Ms. America Goes to Battle

THE FEMINIST ASSAULT ON THE MILITARY

There are many purposes behind the feminists' efforts to restructure the military, but you can be sure that greater national security is not one of them.

DAVID HOROWITZ

FOR NEARLY two decades after the Sixties, the military remained the one institution to withstand the baleful influences of the radical Left. Now that the cold war is over, this immunity appears to have ended. A series of relatively trivial incidents (a joke about women's sexual excuses, a skit mocking a female member of Congress) and a drunken party at which crotches were grabbed in a gantlet ritual have fueled a national hysteria about "sexual harassment" and a political witchhunt that is threatening to deconstruct the military in the way other institutions have been deconstructed before.

Fanning the fires are feminist legislators on the Armed Services Committee, led by Democrat Pat Schroeder, who want women assigned to combat roles. In a July 9 letter to Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, Representative Schroeder put the Pentagon on notice that Tailhook was only "a symptom" and that the resignation of Navy Secretary Garrett does not begin "to address the problem." Mrs. Schroeder called for investigations and prosecutions to purge the Navy of sexual miscreants and bad attitudes.

Mrs. Schroeder herself was the center of the second Navy "scandal," over the Tom Cat Follies at the Miramar Naval Station. The Follies, which were held in a private officers' club and which traditionally include off-color jibes at Navy brass, featured lampoons of George Bush and Dan Quayle. But it was the two skits about Representative Schroeder that caused heads to roll. The first was an altered nursery rhyme: "Hickory, dickory dock, Pat Schroeder s---ed my c---." The second was a skit in which Mrs. Schroeder went to Europe for a sex-change operation and came back incarnated as Dick Cheney. Not far off the mark, considering that Mrs. Schroeder has been mentioned as a possible Secretary of Defense in a Clinton Administration and that Mr. Cheney has been timid on the issue of women in combat.

When the Navy brass was alerted to the contents of the show by a female officer who had been present, the reaction was swift. Five career officers present at the Follies had their commands terminated. (Subsequently, two were reinstated.) The Navy has also apologized to Mrs. Schroeder. Such appeasement, however, has only whetted the appetite of the feminist vanguard, which has stepped up its campaign to pass the Schroeder Amendment, allowing women to fly combat missions. It is seen by advocates as a "wedge" measure that would lead to expanded combat roles and true "institutional equality" for women. A Presidential Commission appointed to review the issue is scheduled to make a recommendation in November.

Militantly Anti-Military

IT SHOULD come as no surprise that many advocates of the change have previously shown little interest in maintaining an effective defense. Representative Schroeder, for example, was an antiwar activist before entering the House. She has been a determined adversary of military preparedness on the Armed Services Committee, where she now serves as a ranking member along with Beverly Byron (who has demanded that every officer merely *present* at Tailhook be thrown out of the service) and radical Congressman Ron Dellums, who denounced Jimmy Carter as "evil" for opposing Soviet aggression in Afghanistan.

When New Left radicals, like myself, launched the movement against the war in Vietnam, we did not say we wanted the Communists to win—which we did. We said we wanted to bring the troops home, which accomplished our objective: the Communists won. With disastrous consequences for Vietnam and the world.

Examples of this kind of double agenda abound in the current feminist campaign and can be found in testimony before the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in

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ILLUSTRATION BY MATT JASIORKOWSKI

Armed Forces. Maria Lepowsky, a professor of Women's Studies, provided the commissioners with data to support a combat role for women. Then Professor Lepowsky asked herself: "What would be some possible consequences . . . —if women were put in combat—on American cultural values and American society . . . ?" She answered her own question: "I think there might be increased concern about committing troops to combat, also perhaps a good thing. . . ."

In other words, Professor Lepowsky was advocating that women be put in combat roles because to do so would make it *more difficult* to commit troops to combat. Now this is a kind of candor that is unusual for the Left.

Reform, Soviet Style

MODERATE feminists generally want modest reforms in American society. Technological advances, like birth control, have dramatically changed women's social roles, requiring adjustments in the culture. The most constructive way for these changes to take place is deliberately, and with due respect for consequences that may be unforeseen. As the inhabitants of the former Soviet empire discovered, at great human cost, revolutionary cures can often be worse than the disease.

This is a lesson lost on feminism's radical wing. When advocates of current military reform speak of "gender integration" of the military, they are often invoking the ideas of these radicals without recognizing them for what they are. Gender feminism is a bastard child of Marxism. It holds that women are not women by nature, but that society has "constructed" or created them female so that men could oppress them. Gender feminists are social engineers in the same way as Communists. They deny that human biology fundamentally influences who we are. For them, the solution to all social problems, conflicts, and disappointments in life is to manipulate laws and institutions so as to create liberated human beings, who will not hate, have prejudices, exhibit bad sexual manners, or go to war.

Gender feminists have little interest in questions of America's national security because they believe America is a patriarchal, sexist, racist oppressor whose institutions must be transformed beyond recognition. Of course, the gender feminists are not so naïve as to admit their radical agendas outside the sanctuaries of women's studies departments. In testifying before Presidential Commissions they will say that placing women in combat positions is merely an extension of women working outside the home, and of equal opportunity.

But placing women in harm's way and training them to kill one-on-one is not a mere extension of working outside the home. Furthermore, there are definite limits to equal rights and equal opportunity when biology is involved. Do American males have the right to bear children? Do they have an equal opportunity with women to do so? Do they have an equal aptitude for combat? Ninety per cent of those arrested for violent crimes are male. Obviously males have a distinct advantage over females in mobilizing an existing instinct for aggression for the purposes of organized combat.

The difficulty in confronting these issues on their merits is the emotional element that is introduced by the moral posturing of the Left. One of the leading advocates of equal military roles is Commander Rosemary Mariner, a 19-year career naval officer. Commander Mariner's testimony before the Commission is illustrative: "As with racial integration the biggest problem confronting gender integration is not men or women, but bigotry. It is bigotry that is the root cause of racial and sexual harassment. From common verbal abuse to the criminal acts of a Tailhook debacle, sexual harassment will continue to be a major problem in the armed forces because the combat exclusion law and policies make women institutionally inferior."

The basic elements of the radical view are all here. Sexual relations between men and women are encompassed by the paradigm of racial relations between blacks and whites. The problem of sexual harassment is unrelated to the different biologies and sexual drives of men and women. The real problem is an institutional framework that causes women to be perceived as inferior. In the eyes of the gender feminists, if women were included in combat (and thus treated as the equals they are), if gender roles were abolished, then sexual harassment would cease to be a "major problem."

Consider the proposition: For five thousand years men have been more aggressive sexually than women. In recognition of this, for five thousand years the sexual rules for men and women have been different. And for the same period, many men, failing to heed those rules, have overstepped the boundaries of decent behavior. But now we are to believe that is merely the past. According to the gender feminists, the U.S. military, by including women in combat positions, can solve this age-old problem. As soon as this law is changed, women's self-esteem will rise, men's respect for women will increase, and presto! sexual harassment will cease.

It is difficult to believe that a rational human being could propose such nonsense, but this is the fundamental idea that feminists advance *ad nauseam*, and that our military brass and political leadership are capitulating to at a disturbing pace.

This summer, Jerry Tuttle, a three-star admiral who had been nominated by the President for one of the top 12 posts in the Navy, saw his career run into a wall, as the President was forced to withdraw his nomination. Why? Because a newsletter for which he was responsible printed the following joke: *Beer is better than women because beer never has a headache.*

What is going on in America when a three-star admiral can lose a promotion over a lame joke that he didn't even make? How could a Republican President cave in to pressures like this, and why isn't there national outrage over it? And what is the problem with feminists who can't handle this kind of trivia? Yet they want to enter a war zone and engage in combat!

Studies conducted at West Point have identified 120 physical differences between men and women that bear on military requirements. Yet the U.S. Naval Academy has been criticized for not moving fast enough to increase its female enrollment. Senator Barbara Mikulski has demanded "an attitude change" at the academy, and an official Committee on Women's Issues headed by Rear Admiral Virgil Hill has called for the "immediate dismissal of senior officers who question the role of women in the military." To question—to *question*—the role of women in the military is now regarded as bigotry by the military itself.

The word "bigot" has resonance. It is meant to invoke the specter of racism

and to appropriate the moral mantle of the civil-rights movement for feminist causes. This feminist attempt to hijack the civil-rights movement is both spurious and offensive, but it is highly effective in preventing opponents from laughing feminist arguments out of court.

As for the facts about women's suitability for combat, it is not always easy to discover them. In its Washington session in June, the Presidential Commission heard testimony from William S. Lind, former defense advisor to Gary Hart. Lind referred to the suppression of information vital to the decisions the Commission is being asked to make. According to Lind, the Army Personnel Office had detailed information on problems encountered with women troops in Desert Storm, which had not been released to the public. The information included the fact that, when the troops were called to battle, the non-deployability rate for women was three to four times higher than that for men. This had a negative effect on unit cohesion, a primary component of combat effectiveness. Pregnancy during Desert Shield was the primary reason for non-deployability.

Also covered up are the consequences of the way women are treated in the service academies. The official position at West Point, for example, is that there have been no negative effects. The facts are different, as a recent Heritage study by Robert Knight reveals. According to the sworn testimony of a West Point official taken in a Roanoke court, when men and women are required to perform the same exercises, women's scores are "weighted" to compensate for their deficiencies; women cadets take "comparable" training when they cannot meet the physical standards for male cadets, and peer ratings have been eliminated because women were scoring too low. "Gender norming"—the institutionalization of a double standard, so that women are measured against other women, rather than against men—is now the rule at all the service academies.

Even the *men's* training program has been downgraded: cadets no longer train in combat boots because women were experiencing higher rates of injury; running with heavy weapons has been eliminated because it is "unrealistic and therefore inappropriate" to expect women to do it; the famed "recondo" endurance week, during which cadets used to march with full backpacks and undergo other strenuous activities, has been eliminated, as have upper-body strength events in the obstacle course.

It is one thing to have second-rate professors because of affirmative-action quotas that lower standards. But a second-rate officer corps?

Not surprisingly, resentment on the part of male cadets is high. One indication is that more than 50 per cent of the women cadets at West Point reported that they had been sexually harassed last year.

It is a perfectly sinister combination. Rub men's noses in arbitrariness and unfairness, and then charge them with sexual harassment when they react. It is also a perfect prescription for accumulating power and controlling resources. Which is what this witchhunt is ultimately about. For every male who falls from grace there is a politically correct career officer or politician ready to achieve grace by prosecuting the cause. Rosemary Mariner is a candidate for admiral; Beverly Byron has been mentioned for Secretary of the Navy; Pat Schroeder has her sights set on being Secretary of Defense.

Another problem raised by William Lind is what happens when women troops are actually deployed. In combat situations, men will act instinctively to protect women, abandoning their tactical objectives in the process. The males' protective instincts will be increased by the knowledge of what other males will do to females taken prisoner. This is not theory, but the experience of the Israelis and other military forces that tried and then abandoned the practice of deploying women in combat.

No amount of sensitivity training, no amount of brainwashing can alter human nature. The Communists proved this at unbelievable cost. They could not make a new socialist man (or woman) who would respond as effectively and efficiently to administrative commands as to market incentives, who would be communist and not individualist. The Communists killed tens of millions of people and impoverished whole nations trying to change human nature, all the time calling it "liberation," just as radical feminists do. It didn't work.

And yet, the military leadership presses on. The Air Force has established a SERE program (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape), including its own "prisoner of war" camp in Washington state to desensitize its male recruits so that they won't react like men when female prisoners are tortured. In their infinite wisdom, Mrs. Schroeder and her feminist colleagues have enlisted the military in a program to brainwash men so they won't care what happens to women. That's consciousness raising, feminist style.

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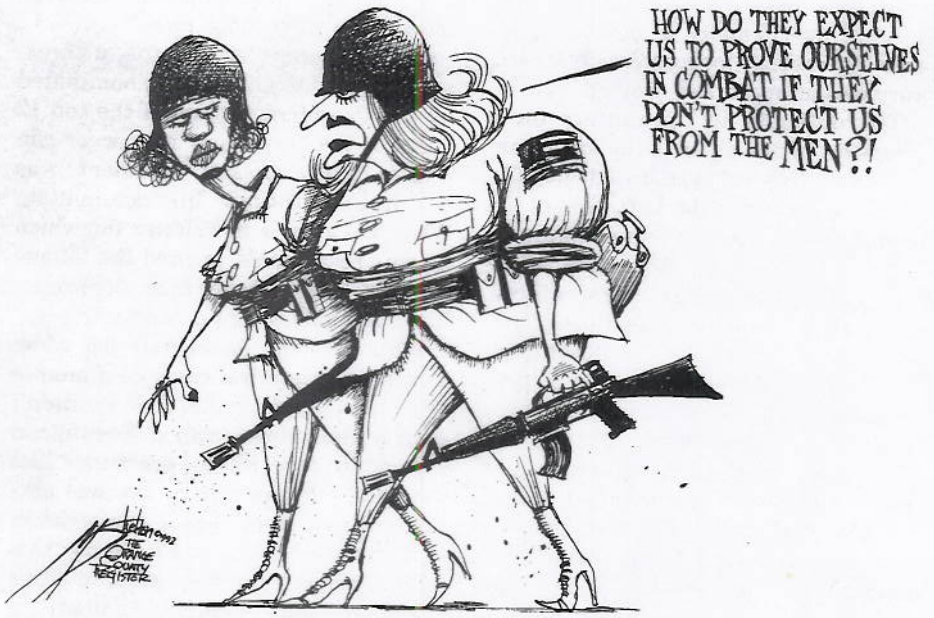

It is hardly necessary to have the detailed information that the military has decided to suppress, to see that America's ability to wage war has already been seriously weakened by the deployment of relatively large numbers of women to an overseas battlefield, even absent a combat role. Who does not remember the poignant stories the networks did, in lavish detail, about the children left behind by their mothers dispatched to war duty in the Persian Gulf? (In fact there were 16,337 single military parents who left anxious children behind.)

The net result is that an American President now is under pressure to win a war in four days or lose the war at home. What will be the temptation for dictators to test the will of America's liberated military and compassionate citizenry? These changes have implications for diplomacy and for long-term national-security interests that are literally incalculable.

The fabric of America's institutional and cultural life has already been shredded by the forces of the Left, with disastrous social consequences. Now the purpose and mission of the American military are held to be of less concern than the need to eradicate any possible injustice that might be associated with the exclusion of women from combat. The worst crimes of our century have been committed by crusades to eradicate injustice, stamp out politically incorrect attitudes, and reconstruct human nature. Let's not add the weakening of America's military to the depressing list of disasters of these utopias that failed. □

Post-Communist Blues

CASTRO BOMBS IN MADRID

When even the Spanish Left pans him, Fidel knows it is time to go home.

MARK FALCOFF

MADRID—At the second summit of Latin American presidents and the prime ministers of Spain and Portugal, the big story was Fidel Castro's first—and perhaps last—visit to Spain. The event was supposed to give a lift to the sagging prestige of the Cuban caudillo, hard-hit by the collapse of his erstwhile Soviet ally. Instead, the visit was a disaster, and Castro cut his stay short by several days. (As the conservative daily *ABC* observed, perhaps he was afraid that if he remained away from his troubled island much longer, he might not be able to return at all.)

From the moment his plane landed, Castro realized that this was not going to resemble his other overseas visits—to places like Angola or the former Soviet Union. Spain is, after all, a democratic society, with a full range of opinion expressed in parliament and the daily press. While there were small crowds of sympathizers gathered outside his hotel and the conference site, there were also hundreds of anti-Castro demonstrators (many—but not all—Cuban refugees resident in Spain). One poll showed that more than 55 per cent of Spaniards thought his visit "a bad idea." The lack of popular enthusiasm caused Castro to cancel plans to circulate through Madrid; instead, he mostly stayed in his suite at the sumptuous Ritz Hotel.

At the conference itself, held in the old Senate building attached to Madrid's Royal Palace, Castro—accustomed to being the center of attention—was merely one of two dozen, including such attractive personalities as Nicaragua's President Violeta Chamorro, Argentina's President Carlos Menem, and, above all, the hugely popular King Juan Carlos. Protocol officers were besieged by requests from chiefs of state not to sit next to Castro at the gala opening dinner. (He ended up being sandwiched between a Spanish royal princess and an elderly duchess.)

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