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Why Not a Military Man at CIA?

THE NOMINATION of Adm. Stansfield Turner to be Director of Central Intelligence has confounded some people because of the fact that he is a professional military man. By this particular line of thinking, no one in uniform can fairly be expected to rise above parochial service concerns—either in his perception of the international environment or in his capacity to work effectively within the confines of the political society. This is no doubt a fashionable argument but—in our judgment—a misguided, insulting one. It should not be necessary to point to earlier examples of versatile and accomplished military men, or to civilians—including some at the Central Intelligence Agency—who went about their work in what some would call a simplistic “militaristic” way. Adm. Turner seems exactly the right man to prove the point anew.

He has been called “the Navy’s intellectual,” an allusion to the qualities that made him a Rhodes Scholar and marked his swift rise to four-star rank. His latest published article, “The Naval Balance: Not Just a Numbers Game,” which appeared last month in *Foreign Affairs*, reveals a mind operating nimbly in and between the military and political worlds (an excerpt from it is printed, *For The Record*, elsewhere on this page today). Adm. Turner’s career has afforded him experience with a number of the elements—NATO,

the fleet, systems analysis, the Naval War College—that are central to the responsibilities of an intelligence chief. A rare bird? Sure, though demonstrably not yet “the next George Marshall,” in Jimmy Carter’s enthusiastic but somewhat overdone phrase.

We are eager to hear Adm. Turner’s Senate interrogators draw him out on the whole range of “new” questions to which recent history has sensitized Washington—questions bearing on the role of the intelligence apparatus in the society at large and the role of the intelligence process in the government. Until we hear out the admiral, we reserve judgment on his nomination. But we are pleased to note provisionally that this nomination is not burdened with the various objections, worthy and unworthy, that sank the previous nominee, Theodore Sorensen. It has doubtless not escaped White House notice that Adm. Turner, though he is not conspicuously of any conventional “left” or “right” persuasion, would probably be received with special satisfaction among those who think that many of Mr. Carter’s other national security appointees are excessively of the left. Meanwhile, we commend the President for recovering from the Sorensen fiasco with a nominee who does not seem to fit into any of those familiar cubbyholes that so often keep Washington from seeing people and things for what they are.