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## President's Notes

Joseph C. Strasser  
*U.S. Navy*

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## President's Notes

**D**URING THE EARLY and mid-1980s contacts between Soviet and United States military personnel were almost non-existent. Most professional and all social interaction was strictly limited, and permission was required from the Office of the Secretary of Defense before a member of the U.S. armed forces could meet with a Soviet counterpart. This situation has changed dramatically over the last three years, and meetings with our former foes are taking place with increasing regularity.

The immediate catalyst for this policy alteration was the visit to the United States in the summer of 1988 of Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergei Akhromeyev. Then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., invited his Soviet opposite number because he felt it important that Moscow's top military official know from first-hand observation about the United States. Crowe wanted Akhromeyev to see not only our military but also

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Admiral Strasser holds a B.S. from the Naval Academy, two master's degrees from the Fletcher School, Tufts University and, from the same school, a Ph.D. in political science. He graduated from the command and staff course at the Naval War College in 1972. He commanded the USS *O'Callahan* (FF 1051), Destroyer Squadron 35, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Three, and Battle Group Foxtrot. His seven years in Washington included two years in the office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

our farms, factories, cities, and highways so that he would learn how Americans live and work and, he hoped, something of the fabric of our society. This visit was not universally supported in Washington, and several bureaucratic hurdles had to be cleared before the invitation could be issued.

During the course of Akhromeyev's stay in the United States, he and Crowe signed an agreement designed to increase formal contacts between our two militaries. Under the rubric of that accord Crowe has since paid a return visit to Moscow, chiefs of all of our services have travelled to Russia and received their counterparts in this country, and reciprocal ship visits have occurred as have other types of exchanges. All of these activities have served to increase our understanding of each other and perhaps have paved the way for a long period of improved relations.

Over the last several months, the Naval War College has been at the forefront of this effort to learn more about our former adversary. Since November three events of great significance have occurred either in Newport or under our sponsorship not very far from here.

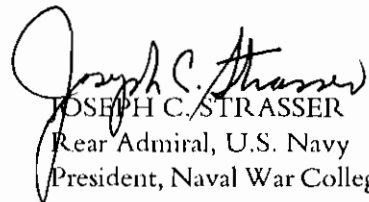
On 8 November, Fleet Admiral Vladimir N. Chernavin became the first Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy (CNO equivalent) to visit the College and address our student body. The Admiral acknowledged that he never imagined that as the head of his navy he would find himself in the United States raising the issues he did with American naval officers. In discussing the new political thinking in his country, which is the basis for its recently adopted defense doctrine, Chernavin defined the essence of this thinking as "the recognition of the authority of common human values, the unacceptability of war as a political tool, the senselessness of the arms race, and the need for new approaches in providing for international and national security." One of the first initiatives to be undertaken, the Admiral explained, is bringing the military budget, construction, and production, including the size of the armed forces, into full compliance with the defensive doctrine. (We are seeking the Admiral's permission to publish the entire text of his remarks in a subsequent edition of the *Review*.)

The following day the U.S. Navy-Royal Navy-Soviet Navy Combined Conference on Maritime Issues began at Brown University in Providence. The fifth in this series of maritime discussions, this three-day session was jointly sponsored by Brown's Center for Foreign Policy Development and the Naval War College. For the first time, the U.S. delegation included flag officer representation: Rear Admiral Ted Baker, Director of the Strategy, Plans and Policy Division of OPNAV, and myself. Two rear admirals also headed the Soviet delegation, while the British team likewise included a flag officer. Each delegation offered a presentation on its country's naval strategy, operations, structure, and budget. These presentations were followed by very frank question-and-answer periods. The overarching theme of the Soviets' remarks was the desire to move from confrontation to cooperation, particularly emphasizing the

desirability of future combined exercises and training. The Russians insisted that they did not view the U.S. or NATO as a threat to their security and in fact do not feel threatened by any state or international organization. They confirmed our observations of significantly reduced out-of-home-area deployments by their naval units. Next year's meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Moscow.

In early December, Admiral Vitaliy Ivanov, Commandant of the Kuznetsov Academy (Naval War College counterpart), and four of his staff arrived in Newport for a week-long visit to learn about our curriculum and the methodologies we employ for educating our officers. They were clearly impressed with the rigor of our program, the seriousness of our students, and the high quality of our civilian and military faculty. Possibilities for cooperation were discussed, and the Admiral raised the issue of future exchange of students. Current planning, the execution of which will depend on the course of events in Russia, calls for a War College delegation to visit the Kuznetsov Academy in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1992.

While the evolving Commonwealth still has a vast military force and therefore bears careful watching, the events outlined above are cause for some optimism. Our meetings have served to point out that we do have mutual interests and common desires for the future. Clearly, much can be gained from serious dialogue. We at the War College are proud that we have been part of this process, and we look forward to fruitful discussions in the future.



JOSEPH C. STRASSER  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
President, Naval War College