

## **CAPT JOHN G. CROMMELIN, USN <sup>1</sup>**

### THE GENERAL-STAFF CONCEPT

The American Press has seized upon, magnified and made capital of many of the superficial antagonisms and manifestations of disagreement between the Armed Services of the United States but it has not presented to the American People the true and basic reason for these inter-service differences. Further it is quite evident that not only the press but also the great majority of naval officers do not understand why their seniors on duty in Washington have spent so much valuable time within the past four years engaged in what the press calls "inter-service bickering". The real basis for this "bickering" is a deep-seated conflict between the naval officer's interpretation of his oath of office and the obvious spurious concept of duty held by certain senior officers of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Forces who apparently believe in an extreme concentration of authority and power-of-decision in a very small and carefully selected cadre of Army and Air Force officers known as "The General-Staff Corps".

Article I section 8 of the Constitution of the United States clearly sets forth unqualified control of the "land and naval forces" in the civilian congress. Every officer, whether he be Army, Navy, or Air Forces swears an oath "to defend the Constitution of the United States against all its enemies foreign or domestic". In view of recent actions of the Congress, it would seem that the legislative body established by the Constitution to control the Armed Forces is not alerted to the grave danger of "The General-Staff Concept".

### ORIGIN OF THE GENERAL STAFF CORPS

The idea of the Army General Staff Corps evidently germinated at about the same time as that for the establishment of the Army War College, which was founded under the Secretary of War, Elihu Root, by General Order #155 of November 17, 1901. However, little was done until the first "War College Board" met on July 10, 1902 under the supervision of Major General S. B. M. Young, USA. One of the most important duties of the war college board and General Young was "planning the organization of the General Staff Corps". The General Staff of the U. S. Army began to function on August 15, 1903 and on November 1, 1903 the Army War College, immediately "merged" with this corps, began its first year of systematic operation under the General Staff. This organization, neither American nor democratic in its scope or intent, was originally quite similar to and patterned after the Prussian General Staff. However, with the perfection attained by years of operation and by the distortion and perversion of opportunists it now assumed a role approaching that of the old Prussian High Command whose sole claim to fame was that it never made a small mistake.

The official reorganization of the General Staff by General Order #14 on February 9, 1918 is a good illustration of how power has been continuously concentrated in the General Staff. In this shake-up the War Plans Division formerly associated with the War College at Fort McNair was established in the War Department with particular duties as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from a paper prepared 12 September 1949.

- (1) Plan for organization of the Army.
- (2) Study and determine types and quantities of equipment.
- (3) Consider projects for national defense.
- (4) Provide for training of the Army.
- (5) Translate and compile foreign documents relating to military affairs.
- (6) Compile, collect and maintain complete military records.
- (7) Propose military legislation for the military establishment.

### THE ARMY-AIR FORCES OFFICER CAREER CONCEPT

As all officers in the Air Forces were a corps of the Army until the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 it is logical to assume that the present senior officers in both the ground Army and the Air Forces were brought up under the malignant influence of various General Staff procedures. These officers were taught from the very beginning of their careers that the way "to get ahead" in the Army was to attend as many schools as possible and demonstrate an avid eagerness for staff duty, so that they could be finally taken into that holy-of-holies institution, the General Staff Corps. Once they had served for eighteen months on the General Staff and could wear that most unusual and unamerican emblem of the General Staff Corps under their right breast, their future in the Army was assured. This undemocratic and false service philosophy developed an academic minded officer who was more concerned with "dotting the I and crossing the T" than with handling men and mastering fighting technique. The Army and Air Forces have finally become dominated by a small group of very shrewd and highly educated but impractical and unbalanced opportunists who can tolerate no differences of opinion and who labor under the delusion that they alone know not only what is best for the military establishment but also what is best for the naval establishment and for the country as well. They no longer constrain themselves to "proposing military legislation for the military establishment" but now consider that they must "propose civil legislation for the military establishment". How long will it be before they "propose civil legislation for the civil establishment?"

### THE NAVY OFFICER CAREER CONCEPT

The naval officers concept of a career is sound and simple. The midshipman is taught from the day he enters the Navy Academy that he will be judged not so much by literary and academic excellence as by the way he handles his men and his airplanes and ships. His fitness reports on "sea duty" will be given a great deal more weight on his selection for promotion than those on "shore duty". The naval officer is instructed to eschew politics and let Congress make the laws and set policies. There is no General Staff in the Navy and let us hope there never will be.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

1. It is reported on good authority that as early as 1943, when the Navy and most good Army officers were fighting the war, General Collins, the present chief of staff of the Army drafted a proposed bill for merger of the land and sea forces. General Collins is a member of the General Staff Corps in excellent standings. His military duties, despite the war, were not however so onerous that he did not have to take time to "propose civil legislation for the military establishment".

2. It is not significant that General Lauris Norstad, U.S. Air Force, a boy wonder and magnificent specimen of General-Staff productivity, is accredited with having actually prepared the National Security Act of 1947?

3. The Army did not oppose this act, for in it the General Staff zealots saw the eventual realization of their great dream. With this aid of a two to one vote in the Joint Chiefs of Staff they could systematically block naval progress and gradually destroy the morale and offensive potential of the Navy. This was necessary as they found out it was impossible to subvert the senior naval officers of their autocratic scheme. The rank and file of the Navy strongly opposed H.R. 2319 as evidenced by the fact that of the one hundred and seventeen senior officers in the Navy who answered the letter of Representative Sterling Cole exactly one hundred strongly opposed the legislation. However, it is thought by many officers of the Navy that an Admiral who helped General Norstad write the bill, finally influenced Mr. Forrestal and Admiral Nimitz that the merger was inevitable. Regardless of whether or not the motives of this naval officer were sincere and unselfish, the security of these United States demands that no other naval officer make the mistake of appeasing the General Staff.

4. It is not known who wrote the Tydings Bill, S-1269, which later became the National Security Amendments Act of 1949 and further concentrates authority in the military establishment but it is an extremely dangerous piece of legislation. The members of the Congress of the United States cannot delegate their constitutional responsibility for control of the Armed Forces and they must not "sell their constitutional birthright for this mess of political pottage".

5. Within the past year and a half General Staff officers have been heard to make statements substantially as follows:

General Eisenhower: We may see a group of highly capable, carefully selected officers from each of the three services who at about the age of forty or forty five lose their service identity and become Armed Forces Officers. (This is the Expanded General-Staff Concept that Representative Clare Hoffman warned the Congress to guard against).

General L.S. Kuter: The entire budget for MATS should be allocated to the Air Forces. (MATS is supposed to be a unified operation combining the Naval Air Transport Service and Air Transport Command).

General Le Roy Lutes: We should establish a joint procurement service to prevent wasteful competition in such fields as electronics. (A concentration of control {garbled} disburse the fifteen billion dollar defense budget).

General L. Lemnitzer: It isn't fair to staff planners not to have a national policy immediately available for various contingencies. (He thinks the democratic process of having the American people establish the nation policy is too slow).

Are these reflections of the Prussian General-Staff concept?

### CONCLUSIONS

1. It is concluded that Mr. Louis Johnson has been deluded by the Army and Air Forces exponents of the General Staff concept and that he does not realize the dangerous national implications of such autocratic and complete military control. He possibly does not realize that the General Staff can control him by shutting off his sources of information.

2. That the General Staff officers in the Army and Air Forces have influenced Mr, Johnson to make some dangerous decisions which are gradually stripping the Navy of vital offensive potential and greatly imperiling the security of the United States.

3. That the General Staff has exploited the Russian situation and the natural desire of the people for economy in government to create a false idea that further concentration of military authority is required.

4. That the Department of Defense is now in position to bring strong pressures upon the Congress both House and Senate, on all national policy as well as purely defense matters.

5. That the Congress must fully investigate inherent dangers not only to our physical security but also to our national spiritual standards which lie in the "expanded" General-Staff concept.

6. The impetus already achieved by the totalitarian military opportunists both in uniform and in mufti is a challenge to every American citizen resolved to defend the Constitution of the United States against all its enemies foreign or domestic.

7. That the three elements of national power, economic, political, and military can be completely be dominated and controlled by a General Staff in this manner: (a) The politics of the nation can be greatly influenced by the centralized disbursement of the fifteen billion dollar defense budget, (b) The economy of the country can be controlled also by the disbursement of the huge budget but it can be completely dominated by strict rationing of the vital elements of industry which are contained in the national stockpile of critical materials. This stockpile will be under the control of the military establishment. (c) The Armed Forces are now fast slipping out from under control of Congress, and the General Staff from behind the scenes is "pilling the wires."

8. That if the Man-on-horseback arrives in the United States within our time, it will have to be by and with the advice consent of a General Staff.

9. That the world has never known a dictatorship which was not a military dictatorship.

/s/ Jno. G. Crommelin  
12 September 1949

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**STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN JOHN G. CROMMELIN, U.S. Navy  
IN REGARDS TO B-36 INVESTIGATION<sup>2</sup>**

As I am involved in certain actions which prompted the B-36 Investigation I had expected to be called as a witness, and therefore for some time have had a statement prepared, a copy of which is attached, which I had intended to give at the hearings. However the Investigation has been recessed until Sept. 21, 1949, and I have not yet been named as a witness. Therefore, I am voluntarily releasing my signed statement.

The purpose of stimulating this investigation was to keep the security of this country on the rails and to provide a medium for calling the attention of the people of the United States to the real cause of the continued opposition of Navy and Marine Corps men to the further concentration of power in the Department of Defense.

The B-36 controversy is the result of the efforts of a few relatively junior officers in the naval service (so far as I know there is no single flag officer implicated in any way) to block a plan which may be subscribed to by some senior officers in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force.

This plan, or sequence of events which has been unfolding before our eyes since the end of World War II is now called by many officers in both the Navy and Marine Corps "The Collins Plan". The plan, which is supposed to have been drafted in 1943 by an Army officer in the General Staff Corps of the Army, is described in some detail in an article in "Collier's" magazine for 27 August 1949 by Major General Merritt A. Edson, USMC (Ret.) entitled "Power-Hungry Men in Uniform".

Although I had nothing to do with the preparation of an anonymous document which Cedric North is supposed to have made available to certain members of Congress, I was the senior officer present about May 20 in company with Cedric North (USNR), Captain Leroy Simpler, U.S. Navy, and Lieutenant Sam Ingram USNR, when the decision was made to try to get congressional action to help create a situation which would give the Navy a chance to publicly state its views on the then proposed Tydings Bill.

I believe in long-range heavy bombers and I want the United States to have the strongest Air Force in the world, but I also believe that a strong, progressive Navy equipped with the great offensive power of carrier and Marine Corps aviation is essential to the success of any bombing program which the United States may be forced to conduct.

I do not believe in the General Staff concept. I know that salt water and politics do not mix.

Jno. G. Crommelin  
10 September 1949.

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<sup>2</sup> Statement of John G. Crommelin dated 10 September 1949.

**LIBRARY'S CROMMELIN PAPERS SUBJECT OF  
PRESTIGIOUS GRANT  
FROM NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER  
TO MUSEUM VOLUNTEER**

The Naval Historical Center recently announced the awarding of a Vice Admiral Edwin B. Hooper Research Grant to Museum volunteer Jack Coe, to support work on an article based on the Rear Admiral John G. Crommelin Papers held by the Museum's Emil Buehler Naval Aviation Library. Donated in September 2005 by the admiral's daughter, Ms. Katharine Milton, the papers relate to the eldest of the five famous brothers who served in the U.S. Navy, four of them as aviators. The extensive files include personal correspondence between the brothers during World War II and official

papers, including those related to post-World War II defense unification and Crommelin's role in the "Revolt of the Admirals." Coe, son of a Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation employee, grew up with the sounds of *Hellcats* and *Wildcats* filling his ears, and for many years has traveled to Pensacola from his home in Wisconsin to volunteer in the Museum library. Past recipients of the Hooper Grant include Commander Thomas B. Buell, USN, biographer of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance and Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King.

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