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President's Notes: Challenge!

R. G. Colbert
U.S. Navy

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CHALLENGE !

Their navy is modern; it is efficient; it is fast. And it is growing at an unprecedented rate. Their new guided-missile cruisers and destroyers are as good, and better offensively than our best. Their surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles have no comparable counterparts in our own or the free world naval inventory. Gas turbine propulsion makes their newest ships faster than most, if not all, of the U.S. and NATO combatants. The trend in their new ship and submarine designs, rapid production, and expanded worldwide operations is both dynamic and sustained. The Soviet Navy is threatening to relegate ours to a status of second best. And in some aspects we already are far behind.

But it is not only the phenomenal advances made by the Soviet Navy in the past decade that have put us in such an unenviable, but undeniable, position. Of equal significance have been our own actions and inactions—our failure to match the Soviet shipbuilding program, our neglect of R. & D. in the surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missile field, and our belated efforts to provide an adequate defense against the Soviet missile threat are all part of the problem we face today. Compounding this situation are current and prospective cutbacks in ships and personnel.

These cutbacks have been necessary for budgetary reasons. With a smaller percentage of our Federal budget devoted to national defense during the present inflationary spiral, all the armed services have been forced to cut their respective force levels. For the Navy, manpower, the most expensive budget item, has been deeply cut. This in turn has meant ship inactivations—mostly vintage ships which no longer are



capable of sustained high-tempo operations. Clearly and inevitably, we are moving, *at least temporarily*, toward a substantially smaller Navy than we have known since the 1930's.

Our job will be to make this smaller Navy the most efficient and capable in the world—at a minimum, capable of protecting vital U.S. interests wherever necessary. And where our own vital interests are not immediately involved, but those of our allies are, we must be capable of assisting them on a regional, partnership basis, directly or indirectly. This, in essence, is the thrust of the Nixon Doctrine from a Navy viewpoint as I see it.

As we well know, we remain desperately in arrears in the crucial area of ship construction. Although we completed 55 new ships last fiscal year, budget cutbacks that year eliminated 180 old ships, resulting in a net reduction of 125 ships in a single year. To date this fiscal year the net loss is 56 ships. Although both Secretaries Laird and Chafee have recognized the urgent need for new and better equipped ships, the fact remains that it can take as long as 7 years from the laying of the keel to the launching of a ship. Even if we began a massive ship construction program today—and I believe we should if we are to retain even unilateral naval parity with the Russians in the long term—it would still take us until 1978 for our efforts to bear fruit.

By then, assuming that the U.S.S.R. continues its dynamic shipbuilding program at the current rate and assuming we continue our own slow pace, the seas could well be dominated by the Soviet Union. And no war would have necessarily taken place. For example, at the Kremlin's whim crucial straits such as Gibraltar, the Dardanelles, Malacca, and passage around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope could be selectively closed . . . in blackmail tactics. On a broader scale our overall sea lines of communications could be threatened, meaning our ability to deliver men and material by sea in time of crisis might be preempted.

While some would argue that the Kremlin would never consider such a reckless strategy, we should remember Khrushchev's Cuban missile venture 9 years ago. He launched this hazardous operation knowing full well that the United States then had overwhelming strategic nuclear as well as naval superiority. By the mid-1970's the U.S.S.R. may well have reversed the 1962 situation and feel relatively free to exercise the blackmail option.

Therefore, as we strive to build the new Navy we need, interim prospects are far from bright. Those risks will be far less if we recognize the challenge and respond in the only way possible at this juncture: make our residual Navy of the immediate years ahead as highly efficient and effective as feasible; justify a program that will dynamically rebuild the U.S. Navy to at least maintain parity with the U.S.S.R.; and finally, convince our allies of the challenge we collectively face. They must understand that naval cooperative arrangements on a worldwide, day-to-day basis are required in order to meet the collective challenge. And here we shall need a concentrated and well-directed effort to spread the word to our many European, Latin, and Asian allies, practically all of whom have important maritime interests, about the grave crisis the entire free

world could face from the burgeoning Soviet Navy.

This may not be an easy task, but it is one which must be undertaken with vigor and enthusiasm *now*. However, it cannot be undertaken without full cognizance of the political factors and potential difficulties involved in attempting to persuade our allies of the common threat. These I believe break down into four groups:

First, many of the nations whom we must persuade have a different conception than we do of the threat represented by the growth in Soviet maritime capability. A world view is the natural perspective of a world power such as the United States, but a smaller power tends to look at security matters from a more parochial vantage. Of all our allies, probably only the current government of Great Britain has a world view comparable to our own. To induce a proper concern within Europe and Asia about the worldwide Soviet maritime challenge, we will have to select strategic arguments which our allies can appreciate.

I believe stressing the threat to their oil supply routes is the best one. After all, Europe relies for some 60 percent of its oil on Middle East sources and has usually less than 2 months supply on hand at any time. Japan gets 90 percent of its oil from the same place. Obviously, Soviet control of the seaways on which this oil is carried could threaten near disaster to Europe and Japan in time of war; in time of peace, it could result in steep payoffs for the privileged passage of tankers.

Second is the problem that in Europe there is a strong tendency to consider that the Soviet Union is seriously seeking meaningful détente. Consequently the military threat to Europe is rated lower than it was even 5 years ago. Whatever the particular interpretation of the Bonn-Moscow treaty, it may be argued that it is almost universally viewed as a portent of reduced tensions.

Soviet presumed preoccupation with its eastern neighbor fortifies this interpretation. But such a view completely ignores the imperialist pattern of Soviet efforts in the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, and Europe, particularly Berlin. Continued military support to North Vietnam, the arming of Egyptian fighting units, and the overrunning of Czechoslovakia are hardly indications that the Russians have abandoned their strategy for world control begun by Lenin and Stalin. It is our task to demonstrate how their maritime growth and their employment of seapower are very much a part of a new, broader worldwide strategy designed to help achieve that consistent goal.

Third, the U.S. cutback in defense must raise doubts about how seriously we assess this Soviet threat. There would appear to be a contradiction between our concern for the dramatic rise of Soviet seapower on the one hand and our equally dramatic reduction in our own forces on the other. Here the domestic determinants which affect our foreign policy and defense posture, which have had so decisive an influence in the shaping of the Nixon Doctrine need emphasis. These determinants are hard facts, and as such they must be explained in the most convincing of terms if our allies are to understand correctly why we are lowering our profile abroad.

Finally, the fourth problem inherent in any effort to convince our allies of the need for greater allied naval cooperation stems from the peculiar national suspicions and policies restricting many of our allies. Coming readily to mind are European reluctance to see a

resurgent German naval might; Japanese hesitancy to rearm; and the political question about the naval role of South Africa.

Certainly our policymakers cannot ignore these four aspects of the problem in working to achieve expanded allied naval cooperation. However, the possibilities for achieving greater collective endeavors along these lines remain realistic despite them. Regional multinational forces operating on a day-to-day surveillance basis supported by call-up attack forces for use in time of hostilities are both feasible options as has been demonstrated in NATO. Similar arrangements should be feasible worldwide. They are realistic—and practical—manifestations of existing allied naval cooperation whose further development will depend upon two things: first, a clear explanation and assessment to our allies of the implications of the Soviet maritime expansion; and second, a convincing delineation of the synergistic effect of combined naval arrangements on ensuring free world control of its vital sea lines of communication. The need is to convey the message to our allies that unless we act promptly, and together, we risk losing the struggle for control of the seaways without which we cannot survive. The hour is already late to make this point.



R. G. COLBERT
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College