

Military Mind ^{Wash Post} 17 Mar 52

The kind of stuff that went into the Grow diary will confirm in many minds the opinion that the military are bent upon provoking war. General Grow is indeed a firebrand. "War!" he ejaculates to his diary. "As soon as possible! Now!" Last year the time appeared to him to be "ripe for a blow." He called to his diary for a leader who would get on his white horse and lead the American people to the destruction of communism.

To what extent General Grow expresses the view of his colleagues is anybody's guess. But we should imagine that his viewpoint is not unrepresentative. After all, war is the culmination of training in the profession of arms. It is only in wartime that an officer's professional mettle is proven, his advancement and promotion quickened. Warmindedness on an officer's part is not in itself reprehensible. The country requires that its military should be devoted to the study of war in case of emergency; the national security depends in great part on the readiness and alertness of the military establishment. However, there is a big gulf fixed in this respect between the Grows, or the operating officers, and the men who are actually in charge of military policy. With responsibility goes a caution and sobriety that is lacking below that level—indeed, that is sometimes lacking among civilians in comparable posts in Government.

At least this has been the general experience. In the war which ushered in the modern wars that have disfigured the twentieth century—the Russo-Japanese war of 1904—the Russian Minister of War, General Kuropatkin, was perhaps the most pacific minister in St. Petersburg. He knew too much. Knowing what he did about the military weakness of Russia, he made the drastic proposal that Russia should abandon her ambitions in Manchuria and Korea and concentrate instead on development in the Vladivostock area further north. Nor in the First World War is there enough evidence to satisfy the historian that the conflagration was sparked by the German military. In the last war, certainly, the record shows that their successors were constantly trying to restrain Hitler, while our own military chiefs were similarly nonbelligerent. Even in Japan the least war-like among the elements in control of affairs were the navy leaders. Admiral Yamamoto, for instance, was a main force for peace. The hotheads in Japan for the 20 years previous to the outbreak of war were the young officers. Eventually

they found a man in the person of General Tojo who would accept their dictation.

What makes military men of the stamp of General Grow dangerous to peace is when the authorities put them in front positions in the conduct of the cold war or otherwise in positions of authority. Yet this is precisely what is now being done in mainland Asia. Official policy on Formosa still remains neutralization of the island till the war in Korea is over. However, the reports keep on coming from the Burmese frontier of Chinese Nationalist activity directed and fed from Formosa and of American participation in that activity. The latest news to this effect is a current Associated Press dispatch filed by Jack Macbeth from "Near the Burmese border in northern Thailand."

This is the kind of thing to worry about, more than the attitude of mind revealed in the Grow diary. If the natural warmindedness of our military officers is, irresponsibly, given its head, then we might as well prepare for trouble. Of course, stories such as are coming out of Burma are denied. But more and more it appears to us that the right hand of our Government in operations abroad does not know what the left hand is doing.