LIKE many of our brothers-in-arms among the military professions, we felt that something had been said which illustrated the truth. When Harry N. Truman, one of America's most eminent military writers, recently spoke out against the one-voice, one-service, one-leader philosophy that has been imposed on the American military establishment ("The McNamara Monarchy," Saturday Evening Post, March 9, 1963) —

Had we been privileged to offer advice to Mr. McNamara while he wrote his brief but searching dissertation, we would have suggested only one change, and that one merely in emphasis, not in content. As one of his many well-taken points, however, he was making a cogent emphasis on what he termed "management" and "command". This argument, while opposed to the traditional concept of the military leader's function as one of "command", in the end result, he wrote, might easily be "military yes-sirs or conformists...". It is this very emphasis of operational analysis and computer calculations, but without the moral courage or leadership qualities required by the battlefield. We would have dwelt longer on the subject than Mr. McNamara because we believe that this trend is being carried to an extreme that dangerously weakens the entire military establishment.

The trend is epitomized, of course, by Secretary of Defense McNamara and his team of computer-oriented civilian managerial specialists. It is manifested most noticeably in the proliferation of cost-effectiveness studies, program reviews, statistical analyses, and analyses of analyses. It has permeated every military level, though, through both pressure and propaganda from the top. By its tenets, Military Command in the field of leadership functions not as Commanders of military formations but as something resembling branch managers for a vast chain of "Sears Roebuck" commands.

It is not the use of modern techniques that we deplore, but the almost obsessive fervor which has established them, not just as a complement to but as a substitute for military judgment. In thequest for effectiveness is indeed a responsibility and a vital function of military command. Waste, whether it's money, manpower, materiel, or time, detracts from the ability of a military organization to accomplish its mission. In many ways, though, good management is the function of command. The principle that command has been twisted around until it's now widely understood that "command is a responsibility and function of good management." From directives, manuals, press releases, Service school literature and public statement, this new concept prevails in military leaders at every level. More and more, real decisions are made without participation of either planners or budget analysts and Comptrollers, able enough in their fields but woefully ill-equipped to measure the tactical implications of a given course of action. High-ranking Commanders wrestle with automated record-keeping systems, and by-the-numbers maintenance and supply procedures, and fear the effects of error in these fields on their efficiency ratings more than they once would have feared the effects of error in a battlefield mis-calculations. Lesser Commanders are exhorted to bear down on record-keeping, facilities management, and full utilization of equipment, not least with the implication that shortcomings in these peripheral fields are more to be avoided than ineffective leadership of troops.

At Base after Base, and Post after Post, operations have come to resemble an ordinary civilian community, and the members thereof have commenced to regard themselves in the same light. Men no longer think of themselves as "going on a mission," but as "going to work," like any stride manager or factory hand. Talk is heard of "compensatory time off" after a prolonged effort, almost as an invariable right.

It wasn't the introduction of modern methods and more efficient techniques that brought this about. It was the undue stress placed on these techniques, and the subtle shift from the philosophy of "command" to that of "management", which gradually distorted the military men's view of his own role.

It's not a mere question of semantics. More than in any other profession, military ones must be psychologically conditioned to the sometimes-harsh demands of their job. They must be trained to bear with themselves, in their comrades, in their leaders, and in the Nation. They must be so imbued with the tradition of Duty, Honor, Country, that they will submerge their own desires for personal comfort, personal safety, personal gain, in this great ideal.

The function of a military force is to fight, if need be, and to win. It hardly needs to be said that by definition the ability and willingness to fight and win, a military force also does war. The primary function of a Commander is to create a military organization that can do just that—fight and win. To do so, he must regard himself as a "commander" and, he likewise must be so regarded by the soldiers, sailors and airmen who serve under him.

The very term, "management," implies cold, impersonal efficiency, not devotion to an ideal. Good management? Most certainly. It's a vital necessity in this age of complex weapons and machinery, but only as a tool of command, not as an all-pervasive goal in itself.