"THE KING CAN DO NO WRONG"?

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TM not too-distant past, in many nations of the World, prevailed the doctrine that Kings ruled by Divine right. The King was surrounded by Ministers and counsellors who came from a segment of the population which had nominated itself to be "the ruling class." It was axiomatic that this group, being wealthier, better-educated, more cultured, unquestionably was wiser than the common herd. When the King was acting on this advice, warned of a flat, it was the dictum was that the King could do no wrong.

This notion rejected that theory hundreds of years ago. It adopted a representative form of government, affording full play to differences of opinion and guaranteeing to all citizens, of all degrees of breeding, wealth, education and intelligence, their right and duty to debate matters of policy bearing on the welfare of the community, the State and the Nation.

The professional military man staunchly upholds that principle, in his utterances. Quite probably, he believes, fairly or not, that it is a principle, or, at least, of open or unconscious, he opposes it bitterly, for it seems to contradict another principle to which by training and conviction he must be dedicated; that of command.

In the heat of battle, if the order is given to assault Hill 109, there can be no concealing of the troops for extended debate and a referendum to decide whether they should assault that hill, or what the plan of attack should be. Maybe the "old Mar's" plan is sound, maybe his subordinates think there's a better way. But it’s his responsibility, he's in command, and his way is the way it will be done.

There is a point of view that brings about the inevitability of the professionals. If his technical and professional training is accepted as the basis for command decisions in battle, the same qualities must be accepted as the basis for establishing basic defense policies. Confident of his specialized military qualifications, it must be difficult for him to recognize the need for military policy, as opposed to operations, in which he is unqualified skimpily or not at all.

He conceives and develops a plan within a framework of strictly military necessity or expediency. He tries to hide it from anyone whose objections based upon political points to which he has closed his mind, and, without receiving the slightest hint of "paper" he's perfected. He sells his little gem "uptight." Eventually, it has to come out in the open. Others see "hugs" in it. But it's his baby and he's proud of it.

This belligerently defensive attitude is especially marked when criticism comes from the civilian world. It becomes particularly obvious when the critics are National Guardsmen or other officials—the "amateurs," of whom it is unhesitatingly presumptuous to challenge the "professionals."

Even (or especially) when events have proven the critics to have been correct and the program, policy or directive has to be revised with resulting turmoil and confusion, the planners (or their successors) and the people "uptight" who bought the original idea, not only will rationalize the 380 change of course but will vigorously attempt to show they were right both times. In their view, any skeptic, doubter or critic is obstructionist or has ulterior motives; there may be veiled hints that the "outside" is perhaps a shade less than loyal. Who would dare to doubt that the "best military minds" couldn't produce infallible plans?

This attitude has been and still is all-too-uncomfortably prevalent, especially in relation to the new Defense Reorganization Act and Congress' actions with respect to stabilizing the strength of the Armed Forces, with particular emphasis on the National Guard.

It reflects habits of thinking which characterize what is known as "the military mind." Perhaps, those habits are too ingrained ever to be changed. At any rate, it would be well for all citizens to remind themselves of the soundness of our system of policy determination, in which elected representatives of all citizens have a vital part. And it would be well to stay alert for, sniff out, and defeat every move, under the guise of streamlining or streamlining, on the part of military strategists, which would weaken the representative system and Congress' role in establishing National defense policy.

We do not believe that "the King" (and his professional advisors) "can do no wrong."