

changes in popular attitudes inevitably have an effect on the men in service. . . . (Such) devaluation of the Army as a career could become a mortal danger if permitted to continue."

All armies political

Since governments are political institutions and armies are instruments and sub-units of governments, *all* armies are involved in politics. They are involved in the politics of budget, the politics of manpower, the politics of weaponry, and above all, *the politics of advice!* An army that gives no military advice is not doing its job; whether, when, and to what extent a nation's civilian leaders take the advice is another matter. And, if an army gives advice, it is involved in both domestic politics and foreign policy whether it likes it or not. The real problem, then, is one of balance. At various points in time and place, what is the proper civil-military balance, especially in a democracy? Who does the wagging — the civilian dog or the military tail?

In the case of Israel, the army is more politicized than its officer corps cares to admit or than its general population realizes. None of the ten Chiefs of Staff could have been named to the post if he was perceived as being at odds with the general socialist-kibbutz-*Histadrut* (Labour Union) orientation of the Labour Party, which has ruled Israel since its inception. I am personally convinced that General Ariel Sharon, the man who trapped the Egyptian Third Army on the African side of the Suez Canal in the October War, has never been made Chief of Staff because he has never hidden the fact that his own political orientation is to the right of the Labour Party.

It was Sharon, a principal architect of the centre-right-wing opposition grouping — the *Likud* — who figured prominently in the "War of Words" or the "War of the Generals" that erupted during and after the Yom Kippur War. It was also Sharon, who, along with other ex-generals, drew sharper public attention to an Israeli phenomenon — the role of retired and reserve generals in Israeli politics.

The War of Words or the War of the Generals, for the first time in Israel's history, and despite supposedly stringent military censorship, generated *public* criticism in the local and foreign press of political and military policies, as well as of political and military leaders, by *men in uniform!* It was fought for months between and among reserve, regular and former Army generals like Sharon, Dayan, Elazar, Allon Par-Lev, Gonen.

On November 10, 1973, while he was still Chief of Staff, General Elazar issued the following statement:

"It is only natural that various subjects connected with the conduct of the (Yom Kippur) War should be discussed publicly. Unfortunately biased and one-sided descriptions and interviews have been published lately which serve no constructive purpose but only personal enhancement, even if this entails casting unfair aspersions on comrades in arms. "IDF war operations are not the private affair of particular generals, but the joint efforts of several military branches and formations working together, the fruits of combat by tens of thousands of soldiers and commanders at every level. "The achievements of the IDF should not be turned into personal ones, nor should mistakes and failures be blamed on others.

"The publication of unfounded conclusions and indiscreet assessments of commanders and operations is an extremely negative phenomenon.

"In this manner, unreliable and distorted information is published and circulated, and injury is done to commanders and soldiers.

"The Army generals have been requested by the Minister of Defence and by me to follow the standing orders (of public silence) in this matter."

New censorship

A month later, new censorship restrictions were announced, requiring advance permission by the Chief of Army Information for interviews with senior officers. Despite these restrictions and General Elazar's "request", on January 20, 1974, the day he left the reserves, General Sharon told his troops in his final order of the day that they had achieved victory despite "omissions and errors, failures and mistakes, the loss of nerve and control".

No wonder that by mid-April Terence Smith, the *New York Times* bureau chief in Israel, could write: "The public has grown increasingly impatient and disgusted as the nation's leading political figures and generals — they are often the same here — have squabbled among themselves in the newspapers and on television."

Smith's phrase "they are often the same here" brings us to the second major political phenomenon to have arisen from the October War — the increased discovery of politics as a second career by former generals of the Israeli Army.

I have already spoken of the multitude of post-retirement opportunities given to Israeli colonels and generals. For the

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