Is the United States a militarized society? Donald McDonald has provided a check-list for determining whether America fits the definition of such a society (The Center Magazine, January).

"1. A militarized society is an authoritarian society.

"2. In a militarized society, stability is a cardinal virtue.

"3. The militarized society is a fearful society.

"4. The militarized society is a self-righteous society.

"5. In a militarized society, the military is not a means to an end, it is the end itself.

"6. A militarized society gives to the military the highest priority in claims on the national resources.

"7. A militarized society has an unchallengeable claim on the lives of its young men.

"8. In a militarized society, the military are beyond effective criticism and control.

"9. In a militarized society, deception is accepted as a normal fact of life.

"10. A militarized society perceives most political problems as military problems and the militarized solution is, therefore, the only realistic solution.

"11. In a militarized society, the economy is dependent on the military.

"12. The militarized society is a sterile society.

"13. The militarized society is a barbaric society.

In a technologized military society, it is possible for decent people to perform tasks that will insure the death of hundreds of thousands of people halfway around the world...."

McDonald’s own long critical review of “relevant evidence drawn from the contemporary American experience” leads him to state that “America has become to a considerable extent a militarized society.” But, he adds, the process can be stopped, and he offers an approach to the de-militarization and civilizing of America.

Others responding in brief to the question itself in the same issue of the magazine reach varying conclusions: “We May Be on Our Way” (Robert Gordis); “Anti-Militarism Is Strong and Growing” (Neil H. Jacoby); “We Are Falling Fast” (Stanley K. Sheinbaum); “We Are in No Serious Danger” (Richard Bellman); “There Is Little Evidence” (George N. Shuster); “The Militarists Have Not Prevailed” (Adolph A. Berle); “We Haven’t Learned to Click Our Heels” (Milton Mayer).

... the Department of Defense is a management," writes Seymour Melman in the issue of Journal devoted to “New Priorities in Federal Spending” (December, 1969). "But it is more than that. It is by far the largest management ever seen in this society, perhaps in the world. For it controlled, last year, $44 billion of industrial work. Please note—I very carefully said 'controlled.' I did not say that it owned the subsidiary enterprises. Modern management, as we learned in the 1930's, does not necessarily own, it merely controls. Stockholders own the assets, but the managers control the enterprise. In precisely that way the new management controls $44 billion worth of industrial activity carried on in nominally separately owned enterprises, actually tightly and centrally controlled enterprises. And so the new enterprise, with $44 billion of industrial activity controlled from a center, has a greater sphere of decision power by that measure than the combined management of General Motors, AT&T, General Electric, United States Steel, and Du Pont. For their combined sales are less than the value of the industrial activity controlled by the new state management.

"... Insofar as control over production gives decision power in other spheres of life, it is unimpeachably the case that the new management is far and away the most potent center point of decision power in the United States. This has other consequences as well. Hitherto, the combination of peak political, economic and military decision power in the same hands has been understood and recognized as a feature of Communist or Fascist countries. The Bolshevik theory of government and practice stipulates that there shall be such concentration of decision power at the top in the same hands. In American government, under the design of the Constitution and its interpretation of the Federalist Papers, political and military power are rendered to government, but enterprise is left to the citizenry. This separation has been altered so that there is now an unprecedented concentration of decision power in the government of the United States...."

There is an additional cost to America, Melman argues, one which “is measured not by the $1,000 billion that has been voted [for the military since 1946]. The true way we pay is in what has been foregone, by what we do not have because we have given that sort of money to the Department of Defense. Money can be printed; it can be enlarged in quantity very rapidly. But manpower is a unit of different quality. Manpower is very finite, especially skilled manpower, and it is limited even in the wealthiest power in the world. As of today, there are somewhat fewer than 300,000 scientists in this country; that's all! And to have more of them involves training periods that run to, say, ten years. Our skilled manpower has been concentrated in lavish abundance on behalf of the military. One-half to two-thirds of (Continued on page 5)
the research and development scientists and engineers in the country work directly or indirectly for the Department of Defense. So it is not the ten per cent of our Gross National Product alone that is a measure of what we put into the military. The more important measure is the concentration of high-grade working skill that is allocated to the military. The payment, therefore, is made in what has been foregone..."

At the conclusion of a lengthy review of Truth Is the First Casualty: The Gulf of Tonkin Affair—Illusion and Reality, (New York Review of Books, January 29), Peter Dale Scott sums up the effects of the government’s actions. “The most important revelations about the Tonkin Gulf incidents are not the mistakes—delayed cables, the inadequate procedures for review. The most important revelation is of another recurring pattern—the readiness of our national security bureaucracy to escalate in Southeast Asia for the attainment of bureaucratic objectives, with or without a provocation.”

And finally, “the Tonkin Gulf resolution led not only to a major war in Asia, but to the credibility gap at home. The young in particular,” Scott states, “have lost respect for those who accepted, without criticism, a clearcut story which no serious student has since found credible. Senator Fulbright himself has said he regrets his own role in the Tonkin Gulf affair ‘more than anything I have ever done in my life.’ It is still in his power to re-open the Tonkin Gulf Hearings, to question Admiral Sharp and other relevant witnesses, and to demand publication of the intercepts on which the strike decision was based. To do so may cause trouble between Congress and the military, but will hardly increase public disaffection. The truth (and the search for it) will more likely allay the worst apprehensions of the anti-war movement. Congress is implicated in the deception of Tonkin; its own credibility is at stake. Many believe our political system is now so militarized, Congressional powers are irrelevant, or subservient, or somehow collusive. Senator Fulbright, will you prove them wrong?”

“... A group of Representatives assert in a memo on ‘Congress and Pentagon.’” The Nation reports in an editorial (January 19), “that ‘Congress must ‘bell the cat,’ meaning the Defense establishment. . . Congress must reassert its constitutional right of oversight upon the military before it is too late.’ These legislators have mapped out the terrain, so to speak, that must be recaptured if Congress is to be more than a pool of errand boys to do the bidding of the generals and admirals.

“What these Congressmen propose is set forth in three measures:

1. H.R. 14323, S. 3024 would create a Temporary National Security Commission which between now and December 31, 1972 would comb the defense operation in all respects, and national security operations as well. The membership would comprise five members from each chamber, and six eminent citizens. It would include no more than a single member of any one of the Senate or House standing committees (to prevent it from being dominated by the present armed services committees).

2. H.R. 14318, S. 3023 would create an Office of Defense Review, responsible to Congress and instructed to provide the members with ongoing knowledge on defense and national security matters, so that they would not be blinded, so to speak, by executive monopoly of intelligence and military data. As it is, House critics of military spending are reduced to scrounging around for information in these areas. This new agency would prepare a Congressional defense budget independent of the one offered by the executive. Such a document could offer instructive comparisons.

3. Most important of all, a Joint Committee on National Priorities would be created by H. 949, S. 160. It would have no power other than to report its findings of fact and recommendations. There would be fourteen members, seven from the House, seven from the Senate, not more than one from any standing committee. The sponsors have taken pains to fend off accusations that they favor a ‘planned economy.’

“Another sign of the times is that Sen. John Stennis (Miss.) is revamping the staff of his Senate Armed Services Committee, replacing former military men with civilian budget experts. Also, the Subcommittee on Economy in Government, chaired by Sen. William Proxmire (Wis.), has called for new reductions in the military budget of $10 billion, and has castigated the military for inefficiency and unconscionable cost overruns”...

An excerpt from the November 15 Mobilization speech of David Dellinger (as reported in Liberation, January):”

“If Spiro Agnew had his way, this [demonstration] wouldn’t be shown on television at all. If Spiro had his way, people would think that the greatest cause of violence in the world today was the anti-war movement. Sometimes the anti-war movement breaks some windows or throws a few rocks, and I don’t think myself that’s going to shift power in the country or build a united movement. But the greatest concentration of violence in the world is run by the United States government. . . We anti-war people may occasionally throw rocks, but the government drops six-ton
bombs on Vietnam. It drops napalm. It drops fragmentation bombs. It doesn’t break windows. It wipes out whole towns and cities. Let’s put this whole question of violence into context.

“Even before Spiro Agnew spanked television, television was implying that the greatest test of this week’s activities was whether or not there was violence. Yes, we’re against violence this week, and we’ve organized against it. But the greatest test of this protest is whether we can stop the massive violence against the black people and the poor people in this country, whether we can stop the institutionalized violence of the status quo, the institutionalized violence of capitalism, under which profit and property is more important than human beings. . . .”

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“By popular consensus and professional diagnosis, the Achilles heel of American government today is government itself. Conflicts in parties, interest groups, philosophies; apathetic or alienated popular attitudes; limits on available resources—all these don’t prevent us from feeding the hungry, reforming the welfare system, discouraging the overthrow of democratic governments abroad. Bureaucracies do. Organized public efforts do.”

The author of these words, himself former Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is Robert Wood (“When Government Works,” Public Interest, Winter, 1970), who concludes:

“The plain fact is that this country has never been serious about establishing a responsible and responsive bureaucracy. Still captivated by the revolutionary effort to tame a king’s power; still misquoting Lord Acton, and implying power encourages corruption rather than rectitude; still regarding the delivery and nondelivery of a particularly public service as a scene in a morality play, the American government has relied heavily on the energies and the devotion of the organization amateur. The political lawyer who has suddenly been asked to handle administrative matters in the White House; the academic economist called on to weld together the energies and loyalties of a large number of men; the neighborhood leader introduced into participatory programming; the government engineer or accountant asked to grow into leadership—all have been the executors of our public policy.

“This country possesses policies and programs that are clearly capable of remediying many of our paralyzing ills if only they are well-executed; it cannot afford amateurs in administration any longer. We cannot will government away; we cannot endure a second-rate government; we cannot solve problems by rhetorical denunciations. We must at long last take the problem of public management seriously.”

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Sociologist Gordon Zahn, known for his studies of the Church in Nazi Germany, and more recently for a work on The Military Chaplaincy, insists that “the major issue all of us, whether social scientist or not, must somehow face and resolve is war and militarism,” and this will be his own future concern (Continum, Autumn 1969). “Furthermore,” Zahn states, “as a Catholic social scientist, I regard the extent to which organized religion contributes to or supports war and militarism as an extremely critical dimension of that overall problem. . . .”

“As long as Christians continue to accept service in the military forces of their separate nations, there can be some justification for the presence of clergymen who have undertaken a special mission to minister to their spiritual needs. But . . . one would expect this ministry to include the responsibility of providing moral guidance which would keep Christians in uniform from committing acts that are immoral. If, as seems to be the case, chaplains are unable to recognize or unwilling to accept this as part of their legitimate function—and if the same opinion is held by the other officers and enlisted men as well—this could reduce the chaplaincy to the status of an institutionalized collaboration with evil in the name of religion. . . .”

“Over and above this limited concern with the military chaplaincy is the problem of the militarization, or the excessive nationalism, of the Church itself. If studies of the kind I propose can help to expose this tendency and demonstrate the threat it can hold for the fulfillment of the Church’s true mission (and, needless to say, I believe they can!), such studies are not only justified but they are urgent and imperative. . . .”

PAMPHILUS