

It is evident that our Secretary of Defense and many of the men around him are most exceptional. The Secretary himself is intelligent, decisive and courageous. He knows organization. He has an immense capacity to absorb facts. He has a willingness to innovate. He works very hard, and he learns very fast. One would expect that under

such a Secretary of Defense the Army would be happy. But you don't have to be a very sensitive observer to know that this isn't the case. In investigating the causes for this, we heard many ideas expressed. Some were preposterous and others lacked substance. But from our conversations the following significant theme emerged.

I wrote this piece for John Spore, editor of ARMY magazine, when I was a lieutenant colonel assigned to the office of Cyrus Vance, General Counsel of the Department of Defense in a time of tension. It was aimed at the energetic Secretary of Defense McNamara and some of the "whiz kids" around him, not including Vance. I thought it best to leave my name off it. Spore agreed.

John W. Cushman

On Understanding Armies

THERE are doubtless many reasons why the United States Army is so often misunderstood. It has multiple missions, not all of them easily comprehended; its means of carrying out these missions cannot be symbolized as a navy can be symbolized by a ship, or an air force by an airplane. Riflemen are important to an army, but when a rifleman is used as a symbol the picture may be distorted through oversimplification.

Some of the difficulty may be that the U. S. Army isn't articulate in explaining itself. Perhaps the listening ear has not been attentive. Or perhaps the story is heard but simply does not make sense. Whatever the reason, there is nothing more important for a Secretary of Defense and other officials around him. If they do not understand armies, they do not understand war, and men at war, and it is their business to understand these things.

Perhaps "understand" is not the right word. There is a certain visceral comprehension involved which goes beyond what the completely rational man can "understand." Henry Stimson and Robert Lovett had this awareness. So does Mr. Acheson. But high intelligence does not guarantee its acquisition.

To those who grasp the need for armies and understand them, such as those who make up armies, "explaining" this need is something like explaining a man's need for food. A man cannot live without food and no country has ever yet lived without an army.

Continental power means army power

The United States is a continental power and more than others continental powers always have a need for armies.

To be sure, we are an insular power, an oceanic power, an "aerospace" power. But we are also, and importantly, a continental power.

Twice in less than a half century we have fought in major continental wars against other continental powers. We waged a long conflict on the massive continent of Asia. For ten years we have maintained a quarter of a million soldiers on the continent of Europe.

We are the main strength of a coalition which—although it bears the name North Atlantic—has members and interests deep on the European continent. This oceanic-continental coalition must have the evident capacity to preserve and defend its continental position in war, or it cannot survive in peace.



Furthermore, we are the bulwark of other coalitions—and of other Free World nations uncommitted to us but depending on our strength for their very existence—which also have interests deep on the Eurasian and other continents.

The army of a continental power must be sizeable—built to fight over long lines of communication, built to fight sustained and prolonged combat. It cannot be a fleet-marine-type force built for beachheads, amphibious assault, and mop-up.

Some 40 per cent of its men in the theater of operations will be out of the immediate battle area—supporting the forward troops with construction, hospitals, prisoner of war camps, supply depots, transport, pipelines, and the like.

Our allies know these things. Those who rest, some of them precariously, on other continents know that we are a continental power and must with them assume the obligations of a continental power if they are to survive. In Vietnam, Korea, and Germany and around the world, they—and neutrals and enemy as well—observe our actions under stress; they observe strength, makeup, and deployments of our army, and they make their own judgments. On judgments such as these depend the reputation of a nation, the strengths of coalitions, and the course of history.

The tools of war may change and concepts of war along with them. Air mobility, land mobility, new firepower, new methods of command and reconnaissance, and new means of logistical support may change the makeup of the field forces. But the capacity for deep, prolonged, sustained continental war around the globe will always be the job of armies. And in this century the armies of the Free World rely in the final analysis on the United States Army. These assertions are held as truths by those who believe. To those who would not believe, they cannot be “proved.” For all, a degree of faith is required.

An army's roots of faith

Armies, generally, have this sort of faith. Armies have other inherent qualities, qualities which are in effect the “original sin” of armies. You can no more expunge them than you can eliminate cussedness from the human soul. Any army raised by the United States has and will have these qualities, to one degree or another.

First, armies are close to the people. Not only do they operate on land and among the people; but sons, brothers, fathers, and friends are drafted into armies—rarely into navies and air forces. This identity of the army with the people of the nation gives rise to the truth that a nation is not committed until its army is committed. This, too, is well understood by our allies.

Armies are basically unattractive. They are more dangerous, they always bear the brunt of casualties and discomfort. From ancient times, leaders have tried to inspire the soldier, to improve his uniform, to emphasize the glamorous and the exciting. This is all to the good, as long as we realize that *the troops will always know*. And the people will always know—because their sons, brothers, and friends *are* the troops.

Land combat is infinitely more disorderly. "Indian Ocean, American Ocean, or North Sea—it is always a liquid plain," said Napoleon. But in land combat, not only is the infinite variety of terrain present—but also the unpredictability of men—each one free to do or not to do.

Armies are therefore more "man-oriented" and less "machine oriented." The rifle squad embodies this concept. Its members, unlike their fellow soldiers in a tank or howitzer crew, are a fighting unit *only* because of the influence of man. There is no machine on which they can orient; it all depends on the sergeant.

So it is with the company, whose captain has a task far different from the captain who commands a B-52. So it is with the battalion commander compared with the destroyer skipper.

Armies are more varied. An army has virtually all the skills of human society, plus those special skills needed to defend the land and defeat other armies, all of these organized to endure in the stress of battle. An infantry division can organize a community—complete from city hall, to waterworks, to supermarkets, even to the church and classroom.

Armies believe in the long war. Their instincts tell them that they—and society as well—can endure the initial phases of even the most devastating war and can go on to fight and survive. Their instincts tell them that preparations for such a war are required.

Armies are the basis of joint operations, the natural focus of all other members of the team. The joint operations is simply not there unless the Army is there. This is recognized in the field. Armies accept this as a fact in their doctrine—hope that others recognize it—and of all the services are most interested in improving the effectiveness of joint operations. They know that they depend on that effectiveness.

Our own Army has one special characteristic: it is closer to our allies, in general. Except for a few, our allies have no important air or sea forces. Their main contribution is in armies. As a result, United States MAAGs are predominantly army, the military leaders trained in this country since World War II are mostly army, and in many nations some of our strongest links are through the army. Our own Army is looked upon by other Free World armies as its model.

Armies are conservative. By nature they are neither flamboyant, nor colorful. Certain elements may be—like the airborne, or the Special Forces. But in the main, they are conservative. An Orde Wingate is an exception in the British Army. He would be even more an exception in our own. We tend to discourage the maverick. We tend to breed the organization man. And this is especially true in peacetime.

And that brings up the final quality. In peacetime, armies tend to go stale. The routine seeps in. Change is slow. Technology does not force the pace to the extent that it does in navies or air forces. So armies must have a periodic catharsis.

Bruised, but basically sound

The U. S. Army which the new team in the Pentagon has observed over the past year has all these virtues and all these blemishes. It is furthermore an army which—strange to say—has passed through perhaps one of the darkest 15-year periods of its long life.

Fresh from what it felt was its triumph in World War II, it went into the postwar period. Its department was no longer the *War* Department. It had no air arm, it was denied the tools to do its job, and it found its influence on strategy—so profound in the war years—steadily slipping away.

It took major blows: the Doolittle Board and its aftermath; the "civilianization" of professional subjects such as personnel and training; the abortive attempt to create a large volunteer force in peacetime. It declined disastrously, only to be thrown into Korea ill-equipped and undermanned. It came out of Korea far stronger and growing adequate—only to be stripped again. It then served eight years under a regime whose defense leadership questioned its utility and doubted its mission. It went through this entire 15-year period saddled with an outmoded materiel organization.

Yet it kept its basic values. They are still there. And they are worth recounting.

Honesty—a kind of naive, unsophisticated honesty. Dedication, single-minded devotion, and toughness—sometimes mistaken for stubbornness and just plain stupidity. Pride in the past—that often looks like living in the past.

It also has men—men of character, pride, and professional skill. More than enough to go around.

Certainly this Army has been bruised. At the headquarters level the past year has been perhaps the most bruising of all. But the organization is basically sound—sound in mind, sound in body.

It does not need much. Any wise commander would sense immediately on taking over such an outfit that he had acquired a prize—an immense potential ready to be shaped and put to work.

All it needs is understanding leadership.