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An Appraisal of Soviet Maritime-Naval Capabilities

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Important to understanding the nature of our new maritime rival is an evaluation of her capabilities and outlook. Some consideration of her intentions--as the least of possibilities opened by the Soviet Union's burgeoning competence on the sea--is thus inherent to any useful study thereof. More important, of course, is analysis of the roles she is exploiting and may exploit in the arena of international power. Russia's own image of herself and her history is significant to this appreciation. Definitive answers are not expected at this stage, but it is hoped that the inquiry herewith begun can lead to a clearer view of some of the prospects for future years.

AN APPRAISAL OF SOVIET MARITIME - NAVAL CAPABILITIES

An article by
Professor Edward L. Beach
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The word "appraisal," in its dictionary sense of value setting, perhaps overstates the intent of this essay. This paper deliberately aims at laying out, in a categorical and even in a provocative way, as many aspects of Soviet maritime capability--with particular emphasis on the Soviet Navy--as possible. It does not seek to convince; that will be for a later effort. It does seek to open the way to a relevant examination of a complex situation of great import to the United States.

It is probably true that navies, more than any other system of arms, are in thrall to the past. The aphorism that the military prepares for the next war with the weapons and techniques of the last one applies to the Navy of the United States more than to either of its sister services. Reasons are easy to ascribe; the great expense of modern ships of war,

their lengthy gestation through budget, design, and construction stages, their long lives. An important offshoot of this is that in the U.S. Navy there has developed what might be termed almost a fetish for perfectionism in minute detail based upon an idealistic concept of efficiency and reflecting "lessons learned" from the past. Roots of this syndrome can be found in the makeup and career indoctrination of the average American naval officer, and not surprisingly the result is a concentration on doing what has been done in the past better than before.

It is the national tradition of invention and innovation which rescues the U.S. Navy from being entirely oriented toward conceptually comfortable, if strenuously pursued, perfection of the past. In the U.S. Navy the innovators have, almost as a group, been men apart,

somehow different from their fellows. This fact reinforces the point. Perhaps concentration on past methods of doing things is endemic to all established navies.

In new navies, however, there is little "past" to draw upon; no history, no tradition, no obvious standards of measurement. Essentially, the new navy must mark itself against an absolute measure, created by its own evaluation of its objectives. Frequently these objectives must include an estimate of a potential enemy's capabilities in the context of the expected or probable confrontation. If the new navy feels that it can control the initiation and terms of the confrontation, its fundamental intentions may be revealed by the navy it builds. It, too, is partly conditioned, however, by the past of its expected adversary; it cannot entirely insulate itself against the proved capability of the old order. Hence, the "absolute standard" has a tendency to look like those of the past, despite the effort to chart a new path for the application of naval power. But if a radically changed condition can be identified, then the standard against which it measures itself can be more absolute and less repetitive of past practice.

It would be a mistake, of course, to ascribe our maritime concern at this time to such involved reasoning or to sweeping generalizations derived from it. It would be equally wrong to credit the Soviet Navy with superhuman perception because of its undeniable success in causing us concern. But it is intriguing to note that Russia is following good precedent. For instance, the fledgling U.S. Navy taught the veteran British Navy some painful lessons during the War of 1812 which it had not been able to do during the Revolutionary War of a generation earlier. A newly built German Navy did the same thing in two successive World Wars. The Johnny-come-lately Japanese Navy taught the vaunted U.S. Navy a number of equally

unpleasant lessons during the early years of what Samuel E. Morison calls the "Great Pacific War." The point is that in each of these instances the new navy was able to select some special feature, a changed condition, by which its objectives were served. In 1812 it was superior American frigates; in 1914 and 1939 it was also better ships, but more important was the employment of German submarines against surface commerce; in 1942 it was better Japanese equipment and training pointed directly against the target navy (that of the United States).

Applying these thoughts to the context of 1969, one can quickly detect certain analogies; and it is possible, as well, to suggest what may be the new conditions upon which Soviet naval policy might be based. It is clear that the most important changed condition is the existence of the nuclear weapon. Second to this is the more subtle fact that war is now recognized as a non-profitable undertaking, whatever the outcome, for the superpowers. Third, if war cannot be avoided, it is still better to win than to lose. But, even for a superpower, the definition of a vital interest worthy of the risk of national survival will be much more restrictive than ever before. This has led to the idea which has been discussed in some quarters that "a great power must be prepared to 'lose' some wars."

Thus war, in the all-out connotation of the term, would appear to have become less likely in this last half of the 20th century than it has been. Even for nonnuclear war between the great powers is this true, for the danger of escalation to nuclear war is an ever-present possibility. Herman Kahn, in characteristic summation, says that "the Soviet Union and the United States have one great common objective: avoidance of nuclear conflict."--and he goes on to declaim that no bond could be stronger. In short, strategic thinkers agree that war is no longer a rational recourse

between the superpowers except in defense of a truly vital national interest (as opposed to a semantic one). Since a "vital national interest" is defined as one a state will fight for, perhaps only the believable threat of nuclear war can make the final determination of whether or not a given matter is "vital to one or both contestants. If this is true, then the world may be in for a series of testing confrontations.

In all history, it is only recently that war has become clearly unprofitable; but this appreciation is confined to the superpowers, as is shown by the wars in Korea and Vietnam. The small powers, as of today, can still seek to achieve their ambitions by arms under the shade of the nuclear umbrella, on the theory that clever manipulation of basic conflicts between the superpowers can give them room to maneuver. With this example, a superpower might also see a possibility for profitable aggression, if it can somehow be accomplished without resort to arms and without endangering truly vital interests of any superpower, itself included. While the evidence may never be as conclusive as strategists would wish--and until it becomes entirely the province of historians instead of strategists this cannot be--the example of the Cuban missile crisis would seem to confirm this diagnosis. It is argued that there was a miscalculation in Moscow as to where the threshold of vital interest lay, and that once recognized it was carefully respected. For that matter, the many analyses of the confrontation from the U.S. side indicate that the same sorts of considerations were foremost in Washington as well. But the truly vital interest happened to be American.

These arguments do not dispose of conflict so much as they purport to indicate the sort of conflict which is likely to occur. It is the purpose of the Naval War College study of the Soviet Maritime Threat to sort out and clarify the pieces of the mosaic, to identify and

consider the facets of the problem, and, hopefully, to indicate in some measure what solutions or actions are most in the national interest. Probably even this final statement encompasses too much. The study will be long continuing and thorough; it may not ever achieve specific solutions; it may, indeed, not get beyond setting out the parameters of the problem for continuing consideration over a much longer time. In the immediate sense, the objective is to set the stage for an ensuing year of research and study.

In considering the Soviet move into the world ocean, there are many functional divisions of her interest: navy, merchant marine, scientific, the fishing industry, and the use of sea movement as an adjunct of foreign aid--while aid, itself, is part of the overall push into the "Third World." If, as seems likely, the Soviet thrust has now turned to the sea and to tactics geared to a low-visibility drive for power, it is necessary that the tactical responses of the United States be considered with this carefully in mind. What these should be is far from clear; it is not even clear that there should be any overt "response." Whether it was so planned as a matter of policy or not, it appears that no Soviet move in its current maritime expansion has yet gone beyond the confines of accepted international law.

In a recent document distributed by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, there is the notation that the Soviet Navy has roots which go much farther into the past than its date of official creation (14 February 1918). This is shown in some detail by the article on Russian naval history which appears elsewhere in these pages. The history of Tsarist efforts to establish a navy go back to Peter the Great and the beginning of the 16th century. A landlocked nation which has always yearned for and fought for an outlet to the sea and for warm water ports free of foreign control, Russia suffered frustration after

frustration at the hands of her European neighbors. Her very geography was destructive of ambitions for the sea. Of all the nations in the world, Russia has always been farthest from having the prerequisites for seapower as described by its primary exponent, Alfred Thayer Mahan; Yet, since Peter, she has had a navy of some sort, and she has shown innovation and ingenuity, not only in the designs of its ships but also in its operational concepts and its maintenance in adversity.

Whatever we think of its political system, a nation of 230 million people is not going to be kept down, particularly when it has attained the preeminent position in Europe. For two and a half centuries, Russia has striven for free use of the only warmwater ports available to her and has been blocked by political and military machinations involving the Turkish Straits. "Keeping the Soviet Union down" is a game that may in the future become difficult to play, given that Soviet moves remain within the framework of existing maritime and international law. The Dardanelles and the Suez Canal are two cases in point. Clearly, Russia has a strong, possibly even "vital" interest in both of these waterways. If her future moves are as circumspect as those to date, the free world and the United States in particular may find it difficult to deny her the final achievement, in the fullest measure, of the free use of them, she has so long sought.

Regarding the Soviet merchant marine, a case can be made that its development is inevitable for a mature industrialized nation with the announced objective of carrying all its own foreign trade. But this merchant fleet has upon occasion—as for example with its empty freighters returning from Haiphong—engaged in rate-cutting wars with free world carriers; and since its owners and its government are one and the same, it can easily change its basis for operations from commerce, to nauti-

cal intrigue, to fleet support. The United States can also shift its basis for operations, but only with much greater difficulty, essentially only in national emergency. This gives the U.S.S.R. "cold war" advantage. The Soviets have announced installation of a computer-control complex for instant retrieval of status and location of any one of their far-ranging ships. U.S. shipping could, of course, do the same, but the national application of the computer-control system is unique. In effect, a national industry is at the instant summons of its masters. For the United States to match the Soviets there would have to be a similar computer built on a standby basis, coupled with legislation permitting nationalization of all U.S.-flag ships (and possibly flags of convenience as well) upon declaration of emergency by the President.

Profit is secondary to the Soviet merchant marine—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is sometimes measured in a different coin. The Soviet image which is transmitted wherever one of its ships touches has had its own value and its concrete results. Finally, an interesting statistic may have some bearing: it appears that the U.S. Navy requires one and a half times as many support ships per major fleet unit as the Soviet Navy. Partly this is no doubt due to the existence of very large units in the American Fleet, the aircraft carriers; and doubtless, more distant deployments have a bearing. It is, however, a fact that the Soviet merchant marine, because of its status as a totally owned government business, is employed on occasion in direct support of its fleet in ways not possible to the United States.

As for the fishing industry, the Soviets have shown their traditional capability for imaginative improvements and innovation in the development of their high seas fishing fleet. Beginning shortly after World War II, large government capital investments were made to pro-

duce a fleet and to expand and modernize port facilities, repair yards, and personnel services. Recognizing that the unit cost of catching and processing fish at sea was both cheaper and more efficient than doing the processing on shore, very large mother ships were built to service the smaller catcher boats, provide them with relief when necessary, and process their catches quickly. This fleet now ranges over the waters of the entire world and consists of 4,000 ships of various classes and sizes. It is still growing steadily. At one time it was feared that the Soviet fishing industry would ignore conservation practices, and there have been cases of this sort reported. More than likely, however, these reports have reflected disputations over catch, procedures, and "traditional" fishing grounds, the Soviets being far more efficient than independent fisherfolk and totally uninterested in informal area divisions by the locals. The fact is that the Soviet Union has observed food conservation practices and is a signatory of numerous regulatory treaties and conventions.

By its nature, the large number of its units, and their methods of operation, the Soviet high seas fishing fleet is a logical instrument of surveillance or electronic intelligence ("elint") gathering. The so-called "elint trawlers"--used exclusively for intelligence collecting are indeed converted fishing-type craft, but there are also reports of covert snooping operations by ordinary fishing boats.

In the national overall orchestration of the present Soviet drive to the sea, it is important not to neglect the influence of her scientific programs and her operations in international aid. Practically all of the scientific community contributes in some measure to the growth of the navy, though prominence naturally goes to the engineers and oceanographers. There is some disagreement in the free world regarding the Soviet engineering degree program and the validity of the large numbers of graduates reported

annually (in all disciplines, approximately double those of the United States), but it is nevertheless also clear that the scientific progress of the Soviet Union has been of a high order. Viewed in its proper context, Russian science has always been good (its occasional prostitution by Communist ideology excepted), and the demonstration of significant achievement by Soviet scientists and researchers bears it witness. In oceanography there are institutions throughout Russia applying their efforts primarily to furthering the commercial fishing industry with new techniques and equipment. One of the driving forces has been the inability of agriculture to meet Soviet protein requirements. The effective results of all these efforts are evident in the greatly increased fish catch (in 1970 it is expected to reach 8.6 million tons. This compares with an annual U.S. catch of 2.5 million tons.)

Perhaps the most well-known of the Soviet aid programs is that in Egypt for the Aswan High Dam, now nearing completion. While it might be overstating the case to date Soviet influence in the Arab world from her aid to Nasser with this project, there is no blinking the fact that U.S. influence among the Arab nations is today at an alltime low. Similarly, Soviet infiltration into the nations bordering the Indian Ocean--some of which are politically unsophisticated, others adroit, all relatively weak but with pronounced national aspirations--has been gradual and effective, supported by largess from Moscow. The two most important "infiltratees" in this area are India and Pakistan--if the ready acceptance of Russian aid and influence can loosely be so termed.

The foregoing briefly summarizes the Soviet aid campaign as it is seen at present. What direction it will take in future time is, of course, a matter for conjecture. If "Soviet influence" did not almost automatically spell trouble

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and enmity for the Western World there would be much less concern over its creeping enlargement.

Although it is the credo of the American military planner that he must lay his plans against potential enemy capabilities and ignore "intentions"--since the latter can change so rapidly--it is unfortunately true at the same time that planning must be made with intentions also in mind, if for no other reason than budgetary refusal to accommodate all possible plans for all possible contingencies. As discussed earlier, a new navy challenging an established one sees the same considerations in a different light, especially if its planners have reason to feel they hold the initiative of the form and timing of the contest. Some evaluation of the intentions of the Soviet naval planners--which is to say, the Soviet Government--hence becomes necessary, in order to form our own objectives.

Among the heritages of the past which are still strong in the U.S. Navy is that of the war on the sea, the tradition that a navy must first seek control of the sea and that the proper way of attaining it is to destroy the enemy fleet. This was true also of the British Navy, from which ours drew so much in generations gone by. Alfred Thayer Mahan's studies reinforced this attitude, quite properly and entirely objectively. But the tradition of the battle became also an emotional matter, for it released and made intellectually acceptable those romantic notions which are still part of the makeup of Western man--submerged in the maturity of his adult years though they may be. The commanding officer of the American flagship at the German surrender of their High Seas Fleet in 1918 records in his memoirs that British officers in his cabin broke down and wept that they had not been allowed to avenge the inconclusiveness of the Battle of Jutland. Remonstrances that no victory could be greater than a surrender without a fight did not satisfy

their emotional disappointment.

On both emotional and objective grounds, it is completely understandable that nothing could induce American naval officers to forego readying themselves, in all ways available to them, for the battle at sea which is still undeniably a possibility. Nor should they, so long as the possibility exists. But it is necessary for them to remain aware that for a traditional navy this involves a tremendous cost, stated explicitly in funds and effort required to manipulate such a weighty establishment, and an equally great subtle cost in terms of weaknesses they have been forced to accept or which, indeed, may be unappreciated.

It follows (and this can be a dangerous deduction if taken too literally) that the new Soviet Navy, unfettered by these same traditions of battle, operating from the conceptually advantageous position of being the challenger to the hegemony of the older navy, may have an entirely different idea of how to achieve national objectives. This would suggest that it may not feel called upon to hazard a contest between great ships far at sea. Far more likely might it see its purposes served by slow, inexorable movement of all the national forces, of which its own very self, without battle, is but a portion, though a vital portion. Such a concept of the employment of a navy approaches what the Western World has been in the habit of calling a "fleet in being." But this fleet need not be confined to harbor; it need only exist, and in existing show consummate effectiveness of its individual units and a willingness to interpose them between the East and the objectives of the West.

One could argue that it is this which has given rise to the "defensive" theory of the Soviet Navy, that this is responsible for the fact that the Soviets apparently see no requirement to match the Western fleets ship for ship, either in kind or number, and that therefore the Soviet Navy is no threat to free world

stability. Such an interpretation of the observable facts will not stand up if a different view of national and naval strategy is taken.

If the Soviet Navy has no intention of taking on the U.S. Navy in direct action, indirect action is by no means foreclosed. Indirect action may very well lead to a seafight or a series of engagements. It would, therefore, wish to ensure that the ability of its units to take care of themselves individually is well appreciated. It would want the Western navies to realize fully that a *Kashin*-class destroyer is a match for any comparable class ship in any other navy; that the *Kresta* missile cruiser has no counterpart as a multipurpose ship, first class. It would wish to demonstrate that Soviet Navy missiles do work; that it is not afraid of the open sea; that its ships can do anything ours can do, and as well-sometimes better. It would seek to prove that its submarines are efficient, the submarine force large and effective, its units perfectly able to undertake lengthy cruises. Further, the Soviet Navy would want the free world continually to witness the operational daring of its units, their truculence, their readiness, their seamanship, and their willingness to make innovations. All of this has been displayed for our full view.

Fully aware that it is the free world which is on the defensive, caught in defense of the established international order, the Soviet Union is pressing its own freedom of movement. Conceiving that the basic tactics of all free world forces, including naval forces, can only be defensive in concept, the Soviet Navy is ready and fully capable of mounting an offensive strategy in support of an aggressive policy on the part of the Kremlin, even within the constraints of being unable to match the U.S. 6th Fleet, for example. Under the nuclear shadow, Russia needs only to avoid the confrontation of vital issues alluded to earlier. To repeat, it is NATO and the

free world and, by consequence, the U.S. Navy which are defensive. Not the Soviet Union. Once again we are being shown that the "offense to the defense is as three to one." The fear of escalation to nuclear exchange will cause democratic governments (because they are controlled by the mass of the people) to remain far away from the most conservative estimate of the "fatal threshold" of organized conflict. An autocracy, controlled by a few determined men, can retain the initiative by correctly estimating the location of this threshold and running a slightly higher risk of war.

In illustration of this is the idea which has been bruited about of late, that a couple of Soviet destroyers before Lebanon in 1958 might have sufficed to prevent the landing of U.S. Marines, or that Soviet surface escort of the missile-bearing freighters en route to Cuba in 1962 would have vastly changed the conduct of the crisis on the U.S. side. While this point is purely speculative, it can be agreed that the postulated situations would have had a significant impact.

What is being suggested here is that if a navy holds the option of deciding whether or not to fight, it, can by careful management, be effective without fighting. At the same time it can put its adversary to far greater effort and expense because the latter cannot be equally sure of the future. On the other hand, the navy which is designed for combat in terms of previous wars on the high seas may be at a disadvantage because its moves must always be made under the full weight of its much heavier—but unneeded—full war capability.

In support of these arguments, we find that the ships of the Soviet Navy today are qualitatively excellent. Its newest and largest destroyer type, which it calls a "missile cruiser," the *Kresta* class, mounts surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles, 70mm anti-

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aircraft guns, sonar, and ASW weapons, all on a hull slightly smaller than the largest U.S. DLG (Destroyer Leader Missile) types. The probability is that *Kresta* does not have the cruising range of our ships of comparable class, a conclusion drawn from her size and what we know of previous Russian design. But this judgment should be viewed with caution, for we should also note that a total of 195 naval ships, including the destroyer class just previous to the *Kresta*--the *Kashins*--have a very sophisticated all-gas-turbine engineering plant, something we have barely begun to consider for our own firstline ships. As engineers, Soviet designers are not neophytes.

Of course, we must consider the strong Soviet submarine force, far larger than ours and fitted with at least one weapon which we do not have at all, the surface-to-surface air-breathing guided missile (cruise missile) estimated to have a range of more than 400 miles and some sort of terminal guidance or homing mechanism. So far as is known, it is the same missile as is carried in Soviet surface combatants except for the shorter range version in the *Osa* and *Komar* boats; and it can be aimed, apparently, at both ships and shore installations. Without question, as the Soviets themselves claim, its conceptual use includes targeting it against major U.S. units in any belligerent confrontation. It has the tactical drawback, so far as the submarine is concerned, that the sub must surface to shoot it, but this takes only a few minutes. The largest Soviet cruise missile subs are nuclear powered and carry eight of these extremely sophisticated weapons. Additionally, of course, the Soviets have ballistic missile submarines, both conventionally powered and nuclear powered, with their latest and best type being roughly comparable to the U.S. *Polaris* class with 16 vertical missile tubes, its missiles targeted against land positions and able to be fired underwater.

But we find no attack carriers, although there is evidence that construction of four such vessels had been planned in the later years of the Stalin era during the last revival of the "old school" naval thinking. Under Khrushchev these ships were terminated in the planning stage; and effort was concentrated on submarines of various types and purposes, large destroyers with various armament configurations, and the *Osa* and *Komar* types boats, similar to but larger than our PT boats of World War II, armed with a 25-mile cruise missile. That this missile works was proved when it achieved three hits for three shots on the unfortunate Israeli destroyer *Elath* and sank her at a range of about 20 miles.

The lack of aircraft carriers has led to the deduction, in some quarters, that the Soviet Navy is defensively oriented, as it unquestionably was a few years ago. Contrary indication is available in the worldwide deployments which have been demonstrated of recent years and in recent statements by Soviet naval and political leaders that their fleet is now a force able to strike anywhere in the world. On balance, the Soviets, like the Japanese of a generation ago, have carefully evaluated the U.S. Navy, obviously their most likely adversary, and have built into their units those individual capabilities which in their judgment will best enable them to carry out their strategy. The crux of our problem today is to determine what that strategy is, what are its options, and what are Soviet intentions.

In the case of a conventional war at sea, which they probably either do not expect, or expect will occur close to the shores of Europe, it would seem that they have equipped themselves for what has been called, in another context, a "counterforce" strategy (the "force" in this case being our Navy). That is, they could effectively oppose any move of the U.S. Navy which puts it at the end

of a long logistics line while theirs is favored by a short one. In a conventional war in Europe the Soviet Navy would be employed to neutralize ours, so that salvation of a threatened European nation would be possible only by escalation to nuclear exchange.

In the case of a war of nerves or tension, as has been going on since the end of World War II and as we expect is the more likely, we have evidence that the Soviets firmly understand the effective use of a navy and have in an incredibly short time provided themselves with one geared to their growing need. In 1967 Admiral Kosatonov, First Deputy under Admiral Gorshkov, spoke of the Soviet Navy as "strengthening the authority and influence of our homeland in the international arena"--and in that year was noted a difference in Soviet action at sea during a crisis. The time was the 6-day war of 1967; and what we saw was Soviet naval ships in Egyptian ports, by their presence supporting the Arabs and reducing the dimensions of the debacle.

Two important thresholds in the game of naval chicken are the shooting threshold and formal belligerency. The Soviet Navy has been shaped on the premise that the free world will endure a great deal before crossing either of these thresholds--now, because of atom bombs, more than ever before. It has learned that a navy can influence matters to go the way it wants, merely by being present while the decisions are made. It has probably noted and agreed with George Fielding Eliot's recent dictum that "One way of limiting the other side's freedom of action is to increase your own." With this in mind, the occasional truculence of its units, apparently without rationale or reason, can begin to make sense from their point of view.

As for the scene and scenario of the next power play, anyone can guess. One plausible scenario has to do with the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal.

Soon to be abandoned by Britain, the Indian Ocean is ringed by countries ripe for the entrance of Soviet Influence, shakily governed, and vulnerable to penetration or subversion in any form of interest to an aggressor. Even if that were not of importance, there is the high cost factor involved in sending Black Sea commercial traffic around all of Africa to reach ports in the Far East. Of all the great powers, Russia has the most to gain, today, by reopening the Suez Canal. Once this is done, her lines of communication to the Indian Ocean, through which she is sending support to North Vietnam and seeking new possible points of entry into Third World countries, become about half as long as before. Where she has been developing new trade routes and carrying out an extensive program of visits by her very impressive ships, she suddenly has interior lines, shorter than those of any other of the power centers of the world.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor Edward L. Beach did his undergraduate work at the U.S. Naval Academy (Class of 1939), is a graduate of the National War College, and holds a master's degree from The George Washington University. He has had extensive duty in submarines, highlighted by command of the U.S.S. *Triton* (SS(N) 586) during its circumnavigation of the world submerged in 1960; he served as Naval Aide to President Eisenhower from 1953 to 1957; with legislative support and backup during congressional hearings for SECNAV and CNO during 1963-66; and was on the Board of Control, U.S. Naval Institute, from 1964 to 1967. Professor Beach has authored several books, his last being *The Wreck of the Memphis* (1966), has written numerous articles for national periodicals, and produced book reviews for *The New York Times* and professional journals. Professor Beach currently holds the Stephen B. Luce Chair of Naval Science at the Naval War College.

At one stroke, half the world opens to her, and this time she is ready. Even if Russia were not interested in making any effort to capitalize on the effect of her new maritime position, it would still be obvious that her opportunities and influence on the Indian Ocean littoral could not be greatly enhanced.

As C.L. Sulzberger says in a recent article, "the day will come when Moscow makes plain its desire for a privileged sea link from the Black Sea to Asia." It is clear that he was thinking about both peace and war, and that what he thinks the Soviets have in mind is a water passage that cannot be blocked by political action at the choke points, as has happened so often in the past.

It is thoroughly possible that some sort of Soviet guarantee of the Suez Canal, once it has been cleared a supervisory benevolence possibly reminiscent of the one held by Great Britain for so many years, will ensue. It would be one of the ironies of history for the continued existence of that canal, in its one hundredth year, to pass under the aegis of the one nation which--more than any other--England and France have so assiduously and for so many years sought to bar from the world ocean.

As a related but second scenario, probably floated out at a different time in order to reduce world alarm, some similar sort of action might be predicted in the Turkish Straits. Here is another "canal"--made by a capricious nature rather than by man--and it is conceivable that in due course the Soviet Union will make it clear to the world that, come what may, the waters of this strait must remain open to her under any and all circumstances. So long as it serves her purposes she will render lipservice to the Montreux Convention, but the moment this no longer is useful it is likely that she will make her own rules. No more will she suffer the ignominy of having a portion of her fleet, during a war, confined to the Black Sea by

international dictum of nations not involved in the conflict. Tsushima, after all, was only two generations ago, and Russian historians cannot have forgotten that her Black Sea Fleet was not permitted to go to the aid of Admiral Rozhdestvensky and his "Second Pacific Squadron."

What, then, is to be done? Or is anything to be done at this time? Perhaps the best answer, for the time being, is merely to keep a cool national outlook. The Soviet Union is barely beginning to experience some of the problems with which the rest of the maritime world has been coping for a long time. If the freedom of the seas can help bring freedom of the mind, then let us welcome her into the world ocean. It cannot be that Russians are so diabolically clever as we have been in the habit of painting them. Some of the maneuvers which to us have seemed so much to their advantage and so much against ours must really have been accidental or fortuitous; some of ours must occasionally seem pretty smart to them.

It would be well, for instance, for the Soviet Navy to experience a really wild hurricane at sea far from land; or for some of their merchantmen to find themselves attacked by rioting natives in some distant harbor, where the only assistance available happened to be from some old U.S. destroyer; or to be forced to conform to a series of apparently ridiculous local laws, simply because they *are* the law; or for Soviet Navy units to become embroiled in the confusing and sometimes embarrassing business of making port visits in foreign countries for the dual purposes of national policy--and crew rest, liberty, and recreation. All these are broadening.

In any event, the formulation of U.S. maritime policy, naval and commercial, in the face of the changed conditions described and in anticipation of future crises of the nature of those suggested, appears today to be a matter of urgency. Something must be done about

our merchant marine, even if only because the competition is leaving us so far behind. The U.S. Navy, with old tired ships still operating at the frenetic wartime tempo we thought to put behind us forever in August of 1945, is stretched too far and too thin. In the modern context of modern war—that is to say, the nonshooting contest we are now in—it must get new ships, new equipment, and reorient its thinking.

Above all, the nation must calmly and objectively face the problem; for even if the solution will not wait, it cannot be treated as a matter of simple response. The factors involved are too numerous. Each calls for examination in depth. And a satisfactory answer will depend more on understanding the interplay of these factors than on responding to each, as it comes forward, in uncoordinated isolation.



I am sure I need not point out to you the immense advantage it will be to us to have a formidable fleet in readiness.

*Lord Sandwich: Letter to Lord North
10 September 1772*