Shall the Czech Republic build fully professional armed forces? This question is quite a simple one but it is not that easy to answer. Even experts in security policy differ in their opinion whether to incorporate the principles of armed forces professionalization into the security strategy of the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, the professionalization is both a political and special military problem. Therefore, armed forces professionalization is frequently discussed by politicians, security experts and by the public.

Professionalization as a method of improving the standard of armed forces, as a process of their transformation. Professionalization as a method of removing disparity in calling up conscripts for the national service. Professionalization is, sometimes used as a magic formula which is to solve many problems of both the present and the future armed forces. Professionalization as a nightmare of estranging the armed forces from civic society. These are really some aspects which have to be taken into account and which can, to a certain extent, characterize the problem of professionalization.

It is impossible to ignore an obvious objective trend of the increasing percentage of military professionals in today’s armed forces in advanced countries, especially where the needs are characterized by high standards of technology and demands on mastering the control of both technical and organizational systems. Considering this concept, i.e. gradual attainment of a higher level of professionalization in the number of professional soldiers, there certainly will not be much disagreement. Another thing is the concept of absolute professionalization which has been fully implemented e.g. in the armed forces of the USA, Great Britain and nowadays also in the Netherlands, Belgium and almost in France. On the other hand, so far it has been turned down e.g. in Germany and in Scandinavia, especially in Norway.

Some problems of the professional armed forces build-up were characterized by Dr. Petr Nečas, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee of the Czech Republic in Vojenské rozhledy magazine No. 2-1999, especially from the operational-tactical and technical point of view and further with respect to universal conscription systems, the decrease in the number of conscripts and the percentage of recruited soldiers.
DEFENCE AND STRATEGY

In this paper I would like to deal with the content of professionalization focused mainly on the corps of officers. Professionalization does not only imply an increase of the percentage of military professionals in the armed forces, but also – and perhaps above all – an improvement of the professional knowledge and skills and all-round development of personal qualities of present and future military professionals and especially of officers, that is the improvement of qualities of individuals with decisive responsibility for the troop operations, highly trained and well paid individuals with the best perspective in their military career. From this point of view I think that these problems are absolutely topical and in fact they are a living reality of everyday military practice and all proposals and concepts for the development of armed forces.

In general, in building up of their armed forces most NATO countries try for a significant degree of professionalization along with a substantial reduction of the total number of personnel combined with the intensive employment of technology. However, at the same time the NATO countries adjust their information, personnel, financial and social support and education and training systems to new conditions.

What are we to understand under the term military professional? What qualities should an officer of the present-day armed forces have, how are we to mould and develop the qualities at these specialists whose primary task is to command, to manage teams, to control complex technical systems and take decisions affecting sometimes the lives of people? What educational and training processes, and institutions should be used and when? What level of education, training and practice should a professional have? How to evaluate the success of his work when considering his career prospects? How to implement a principle of preparation of the military professional as a citizen in uniform, how to prevent his alienation from reality and ensure a smooth integration into the civilian environment after the completion of his active service in the armed forces?

When looking for an answer to these key questions, it is necessary to realize that a military professional is not a mercenary. Further, he does not exist in isolation but he is a part of society, he is moulded in the context of social and historical development and though he is assigned for a very specific task he is still a citizen of this society.

When addressing the questions what to do and how to prepare an officer we must at least generally know what are the objectives to be attained in his preparation. Considering the presumable course of a career of an officer in the Czech Armed Forces, then the main general requirements for his preparedness are as follows:

1. Proper moral standards and volitive qualities, patriotism, conviction of the importance of his profession.
2. Mastering the military profession – high standard of training, preparedness for the assumption of his position.
3. Appropriate education, unambiguously at university-level; at higher career level, a master’s degree or doctorate.
4. Physical fitness, much higher than the average.
5. Managerial capabilities and skills.
6. Foreign language proficiency – very good standard of English, with a good knowledge of another language.
7. Pedagogical and psychological background.
8. Practical experience.

Can we assume that a man who becomes a military professional knows why he does so and especially what it means to be a military professional? Obviously it will be so in future. So far, it is not so because of the general prestige of the profession, social and historical reasons, methods of recruiting and preparation. The main motivation factors are mainly economic security and attaining an education. But these factors also prevail in the professional armed forces of other countries. This must also be taken into account.

Even in the future we should continue to support the educational influence of military training and educational facilities, especially in the preparation of commanders. Reinforcing and shaping the necessary moral and volitive qualities and social awareness are the most important reasons for the existence of specific educational and training platforms in the armed forces. It can be expected that not every future military professional will have these qualities. Therefore it is necessary that the military educational and training system gradually, effectively, at the right time and to the required extent and standard should meet the requirements placed on an officer at a certain level of his career. It is evident and experience from abroad shows that this cannot be attained in a single institution. A career officer must be both a well-trained and experienced commander as well as a well-educated individual. We should realize that along with higher professionalism, demands as to the level of education of military professionals will also rise, especially for officers and warrant officers. With an assumed 50% of university-level educated people in the population in 2010 and with the increasing complexity of technical systems, it will be also necessary to enable some warrant officers to gain a bachelor’s degree. If the armed forces were to fail in this respect, then the general level of education in the armed forces would be considerably below the national average. This is unambiguously accepted by the armed forces in other countries.

Nevertheless, we should avoid creating an imbalance between education, training and practice in “the interests of education”. In our present system it is possible that the following “model situation” could occur. A graduate from a military secondary school can directly after his graduation attend the military university-level school, he graduates from a bachelor study program, but, temporarily there is no appropriate assignment for him. That is why he does not assume his initial appointment but continues in a master study program. He is an outstanding student and he is offered and has the chance to study a full-time doctoral program. Quite possible in accordance with the University Act. After completing his study he can work without any practice in the armed forces as
DEFENCE AND STRATEGY

a military university teacher or he can assume his first command. Consequently, after 12 years of study provided by the armed forces and without any practical experience he (Lt. Dipl. Eng. XY PhD.) assumes a position such as an engineer platoon leader or engineer company commander or he may even work as a teacher. Certainly, this is an extreme case but the system should not permit this sort of thing.

The task of the military educational and training system is to admit young men and women with different qualifications, education (e.g. different levels of the school leaving examination) but also different ideas about the military profession and gradually to mould and prepare them mainly for assuming command, staff or logistical positions in the armed forces. At the same time to improve their general education. More than before it is also necessary to expect a greater number of civilian university graduates joining the army, especially in specific professions, and to educate and train them according to needs of the armed forces.

I assume that the Czech Armed Forces will be responsible for both training and education also in the future, even if a university-level study can under certain circumstances be gradually provided by civilian institutions. But for this there are neither the right conditions and nor in fact any reasons. The existence of the current autonomous system is a major advantage of the Czech Armed Forces and a basis which can be transformed to provide the required education and training. But the transformation should not be delayed. Several years have been already wasted and the time-lag which exists in the educational system, related to the implemented study programs, is 3—5 years. Though the standard of the current system is from the educational point of view very high, it is very expensive. However, it serves a number of other functions, especially in science and research, expert activities, life-time education, specialized courses, retraining, etc.

The argument, that a strategic defence revision has not yet been completed and that is why requirements for numbers of graduate-specialists for 2005—2010 could not have been unambiguously defined, does not stand up. On the contrary, it is necessary to prevent “precise” definitions of numbers of specialties (except for doctors or pilots), provided that a model of longer entrance preparation of officers (3—5 years) is preserved. For the period in question, we are able to estimate approximate numbers of military professionals within an acceptable margin of error. After the start of their military career, the candidates should be divided only into several main groups according to arms and services and they should specialize gradually. Even the current system of military education makes this possible, but this possibility is not used.

Above all, education should be separated from the training in time, space, institution and personnel. This would facilitate an effective allocation of resources. Responsibility for training, especially preparation for special assignments is unambiguously a military matter. Division of study and training into blocks makes longer initial preparation possible, though a combination of a short introductory courses with practice and study could be also considered. In training and in the preparation for future assignments
the closest possible link with practice must be ensured. It is essential to introduce rotation of commander, instructor and selected teacher positions in order to maintain a proper relationship between the school, training base and military practice. The position of instructor (teacher) at a military school or a training base should be an integral part of the military career of an officer. Accordingly, accredited study programs must maintain long-term personnel stability and professional growth comparable with civilian scientific and educational institutions even if this results in a lower number of military positions compared with civilian ones. Educational institutions must invest significantly in the scientific research and an information base. The training bases then have to invest in military equipment, training facilities and military training areas. This is the only way to provide a high standard of education and appropriate training for future military professionals.

In my opinion, it is very important to solve the problem of objective evaluation that will be decisive for career progression. From the present evaluation method we can accept the so-called career evaluation for professionals on comparable positions performed by a single superior. There is no generally comparable evaluation method. Nevertheless, evaluation and testing must be implemented not only before each admission to the next level of accredited study programs but also before admission to lifetime education programs and courses. Results from study programs must be evaluated if a new assignment is to follow.

There will be competition throughout the duration of a career and a number of military professionals will leave the armed forces considerably before the expiration of their active service. These people must be prepared and educated or retrained so that they may find their proper place in civilian life according to their ideas and in addition that they may apply which they have learned through serving in the armed forces to full extent.

The preparation, i.e. education and training of the military professional is a very complicated and complex process. Neither of its components can be implemented at the expense of the other. Both of them have their specifics and regularities. As society and the armed forces undergo changes, the military educational and training system must be changed too. These changes are not aimed at liquidating anything that is effective for the preparation of military professionals. However, the aim is to eliminate discrepancies, to follow the trends of development in society and in the military and to provide conditions for the professionals in the armed forces to acquire all-round capabilities to be prepared to exercise their demanding profession in peace and also in the environment of armed conflict. At the same time they must be mature personalities respected by society as educated and cultured citizens.