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## Out of the Mouths of Generals

"There is no such thing as an ex-Marine," the wall posters used to say at the mustering at the stations after World War II, as if to emphasize that the Big Drill Instructor would be watching you, and former Marine commandant David M. Shoup, who did not win the Medal of Honor at Tarawa by keeping his head down, is proving the point in his own way, out there again in an exposed position, warning that "militarism in America is in full bloom," giving us his inside story of how it works. If the General had said only that this country "has become a militaristic and aggressive nation," in his recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, he would have said no more than is being said in Congress and in academia every day. The size and the political power and the economic strength and the social impact of our military establishment is becoming an issue which seems likely to engage politicians and professors in heavy combat for many months to come. Partly it is the unfinished—and seemingly unfinishable—war in Vietnam; partly it is the confrontation over the anti-ballistic missile system, the ABM. Beyond these, there is this uneasy sense that our priorities are all askew, that the military is just too big and all-pervasive and demanding upon our resources and that it cannot be contained.

But General Shoup did not deal in the sweeping generalities of congressional debate, and that is where his contribution lies, because he was talking, not as one of us, but as one of *them*. He talked of the excellent, but limited (neither "liberal or cultural") education offered by the service academies; the emphasis on command and the power to persuade and the art of deceiving an enemy, which naturally, even unconsciously, encourages the concealing of things, period—from friends and allies, from the public, from the President. He talked of the fierce competition for the relatively few slots in "the elite senior ranks"; of service loyalties and the equally fierce competition this produces for a bigger slice of the defense dollar—and of the

natural upward push this has to give to the total defense budget.

Out of his own knowledge of war and its effect on men—those in the service and those who have left it—he knows that for those who survive it is "an exciting adventure, a competitive game" and, to be quite frank about it, the quickest, surest way for a professional military man to make his mark. "Civilians can scarcely understand or even believe that many ambitious military professionals truly yearn for war and the opportunities for glory and distinction afforded only in combat," he said. As for the reservists and the draftees, what rubs off on them is not the memory of KP or the long night watch, but the recollection of danger shared, of comradeship, of self-sacrifice, discipline, physical fitness, and of the military doctrines "used to motivate men of high principle: patriotism, duty and service to country." This is "powerful medicine, and can become habit-forming," Shoup declared. It has resulted in a "nation of veterans," military-oriented, regularly reinforced and rededicated in their beliefs by membership in veterans' organizations and service associations. Add to this another very large segment of society with a natural stake in a very large military establishment—the defense contractors, their work forces, all the people who

profit from the secondary economic effects of defense industry or an airbase or a depot or a shipyard.

General Shoup does not deal in plots or conspiracies or "complexes," military-industrial or otherwise and this is the singular merit of what he has to say. It is the difference between something "like a religion" and an incipient Seven Days in May. "The basic appeals of anti-communism, national defense and patriotism provide the foundation for a powerful creed upon which the Defense establishment can build, grow, and justify its cost," he said.

There is a lesson in all this, and it is not the easy one that military men must now be put in their place or that the Defense budget must be indiscriminately slashed. The point that seems to have been missed in what he is saying is that we get about what we ought to expect from our military establishment, given the education and training our professional officers receive; the terrible responsibilities which are thrust upon them; the disinclination of civilian controllers to take risks upon themselves; the craven acceptance by a small clique of congressional elders of any demand the military may put upon them; the reluctance on the part of political leaders, in short, to use the checks and balances on overblown military influence that are readily at hand. It may please the war critics to demand, blindly, that the war be stopped, or the ABM critics to plot its defeat. But this is taking blunt instruments to a problem which can only be solved in the end by a reappraisal of relative risks, a reordering of priorities, a restoration of balance to a society whose concept of its own goals and values has clearly gone awry.

Shoup is not the first general to sound the alarm. And neither, incidentally, was President Eisenhower, in his celebrated "Military-Industrial Complex" formulation, or in his less well-known declaration in his final State of the Union Message when he said:

Every dollar uselessly spent on military mechanisms decreases our total strength and therefore our security. We must not return to the "crash program" psychology of the past when each new feint by the Communists was responded to in panic. The "bomber gap" of several years ago was always a fiction, and the "missile gap" shows every sign of being the same.

Long before Eisenhower, and General Dynamics and Lockheed and the ABM and the Minuteman and MIRV, another soldier-President, George Washington, counselled us "to avoid the necessity of those overblown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty."

So we have been warned, and it will not be enough to respond in blind partisanship, or in a spasm of anti-militarism, or out of deep frustration about a war gone wrong. What is needed is a good deal more understanding and appreciation, not only of the natural forces that animate the military, but of the natural, readily available remedies, in the offices of the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State and the President, and in the power of congressional right to review. What is needed is a thoughtful, nonpartisan reappraisal of how we educate and train and indoctrinate and deploy our military forces, of how we assign objectives without defining them, of how we delegate to the services the risks and the responsibilities which political leaders in our way of doing things are supposed to take upon themselves.