9</sup> David's sling is, of course, the obvious example.

Reassuring evidence is emerging from Vietnam that the crisis there is bringing forth the leadership needed to cope with a revolutionary situation. Philip Geyelin writes of this in an article entitled "The New Breed," pointing out that these unconventional men are fighting higher headquarters and the Viet Cong simultaneously. "Most of them are . . . quick to criticize the rule-book reflexes and case-hardened thought patterns that are so often a part of big bureaucracy," says the author, and "the New Breed is looked upon by many higher-ups as perhaps a little unruly, emotionally over-committed, even a touch eccentric."

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<sup>7</sup>A Study of History, pp. 275-279, 579-580.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 331-349, 582.

<sup>9</sup>Toynbee, War and Civilization, p. 129.

For this reason, there is unofficial pressure to prevent these experienced men from extending their tours of duty in Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

To take a bold, imaginative look at aspects of military leadership where revolutionary improvements are needed to develop our utmost leadership potential, we must play an intellectual game with ourselves. Imagine that we have just suffered a crushing national defeat. Like Rome after annihilation of three armies in 218-216 B.C., like Prussia after Jena, like France after 1871, and like Germany after 1918, we now know that defeat is possible. And as in all these cases, we intend to profit from our lesson and produce a military organization that will win the next conflict.

Why were we hypothetically defeated?

Civilian domination of military planning will, of course, head the list of excuses drafted by the admirals and the generals. Why didn't you have the moral courage to resist? would be the reply. We did all we could, say the military.

Let us examine this last contention. The traditional military action when presented with a situation that is intolerable from a professional point of view is to resign. This is done with dignity and decorum, and without association with the

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<sup>10</sup>Wall Street Journal, 25 August 1965. The author is referring to civilian and military leaders away from their Saigon headquarters. See bibliography for another portion of Geyelin's report from Vietnam.

views of any political party. But it is done boldly and with a plain, public statement that the reason for resigning is a professional conviction that you can no longer act in the national interest.

The only senior officer who has come close to this gesture since World War II is General MacArthur. Although he denied any intent of deliberately pursuing conduct that would force his dismissal, he did take advantage of the occasion to express publicly his disapproval of national policy.

Several senior officers within recent years have left the service before reaching the mandatory retirement date. Although it was no secret that they disagreed with their civilian superiors, and although they promptly published books presenting their protests, not one of these officers issued statements indicating that he was leaving the service in any spirit of professional protest.

So-called "revolts" of the generals and admirals took place in connection with the Unification Act of 1947. In later developments, the following senior officers requested early retirement or were eased out of their high military offices by the Administration: Generals Gavin, Ridgway, Taylor, Medaris, and White, and Admiral Anderson. Admirals Brockett and Curtze, Chief and Deputy Chief of the Bureau of Ships, both requested early retirement at a time when Secretary McNamara was exerting increasing control over the affairs of their bureau. While almost all of these



officers subsequently made speeches and wrote articles or books expressing their objections to "civilian over-ride," not a one could claim to have "resigned in protest." In the most recent instance, that of Admirals Brockett and Curtze, while obviously expressing protest and so played up in the newspapers, both of them denied that they were resigning for anything more specific than "personal reasons."<sup>11</sup> The case of Admiral Anderson begins in the newspaper editions of 7 May 1963, when it was announced that he would not serve a second two-year tour as Chief of Naval Operations. In a speech on 4 September 1963 before the National Press Club he charged that there were "tendencies" to "downgrade" the military leader's advice, which "could jeopardize our national security."<sup>12</sup> But in his official message to the fleet on the subject of his being relieved as CNO he said the Navy was stronger than any other in history, noted "with considerable concern the speculation as to possible reasons for the decision to limit my term to two years," and implored all naval personnel "to avoid any remarks, comments, or assumptions relating thereto."<sup>13</sup>

Let the Tribunal of History, therefore, take judicial notice that no senior American military leader has resigned in protest to orders that, in his professional opinion, jeopardized the national security.

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<sup>11</sup>See papers of 28 October 1965, the day their resignations were publicized.

<sup>12</sup>The speech was inserted into the Congressional Record, 5 September, on p. A5617.

<sup>13</sup>Army, Navy, Air Force Journal and Register, 18 May 1963, p. 39.

Other military protest would logically be sought in published articles and books. Such a search would reveal almost no evidence that American military leaders have influenced national security planning by their published thoughts. They criticize the works of young civilian intellectuals like Kissinger, whose ideas have shaped military reorganization, but do not compete in print. One reason is that officers on duty in Washington are "too busy," and there can be little doubt that the military profession is hurting itself by its otherwise laudable tradition of overwork.

A truly enlightened military leadership would learn that creativity requires leisure. When the military man does find leisure he is unprepared to make constructive, creative use of it. This is best illustrated at the senior service schools, where an officer is isolated from the "real world" of military duty, relieved from the pressure of competing for personal advancement, and given an opportunity to exercise his mind. Writing of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Masland and Radway say:

. . . we feel that the college is distinguished, even among senior military institutions, by the heavy work load it places on its student body. There seems to be an implicit assumption that outside observers will grow suspicious unless students are constantly in motion or that Congress will snatch away unobligated time as it presumably snatches away unobligated funds.\*\*\*A more leisurely pace is needed to induce a greater amount of critical thinking.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Soldiers and Scholars, p. 414. This was published in 1957. Italics added.

The authors err, however, in presuming that this bustle is inspired by Congressional propinquity; nor could directors of the college do much to slow it by reducing the work load. "Selected senior officers," as they are called in the mission statement of these schools, are thoroughly imbued with the tradition of being "constantly in motion," literally or figuratively. It takes experience with leisure to do something constructive with it. Senior officers in the Pentagon have occasionally commented, in a philosophical moment, how nice it would be if they had the time to stop and think. Brainstorms come more frequently to the man staring out the window than to the one rushing to meet a deadline. The superior who has never known leisurely thought will certainly not tolerate, much less encourage it, in a subordinate.

It is worth noting, however, that games are accepted by the military officer as almost a form of duty. Imagine the reaction if a Pentagon officer announced he was going home early to exercise his mind by reading Clausewitz, yet an afternoon a week is authorized in many large headquarters to exercise the body. This is a hoary military tradition, as indicated by this passage from Fuller's Generalship:

Games and sports have an immense value as physical relaxers and restorers; but in themselves they have no more military value than playing fiddles or painting postcards.\*\*\*The comfortable theory is that to amuse ourselves is the most perfect way of learning how to become soldiers. 'He who plays /with his superiors?/' should be paid by promotion,' such is the unwhispered canon of this cult.

The result of this comfortable theory is mental strangulation. As the cricket ball bounds through the air the cannon ball bounds out of mind. Soldier-ship losing all stimulus becomes 'shop.'<sup>15</sup>

Another reason why we will find little published thought by military men is a curious tradition that professionals do not "pop off in print." This is one reason why the Royal Navy, in the days when it was Britain's principal military arm, was proudly known as "the silent service." Colonel Joseph I. Greene, a soldier of rare literary ability and long-time editor of a major service journal, once wrote:

Realization of the value of writing ability within the Army framework has often been hampered by the feeling that a 'writer' and an 'author' are the same. Some famous authors have been long-haired and peculiar; therefore all writers are at least a little that way. One of our ablest Chiefs of Staff decided to stop writing professional articles early in his career because he did not want to become known in the Army as a 'writer,' an 'author.' Others have felt the same way about it. This is a prejudice . . . /which/ with the belief that writing was beyond them, has kept many of our best military men from making their ideas known. . . . It was also a part of the general inarticulateness of the Army in the years between the wars.<sup>16</sup>

A new bar has been raised to military authors, that of censorship. In 1937, the published editorial policy of The Infantry Journal contained this explanation of why it encouraged submission of critical articles:

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<sup>15</sup>J. F. C. Fuller, Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure, pp. 81-82.

<sup>16</sup>David Klein, The Army Writer, op. cit., p. iii.



. . . eyebrows are sometimes raised over the articles that scoff at time-honored practices or criticize prevailing doctrine and methods. The eyebrow raisers seem to have an idea that such articles are subversive to discipline and damaging to the prestige of the Army. Those who recognize the Journal for what it is are not disturbed by articles that inveigh against the established order. They applaud or condemn. . . .The dissenters may write impertinently friendly letters denouncing the offending contribution or they may submit a spirited reply. But they don't suggest that the War Department exercise its power to prevent the publication of critical articles on the grounds that they undermine the foundations of the Republic.<sup>17</sup>

The civilian management of the Pentagon has now established what amounts to precisely the censorship mentioned above. The policy has evolved from one barring publication on grounds of "security," "propriety," or "good taste," to one denying publication of such "eyebrow raisers" as mentioned above.<sup>18</sup>

A notable exception to the general rule that officers do not write critical articles in influential journals is Colonel Robert N. Ginsburgh, whose "Challenge to Military Professionalism" was published in the January 1964 issue of Foreign Affairs. Another is Colonel Robert B. Rigg, author of War--1974, an imaginative evaluation of future warfare, and the article "Are Generals Obsolete?" in the December 1965 issue of Army. Publication of these articles proves that critical writing by active duty officers

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<sup>17</sup>Quoted in The Infantry Journal Reader, p. viii. This journal, predecessor of the current Army, was an unofficial publication, but was under official supervision. (Ibid.)

<sup>18</sup>Colonel George S. Pappas, "Program for the Development of Military Writers. . . .", Army War College paper, 1966.

can see the black of print, but one service journal finds that 20 percent of the articles it receives from this same category of officers is denied publication by Pentagon authorities.<sup>19</sup>

### A SENSE OF HISTORY

Finally, in the critique of our hypothetical defeat, we might realize that we had not acted in our day-to-day performance of duty as if the American military establishment was a permanent institution. "Constantly in motion," as Masland and Radway observed, proud of being overworked and making sure our subordinates shared the pride, oversupervised and oversupervising, we perfected the arts and sciences of "crisis management." From one crash program to the next, we acted as if nobody had done anything constructive before us, and we could not raise our eyes from the rut to see where the road was leading.

Looking back, it frequently is hard to understand what is so vitally important today about what we were wearing ourselves out on yesterday.

The "paper shuffling" in the Pentagon has already been described in the words of C. Wright Mills and Admiral Anderson at the beginning of Chapter 5. Parkinson has observed that administrative work increases in accordance with the number of people available to perform it.<sup>20</sup> Admiral Rickover made the

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<sup>19</sup>Pappas, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>C. Northcote Parkinson, Parkinson's Law. . . , pp. 2-13.

following comments in testimony to a Congressional committee:

There are too many staff organizations and too many people on staffs.\*\*\*Increased staffs not only mean needless additions of officers and men, and the expense this causes. The more serious problem is the needless work generated by the oversize staffs.<sup>21</sup>

Where is the military leadership to solve this problem of over-work on bureaucratic make-work? It is caught up in the treadmill. One is reminded of the anecdote about the man running behind the crowd in the Paris Revolution of 1848 saying, "I must follow them. I am their leader."<sup>22</sup>

If few officers today would understand the older conceit that "It takes three generations to make a gentleman," at least they understand that successive improvements in a "family of weapons" are frequently referred to in terms of "generations." With the perspective that comes with a sense of history, we might conduct today's business with more regard for the lessons of yesterday and with a view to steady progress tomorrow and the next day. In other words, we must try to grasp the concepts of time and experience.

As for time, particularly in the revolutionary problems of leadership existing throughout the world today, the realization seems to be coming that everything will not be solved in a few years. We are using weapons whose development was started 15

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<sup>21</sup>U.S. Congress, House, Testimony of Vice Adm. Hyman C. Rickover /1966/, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Congressional Record, Senate, 87th Congress.

years ago. Scientists tell us that half our population in a few years will be engaged in occupations unforeseen today. Americans are "nation building" in places that became nations yesterday. A sense of history might reassure us that considering how little time we have been so engaged, and considering how little experience we took to the task, it is remarkable that we have had any success at all. Projecting this reasoning, we could conclude that in another 20 years, with a generation of experience behind our leaders, today's problems will be simple. Each generation of a weapons system is better; won't each leadership generation be better? This is, of course, why a third generation gentleman considers himself superior to the man with less family background, and why "old money" feels the "new rich" has something to learn.

But the grandson of a gentleman or of a millionaire is not automatically a superior human being. He has the advantages of solid family background and the money for better schooling, but he may be spoiled by this good fortune.

The generation analogy might be more palatable in its application to military leadership if we looked on the officer corps as comprising three generations today and considered how best we could raise the company grade officers to become good field officers and then the best possible general and flag officers.

Reforms suggest themselves immediately.

There is no substitute for the leadership experience an officer gets at company level, if left there long enough, if not



oversupervised, and if given the leisure to think about better ways of applying his individuality to the specific situation. It would take a drastic revision of present leadership on the part of his superiors to make this experience possible. Overcentralization has created so many demands for staff officers and specialists that outstanding officers can command for a limited time at each echelon. The lieutenant who shows any aptitude as a platoon leader is eyed by staff officers at the next two or three higher echelons as just the man they need for an assistant. After another short time, a higher staff assignment is inevitable, thanks largely to the "personnel turbulence" prevailing today. Next the officer may well return to the troop level as a company commander, where with a smattering of experience he is hardly qualified to teach his platoon leaders much.

These conditions prevail at all echelons, on-the-job trainees leading the on-the-job trainees with the benefit of only slightly more experience, and probably with illusions about their own qualifications to teach their subordinate leaders. Meanwhile, overcentralization and overstaffed headquarters produce a steady series of programs, tests, inspections, reorganizations, orders, and counterorders.

Looking back from our hypothetical defeat, we can see why subordinate leaders showed little initiative, creativity, or adaptability to the unique conditions on the battlefield.

Post-World War II evils of overcentralization, oversupervision, and "civilian override" have been defended on two grounds: that military life has become so much more complex; and that an act by a very subordinate military commander--a company commander, fighter pilot, or commander of a minor naval vessel--could precipitate an international crisis. Improved communications have made oversupervision technically possible. We therefore have the spectacle of the President of the United States getting a step-by-step account from a destroyer captain of his interception and boarding of a Russian ship stopped for inspection off Cuba. A New Yorker cartoon showed a startled machine gunner in the front lines saying on his radio, "Yes, Mr. President. . . .That's right, Mr. President"; this is well within the human and technical limits of fantasy.<sup>23</sup>

These evils will disappear to a large extent when the pressure of world events creates so many crises that each level of command will be forced to limit itself to its proper role. Subordinates down the chain of command will then be forced, also, to perform their proper roles. But irreparable, perhaps fatal, damage has meanwhile been done to military leadership: having been deprived of the experience of commanding at their own level, each echelon will have to learn in combat. In a more leisurely era, there was time during mobilization for this. Even after the start of combat, there was time to replace inept commanders. By all indications, this time will not be available in a nuclear war.

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<sup>23</sup>The cartoon is reproduced in the article, "Are Generals Obsolete?" Army, December 1965, p. 25.

We therefore face the possibility of going to war with generals whose experience in command at the lower levels has been too short and too supervised. The leader will find himself suddenly on his own, facing unprecedented challenges but supported by unseasoned subordinates. The challenge would be tremendous even if the general and his subordinates had the proper peacetime experience in leadership behind them; the challenge may well be too great for men lacking even this background.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

Leadership is something more than management. It has a special meaning which includes creativity.

Bellows<sup>1</sup>

Fundamental reforms are needed now to restore military leadership as an element of American power in Washington, and to develop within the armed services a reservoir of leadership talent from which the country can draw military genius to win a hard war. These reforms are most critically needed in the personnel field-- in the matters dealing with the human factor. Only the experienced military man can fully understand this nebulous but vital feature of military command and organization, and even he has historically forgotten it during long periods of peace.

"The Roman, a politician above all, . . . had no illusions," wrote du Picq in an observation of particular significance to modern Americans. "He took into account human weakness and he discovered the legion."<sup>2</sup> France had to suffer the defeat of 1871 to discover du Picq. We may have to be convinced that we too can be beaten, before we understand that already we have sown the seeds of defeat within our military leadership.

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<sup>1</sup>Creative Leadership, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 49.



The seeds are oversupervision, overcentralization, and overriding of military expertise by civilian big business management; the shoots from these seeds are overwork on nonessentials, "crisis management" instead of crisis avoidance, perpetuation of the military management tradition and suppression of military leadership. The latter has damped the traditional military spirit that has brought victory in past wars and that may be needed again.

The heroic military leader has almost always arisen during crises from an elite corps of officers whose general excellence has evolved through the years. The achievements of Alexander, Hannibal, Scipio Africanus, Caesar, Jenghiz Khan and his successor, Sabutai, and Frederick the Great all illustrate this.<sup>3</sup> The military fame of such leaders as Scipio Africanus, Gustavus Adolphus, and Napoleon was based more on their innovations in the art and science of war; although their base of departure was good insofar as inherited military institutions and weapons were concerned, their genius made the quantum jump.

The military leadership of the Southern Confederacy and of the German armies of the two world wars emerged from general excellence of two different sorts. Southern leadership benefited from an aristocratic tradition of social leadership and martial

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<sup>3</sup>For supporting detail, two general works are useful: Liddell Hart, Great Captains Unveiled, and the West Point text, Great Captains, fully identified in the bibliography.

qualities that transferred readily to the army.<sup>4</sup> It profited also from the fact that a high percentage of the Army's West Pointers, veterans of the Mexican War, were Southerners and remained loyal to their states. The genius of Robert E. Lee undoubtedly prolonged the war a matter of years.

If we accept the wholesome premise that the general level of excellence in the field of American military leadership can and must be elevated, that we will not follow the Toynbean pattern of "resting on our oars,"<sup>5</sup> then it might be worth reconsidering the views of Thomas Jefferson on the need for developing America's "natural aristocracy." This great American was notoriously indifferent to the requirement for military excellence, but in view of the changes in the world's problems since his day, his phrase can be extended to encompass the need for a "natural aristocracy" in the military hierarchy of 20th century America.

Elsewhere I have developed the idea that, our egalitarian prejudices notwithstanding, we might consider the conceit that "it takes three generations to make a gentleman" and extend it to the concept that each generation of military leaders must move higher up the scale of "natural aristocracy"--not by virtue of inheritance, but, like the old fashioned gentlemen, by virtue of fatherly guidance and family advantages to acquire education and style.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Morris, Encyclopedia of American History (1st ed., 1953), p. 231.

<sup>5</sup>See pp. 40-41, above.

<sup>6</sup>See pp. 57-60 for this argument.

While the case for strong individual leadership has been made in Chapter 2, "Is the Great Captain Obsolete?", this military genius is most likely to arise to become the nation's hero in its hour of crisis if the nation has created a broad base of leadership excellence--a large reservoir of military talent. This function was performed admirably by the German General Staff, that little-understood institution whose concept has been copied by virtually all modern armies but whose true nature has never been understood in America.<sup>7</sup> Those who inform themselves on the true history of the German General Staff, and who understand the prostitution to which its weaker representatives were forced by Hitler, will find that Americans have failed to learn the real lessons furnished by the true history of this remarkable corporate group.<sup>8</sup> The first conclusion to emerge from such a study is that we have never developed a real general staff organization. Whether in the year 1966 we should consider another reorganization of the Department of Defense in this direction is beyond the scope of the present paper, but we should recognize the success of the

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<sup>7</sup>General Gavin wrote in 1959: "There is frequent reference to the horrors of a 'Prussian General Staff.' I am not sure that many people who use that expression know what they mean by it, but they use it so frequently that it has come to assume some meaning." He goes on to explain that the meaning is abhorrent, and that supposedly well-informed Americans are stunned to learn that "in the last two world wars Germany did not have a German general staff." War and Peace in the Space Age, pp. 262-263.

<sup>8</sup>The phrase is used in the context of the concept developed by Max Weber. See his Theory of Social and Economic Organization, pp. 145-157.

German General Staff in evolving a highly professionalized method of corporate leadership. From this evolution came not only the military leadership that helped crush Napoleon and that humiliated France in the War of 1870--they were among the few to learn the lessons of our own Civil War--but this body provided leadership that prolonged World Wars I and II in the face of overwhelming odds.

It is interesting that although few individual names emerge from the German General Staff as great wartime commanders--with the exception of the almost unique combination of Hindenburg and Ludendorff to accomplish the strategic masterpiece at Tannenberg in 1914. But great individuals figured in the creation and development of the GGS: Frederick, who established the broad base of German military professionalism; Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, called "the fathers" of the system; Clausewitz, "the philosopher of war"; Schlieffen, creator of "the master plan"; Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who, after Tannenberg elevated them to fame, were called on to head "the silent dictatorship" that tried to save Germany in the last two years of the war; and Seeckt, who revived the army after the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>9</sup>

The great names associated with evolution of modern American military institutions are civilian: Elihu Root and Robert S. McNamara.

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<sup>9</sup>Quoted characterizations are from chapter headings of Walter Goerlitz in his History of the German General Staff, pp. xiii-xv.



American military leadership has never lost a war but it has shown deficiencies that must be overcome while time remains. It is perpetuating a prosaic tradition that has been good enough in the first half of the present century but that is not good enough to meet the revolutionary challenges of the near future. The military manager has succeeded the inspirational, heroic leader, and under his management the professional soldier has been eclipsed by non-military expertise in the field of military affairs. Having failed at this level, the military manager tradition is also failing to attract, develop, and retain the strong, creative, dedicated officers who should be moving up through the hierarchy to lead the American armed forces of tomorrow.



MARK M. BOATNER, III  
Colonel, Infantry

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