

# Saturday Review



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## Toward a Military Welfare State?

It was a small piece of pipe but big enough to stun a nation. What happened was that the Department of Defense had a briefing session for newsmen on Laos. The importance of the briefing was underlined by the presence of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. In sober, matter-of-fact tones, a briefing officer conveyed the good news that a vital part of the pipeline supplying oil to North Vietnam forces on the Ho Chi Minh trail had been captured. As direct evidence, the officer exhibited a small section of pipe taken from the cut line.

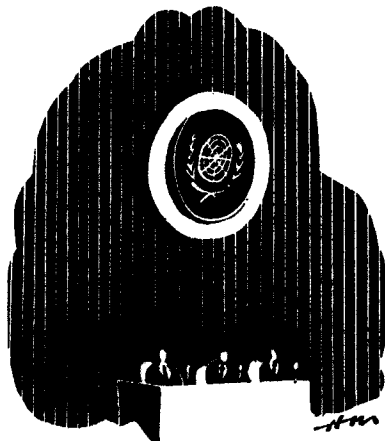
It was all very impressive—except that George C. Wilson, a resourceful reporter of *The Washington Post*, pursued a hunch and was able to ascertain that the evidence was false. Confronted by the facts, Secretary Laird admitted that the piece of pipe shown had nothing to do with the operation described in the briefing. He also admitted that he had known that this was the case at the time it was presented. He said he realized he was open to criticism for having permitted the deception.

Inevitably, other incidents come to mind. Far back, there were the initial denials about the use of crop-killing poison chemicals in South Vietnam. Then there were denials about the burnings of South Vietnam villages, as at Camne, denials that collapsed under the weight of correspondents' eyewitness reports.

These lies ignite a sense of outrage. The American people are not paying the most extravagant bills incurred by

their government in history only to be lied to and manipulated. But what produces the fiercest feelings of indignation of all is the fact that the officials who are doing the lying are the same ones who now presume to pass on the good character and loyalty of the American people by setting up a spying system that presently has more than seven million American names placed in computers for instant use—and one shudders to think what is happening to due process in such use. The Constitutional system of government and the principal institutions of this nation are being twisted and undermined by the very branch of government established to protect them.

It all seemed so easy, twenty or so years ago, when extraordinary powers were provided to deal with enemies outside the country. There was the notion that in order to deal with intrigue and subversion we had to play



the game ourselves. So we set up our own special undercover apparatus, using unvouchered funds, and got into the business of secret, subversive operations and political assassination—the very undertakings we had said were abhorrent when done by others. But all of it was done in the name of our security, or so we allowed ourselves to be persuaded. The surprise is not that the monster is now operating at home, but that its advent should not have been anticipated.

The idea that we have to invoke the worst in ourselves in order to protect ourselves is one of history's greatest absurdities and untruths. And so now we discover that the military has taken it upon itself not just to lie to the American people but to keep secret files on American citizens and their elected representatives. We discover that the military is spending billions of dollars for activities that have little or nothing to do with the security of the nation and that, indeed, may run counter to it. We discover that the military can control or reshape a large segment of the American economy, that it has the equivalent of a State Department in its own foreign policy-assessments branch, with representatives in capitals throughout the world. Is there now also a *domestic* assessments branch in the Pentagon? Does such a branch equate loyalty to America with loyalty to the military establishment?

Few things say more about the problem of runaway military expenditures than the reaction of a Pentagon spokesman to reports of progress in the SALT negotiations at Helsinki. The official was quoted as saying that, even though the talks on arms reduction between the United States and the Soviet Union might lead to consequential agreements, this did not mean there would be any reduction in the American military budget. Other things were waiting to be done, he said, that would more than take up any savings. In short, the American people have been put on notice that even though the reasons for colossal military spending may be reduced or removed, there is no intention to alter the size of the military establishment. We thus are confronted with the prospect of a military welfare state in which the bulk of the nation's taxes go to the support of a vast institution that may exist independently of original need and that has a life of its own not necessarily consistent with the traditions it was set up to protect.

Every society has the obligation to protect itself. The American people are paying far more per capita for the protection of their society than any people on earth. What they are getting in return, however, is a vast apparatus

# Letters to the Editor

that; according to one of the nation's most illustrious generals, has become a threat to the society it is supposed to serve. The Army, the Navy, and the Air Force have never really completed the unification required by Congress; each branch of the service vies with the others for maximum budgets and for primacy; the overlapping in weapons, services, personnel, and facilities costs the American taxpayers billions of dollars a year. Overspending or mis-spending has reached the point where the alarming disclosures of Congressional investigating committees have almost lost their power to surprise.

Ideologically, the free enterprise system and a strong national military capability are regarded as highly compatible concepts. Yet the irony today is that the greatest danger confronting free enterprise in America comes not from revolutionaries but from the intrusion of the military into the economic life of the country. Hundreds of industrial firms take their orders from the military in the most literal sense. Nominalism in competitive bidding on military contracts further weakens the national industrial structure. Inflation is regarded as the number one problem of the economy. Yet this inflation is only secondarily the result of the wage-price spiral; fundamentally, it is the result of a vast infusion of dollars in military spending. The flight of gold from the United States and the dollar deficit are not caused by vacationing Americans but by the maintenance of vast military establishments abroad. Even excluding Vietnam, these establishments involve the support of hundreds of thousands of military personnel.

For the President to end the war in Vietnam and Indochina it will not be enough to withdraw troops from South Vietnam. The fundamental change that is necessary is a full and unambiguous restoration of civilian control over the military. Until that time, initiatives taken by the military will make it difficult for the President not to fall in behind an already committed American flag. Direction of foreign policy must revert unequivocally to the Executive branch of government. Surveillance operations by the military against American officials and citizens must be summarily ended and the records impounded by Congress.

In an even more fundamental sense, the quest for national security must be updated. Security in the modern world depends less on the pursuit of force than on the control of force. And this means, inevitably, a strong world organization. No effort to promote true American security makes sense unless it begins with the concept of a fully developed U.N.

—N.C.

## Kuznetsov and "Babi Yar"

IN HIS LONDON LETTER column of December 12, Herbert R. Mayes indulges in a little game of character assassination directed against A. Anatoli (Kuznetsov), the former Soviet writer now living in Britain, accusing him of inventions and lies. Yet in the course of his disgraceful attack, Mr. Mayes cannot help revealing that he offered Kuznetsov \$50,000 for the American rights to his novel *Babi Yar*. In vain does he try to conceal this awkward fact by saying that he withdrew the offer "when suspicions about Kuznetsov began to accumulate," because all his "suspicions" refer, in fact, to information available to him *before* he made his offer. The "last straw" for him, he says, was Kuznetsov's scheme for swimming to Turkey. But Kuznetsov described this escape plan in the very first series of articles he wrote, long before Mayes began to negotiate to secure the American rights for Kuznetsov's writings. It is clearly apparent that Mayes's arguments are self-contradictory and that his cocktail of false accusations and malicious innuendo is based on sour grapes.

As the person with whom Kuznetsov first made contact when he decided to stay in London, who has got to know him very well in the last sixteen months, and who translated the complete version of *Babi Yar*, I would be grateful for the space to correct the false impressions that Mayes's comments may have left in readers' minds. *Babi Yar* is now available in America—not, of course, under the imprint of the publishing house on whose behalf Mayes offered \$50,000.

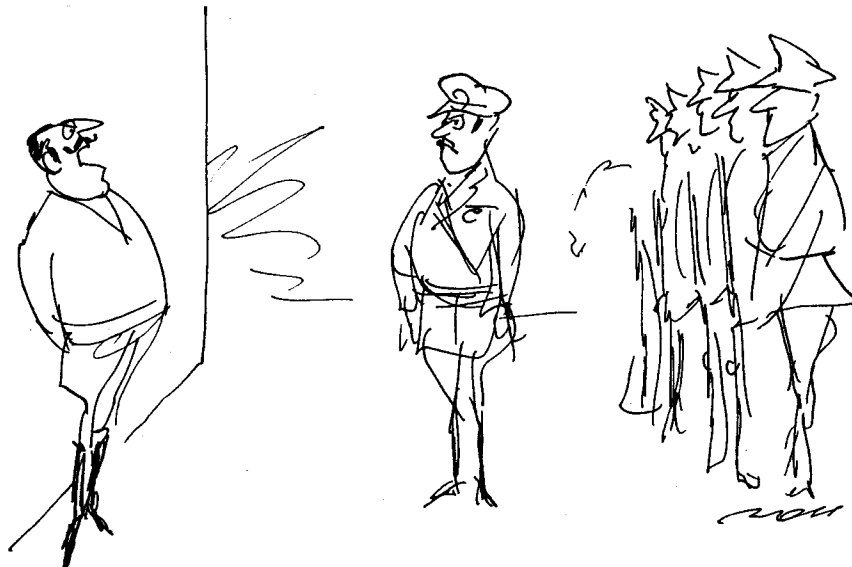
1) Mayes recognizes that Kuznetsov freely admitted the "treachery" by means of which he tricked the Soviet authorities into allowing him out of Russia, but he adds that "it would have been impossible to conceal the facts." Not true. The facts were known only to the KGB (secret police), and they were certainly not going to

admit they had been tricked. But Kuznetsov took the initiative so that there could be no question of his colleagues in Russia suffering. Had he remained silent about what appears on the surface to be a discreditable episode but is not, those "unbiased" critics who have seized so eagerly on it would have known nothing about it at all.

2) "What happened to his colleagues, nobody knows," says Mayes. Not true. There is no secret about the fact that all the writers whom Kuznetsov included in his imaginary "plot" have not suffered in any way.

3) "Nor does anybody know what happened to the mother and wife and nine-year-old son that Kuznetsov left behind." Not true. Anatoli's mother still lives in Kiev and is no longer being forced by the authorities to send him letters appealing for his return. He sends her a post card every day, and she manages occasionally to get a letter to him. She is well and unmolested. His former wife, from whom he was divorced two years before he left Russia, is still living with the man for whom she left Kuznetsov and with the son whose custody she was awarded. She is also no longer bothered by the authorities. But we are not sure whether the boy has received the toys dispatched from London.

4) Mayes—or the unnamed "skeptics" he knows—finds it "odd" that Kuznetsov was able to take the films on which he had photographed his manuscripts through the Soviet and British customs concealed in the lining of his coat. If Mayes and his skeptical friends will stop to think, they will see that there is nothing odd in it at all. There are between thirty and forty exposures on an ordinary 35-mm film, and each exposure takes six pages of quarto manuscript, or about 200 pages per film. Two or three films will thus take a 500-page manuscript. A dozen films take four



"I distinctly remember abolishing firing squads."