

Military Strategy by Susan Welsh



Photo: Meyer/NSIPS

Reagan's advisors sold Nixon the All-Volunteer Force

American conservatives who are supporting Ronald Reagan for President in hopes that he will rebuild this country's military might are in for a big surprise. Our ghettoized and drug-ridden All-Volunteer Force (AVF), whose average enlisted man reads at a fifth-grade level, was created thanks to the years-long organizing drive of two of Reagan's top advisers—Milton Friedman and Martin Anderson. Reagan himself supports the AVF concept, provided pay levels are increased to make the service more attractive.

Free-enterprise economist Friedman and political scientist Anderson of the Hoover Institution sold Richard Nixon on the idea that conscription is a violation of conservative-libertarian principles, and he made repeal of the draft a plank in his 1968 campaign platform. With the "winding down" of the Vietnam war, the AVF passed through the Congress in 1973.

This policy set into motion a second "phase change" in the post-World War II American military. The first such dramatic change occurred between the Korean War

and the mid-1960s, under the influence of the "reforms" of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and his fellow "systems analysts." World War II vets began leaving the service in droves, fed up with the way the U.S. military was being transformed into a sociologists test-tube, a parody of its humanist-republican tradition. From 1956 to 1962, the rate of retirement among military personnel more than doubled.

Disaffection and cynicism increased through the Vietnam war, as drug usage and "fragging" (murder) of officers by enlisted men reached epidemic proportions. Now under the volunteer army and the doctrinal and budgeting policies that have gone along with it, the U.S. military is entering into a decline which could soon become irreversible. This "phase change," which parallels that in the civilian economy as a whole, will be discussed in future articles. Here we focus on the strange history of the All-Volunteery Force.

This was a fight which witnessed some of the most seemingly unlikely tactical alliances ever seen in American history. Sen. Edward Kennedy, Sen. John Stennis and Selective Service Director Gen. Lewis B. Hershey were on the prodraft side, pitted against Sen. Barry Goldwater, Sen. George McGovern, Rep. Donald Rumsfeld, Milton Friedman, William F. Buckley, Noam Chomsky, Dr. Benjamin Spock, John Kenneth Galbraith, Margaret Mead, and the Berrigan brothers on the all-volunteer side. (Mead and Galbraith supported the idea of universal service, not necessarily military

Photo: New York anti-draft demonstration, May 1980.

service.) Ted Kennedy argued that abolition of the draft would mean an unfair black man's army, and therefore advocated a lottery system and the repeal of all occupational deferments which, he said, discriminate against the poor. Kennedy's tactical ally, Gen. Hershey—the chief target of the left-radical draft resisters—opposed the lottery system since the occupational deferments were vital to the strength of the civilian industrial economy:

"I am convinced that this Nation has paced the world technological advance of recent years in large part because scores of thousands of people have become scientists, engineers, teachers and applied other technical skills because they were deferred to do so."—Congressional hearings, June 22-Aug. 30, 1966.

Hershey lost out, and was fired by Nixon in 1969; in 1970, occupational deferments were cancelled.

The wooing of Richard Nixon

Pressure for draft reform began to get under way in December 1966, when the Ford Foundation sponsored a conference on the Selective Service at the University of Chicago. Among the participants were Milton Friedman; sociologists Sol Tax, Morris Janowitz, and Roger Little; General Hershey; Sen. Kennedy; Harold Wool of the Department of Defense; and Margaret Mead of the American Museum of Natural History. Following the conference, Friedman continued to write in favor of a volunteer army, demanding "the elimination of compulsion which now makes military service synonymous with enforced incarceration."

Friedman and Martin Anderson joined Nixon's campaign advisory staff, and Anderson prepared a document for the candidate advocating an end to the draft. The combination of arguments based on "good old-fashioned conservative principles" and political expediency (the unpopularity of the Vietnam-era draft) convinced Nixon, and he gave a speech in October 1968 (written by Anderson), announcing that if elected he would abolish the draft.

These free enterprisers' efforts were complemented perfectly from the "left" of the political spectrum. The fall of 1967 saw the issue of a "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority," signed by hundreds of leftist intellectuals like Noam Chomsky, Herbert Marcuse, and Bishop James Pike. Catholic leftists played a particularly significant role in the draft resistance, as Rev. Phillip Berrigan poured blood over the files in a Baltimore draft board, and his brother Daniel, a Jesuit, incinerated files with napalm in Catonsville, Maryland. Similar "civil disobedience" actions were organized by other Catholic priests, nuns and laymen.

The third major component of the antidraft movement was the army of sociologists and psychological-

profilers that had been created since the war by Great Britain's Tavistock Institute, the Stanford Research Institute, the Rand Corporation and like institutions. These are the theoreticians of what is now called the "Aquarian Conspiracy." Morris Janowitz, dean of the military sociologists, proclaimed the obsolescence of the mass army in a nuclear age, urging its replacement with a small "constabulary force" whose purpose is "managing the instruments of violence when national policy is designed to avoid general war, and [to] manage limited war to avoid general war. ... The military establishment becomes a constabulary force when it is continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force, and seeks viable international relations rather than victory because it has incorporated a protective military posture." These sociologists took the experience of Great Britain as their model, and bolstered their support for the AVF on Britain's abolition of conscription in 1961.

After Nixon was elected, he set up the 15-man Gates Commission to plan the transition to an all-volunteer force. It was headed by Thomas S. Gates, chairman of the executive committee of Morgan Guaranty Trust and a former secretary of defense during the last year of the Eisenhower administration. The Commission included Milton Friedman; Thomas Curtis, vice-president of Encyclopedia Britannica; economist Alan Greenspan; Stephen Herbits from Georgetown University Law Center; Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, member of the New York Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission; and former Supreme Allied Commanders in Europe, Lauris Norstad and Alfred Gruenther. Four of the members were strongly pro-AVF; none of the 15 had ever publicly questioned or opposed the concept. The Commission unanimously recommended the end of the draft.

An American tradition?

The conservative-libertarians who pushed through the AVF contended that conscription is not an American tradition. True enough, United States has only had the draft three times during its history: the Civil War, World War I, and World War II through to the present (with a brief hiatus just after World War II). But our history has been a continuing fight of the Federalist-Republican factions against the "Jacobins" of the Thomas Jefferson-Andrew Jackson stripe (see "The Treachery of Thomas Jefferson," Campaigner, March 1980). Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Alexander Hamilton had to overcome overwhelming "libertarian" opposition to form an army that could fight Great Britain; it was Jefferson who warned that a standing army is "dangerous to free government." Had real American policies not won out—at least under temporary conditions of emergency—against Milton Friedman's ancestors, the republic would have been destroyed.