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Nikolaevich Chernavin
Commonwealth of Independent States Navy

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A Talk
Followed by Questions and Answers
U.S. Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island
8 November 1991

Fleet Admiral Vladimir Nikolaevich Chernavin

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE to have this opportunity to meet with you. I would like to express my gratitude to all of you present here for your interest in this meeting and to express my thanks to its organizers. During this brief stay on American soil I have met and had discussions with leaders of the Department of Defense and the Department of the Navy. I have visited a carrier, a cruiser, and a nuclear submarine in Norfolk, and one of your oldest educational facilities, in Annapolis. There were other meetings and discussions also. Everywhere I felt sincere hospitality, openness, and a desire for broadening our relations. These contacts and also this meeting today, with such a representative audience at the Naval War College, confirm the fact that not only political but also military relations between our countries are entering a qualitatively new stage.

At this stage in international relations, new priorities have clearly emerged. They are related not to the factors which divide our nations and countries, but rather, they are related to those that unite us. Today the issue is this: we should not emphasize our differences and contradictions or use them as a pretext for confrontations and arms races. On the contrary, we should learn to listen and to understand each other, to hold constructive dialogue, and to search for ways to eliminate mutual mistrust and to achieve rapprochement. This, perhaps, is the key to the successful resolution of the questions of the preservation of peace and the prevention of war.

Fleet Admiral Chernavin is the Commander in Chief of the Commonwealth of Independent States Navy. At the time of his Naval War College address, delivered during a visit to the United States as the guest of the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Frank B. Kelso II, U.S. Navy, he was Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy and Deputy Minister of Defense of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Translation by George E. Fedoroff of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Washington, D.C.

I note with satisfaction that the recent initiatives of our presidents in the area of further reduction of nuclear weapons convincingly testify to an adherence to such principles in the political and military spheres.

In this, our meeting, I would like to acquaint you with the principal provisions of Soviet military doctrine, which is being developed now, as well as to expound on some aspects of naval development in conjunction with this doctrine. I would also like to express my opinion on the subject of reduction of naval arms and some steps for the broadening of confidence measures.

Recent events, changes which took place in the military-political situation in Europe, in the world, and in our country, and the accelerated process of reform in the political, economic, and military fields have, in fact, imparted a stormy and revolutionary character to these reforms. The consistent implementation of obligations undertaken by our two countries, such as the INF [Intermediate Nuclear Force] Treaty, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, cessation of the production of chemical weapons and the gradual destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile, dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and the reciprocal initiatives of our presidents in September and October of 1991—all these factors have had significant influence on the international situation in the world and permit the improvement of relations between our countries.

Serious changes in political and economic life are taking place in our country. I suppose you are aware of them. All this has made it necessary to revise many provisions of our military doctrine which was adopted in May of 1987.

What is our general view of the new Soviet military doctrine? First of all, it is defensive and common to all of our sovereign republics. It must comprise common principal views on the questions of joint defense and meet the national security requirements of the republics that will be included in the renewed Union. The new political thinking became the basis of the new doctrine. The essence of the new political thinking is in 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.

Today, however, it is a bit premature to speak about the elimination of a military threat to the renewed Union. Right now there is increased danger of the eruption of local conflicts on the basis of territorial, interethnic, religious, and other contradictions. The development of the theory and practice of military art is being carried out on the basis of a defensive strategy in accordance with which the fundamental efforts of the defense of the country are concentrated within state boundaries.

In our opinion, to carry out the objectives of national defense we need less numerous, and professional, armed forces, adequate for the size of our country and our borders. They should be equipped with highly effective, modern

military hardware. We do not intend to have armed forces in excess of the minimum required to prevent war and to repel any attack from without.

It is intended that the security of the Union in the new military-political situation will be provided, first of all, by nuclear deterrent forces, and also by maintaining conventional forces in a state and condition which will be able to prevent regional conflicts and, in the case of aggression, to reliably repulse it and preclude escalation of the conflict.

Adoption of the new military doctrine calls for an objective necessity to develop a new concept of military reform that envisages a broad program of changes in the defensive system of the Union at the military-political, organizational, military-technical, and other levels. The intent of military reform is the solution of three complex problems.

“During the last two years we have removed from the order of battle of our navy over two hundred ships, among them submarines, cruisers, and destroyers. In the current year we plan to decommission over fifty ships.”

The first is bringing the defense budget, military production, and military development in its entirety, including the composition, infrastructure, and equipping of the armed forces, into full compliance with the defensive military doctrine while considering the real changes taking place in the state system of our country. The second is the replacement of a quantitative approach to defense problems and to combat readiness and training of the Army and Navy by a qualitative one. The third is a deep and comprehensive democratization of military life and an improvement of socioeconomic conditions for all categories of servicemen.

In accordance with this plan we have started to implement some large-scale initiatives, particularly in the INF and CFE [Conventional Forces in Europe] Treaties, as well as the unilateral reduction of our armed forces which started in 1989. We are consistently creating completely new defensive groupings of our armed forces within our state boundaries. We are also revising our plans for the combat deployment of our armed forces.

We are planning a number of major steps in the structural reorganization of our armed forces, including their upper command structure. It is envisioned that they will consist not of five, as today, but four component services, which will be as follows: the Strategic Deterrent Forces, the Air Forces, the Navy, and Ground Defense Troops. The military administrative subdivisions of the country will be refined. It is envisioned that command and control over the Union armed forces will be exercised through administrative (military-political) and operational (military) lines.

We are convinced that the strategic nuclear forces should be unified under and subject to a strictly centralized operational control system, which would completely preclude their unsanctioned deployment.

As for the Navy, its structure basically will remain intact as is—the four fleets, the Caspian Flotilla, and the Leningrad Naval Base—though within this framework we envision serious changes due to a significant reduction in the numerical strength and composition of fleet forces.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that none of you have any doubt that this meeting has been made possible by the significant changes in the relations between our two countries, in both the political and military spheres. Just recalling what kind of relationship we had only a few years ago, I can say that in those days I could never have imagined a situation in which I, the Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, in the year in which we are celebrating the 295th anniversary of our navy, would find myself in the United States and discussing with you the issues of today's meeting. By the way, the tricentennial of our navy will be very widely celebrated in our country in 1996.

It gives me special pleasure to note that such changes are taking place in the relations between our navies. In 1989, I was glad to welcome to our navy Admiral Trost, who was then the Chief of Naval Operations. In my mind I call him the "Columbus of our times." The only difference lies in the fact that Columbus was sailing westward five hundred years ago to discover America, while Admiral Trost—five hundred years later—was sailing eastward to discover the U.S.S.R., for the benefit of the navies of our two countries. I will not try to hide the fact that it gives me great pleasure to be the discoverer of the same route in the opposite direction, from east to west, and to be the guest of the U.S. CNO, the esteemed Admiral Kelso.

As history bears witness, our good contacts date back to the eighteenth century. They are connected with the name of your national hero, [John] Paul Jones, one of the founders of your navy. During the years of the Second World War, our wartime cooperation within the framework of the anti-Hitler coalition enabled us to maintain an important communication link in the Atlantic through which our country received arms, equipment, and food.

From 26 August to 6 September this year, the Northern Fleet, the communities of Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk, and World War II veterans from the U.S.S.R., Great Britain, and the United States joined in a festive and large celebration to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first convoy of ships of the anti-Hitler coalition allies, which had the codename "Dervish."

The exchange of official ship visits between the navies of the Soviet Union and the U.S. is a concrete manifestation of the successful development of contacts between us. We welcome the establishment of contacts between our respective naval educational establishments. This December, a delegation from our Naval

Academy* will visit the United States. We are deeply convinced that the expansion of such contacts is advisable also in the future. We attach a great deal of significance to such activities and regard them as important steps toward developing friendly relations between our navies and strengthening trust between the Soviet and American peoples.

The men of the Soviet Navy value highly the intergovernmental Agreement on the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas, which was concluded in 1972. As concerns our respective navies, there has been not a single case of violation of this Agreement in the current year. We will continue to observe the letter and spirit of this Agreement in the future. We are glad to see that the example set by our countries has been followed by other sea powers. The Soviet Union has concluded agreements on the prevention of incidents at sea with the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, and a number of other countries.

I believe that with an audience like this there is no special need to convince anyone that our country is not just one of the largest continental powers but also one of the largest maritime powers. It is no accident that the strategic position of our state has always been supported not just by its army, but also by its navy. Our navy has no specific strategic concepts concerning its employment, or a system of military bases on foreign territory. The purpose of its development, its mission, and the methods of its employment are determined only by the geographic location of our country and by the requirements of the defensive doctrine, which are the same for all of our military services.

"It is my firm belief that the question of starting negotiations on naval forces has been ripe for a long time. In our view, it would be expedient to start without delay a concrete dialogue on the entire complex of issues relating to strengthening the security and stability of ocean and sea theaters of war. . . ."

During the last two years we have removed from the order of battle of our navy over two hundred ships, among them submarines, cruisers, and destroyers. In the current year we plan to decommission over fifty ships. In order to implement the Treaty on the Reduction of Strategic Offensive Arms, we plan to decommission by the year 2000 over twenty strategic missile submarines and cut in half the number of formations of these submarines. We are also planning to decrease significantly the strength of the general-purpose forces. We are trying to create a navy smaller in size but more mobile, modern, of a better quality, and with better combat characteristics.

*The Kuznetsov Naval Academy in St. Petersburg, the equivalent of the U.S. Naval War College. *Ed.*

The negotiation process today plays a significant role in relations between our countries. Under modern conditions, such processes are a requirement of the times and we cannot avoid them. I believe that you will agree with me that agreements that have been signed and those that are being prepared for signing should, first of all, be based on equal rights, and secondly, they should include all arms and not only some, if we really want to reduce significantly the level of military confrontation.

It is known at present that the treaty process has encompassed the strategic offensive arms of our countries. Our two presidents have proposed initiatives in the field of tactical nuclear weapons; however, weapons owned by U.S. allies have not been taken into account. The conventional forces and the numerical strength of ground forces and land-based aviation in Europe are also being reduced. As for general-purpose naval forces and their conventional arms, the question of their reciprocal reduction has not been covered by treaty obligations. Our concern is aroused by the fact that as long as real reductions of nuclear arms, ground forces, and land-based aviation are going on, the military balance will shift in favor of the side which possesses a more powerful general-purpose naval force.

It is my firm belief that the question of starting negotiations on naval forces has been ripe for a long time. In our view, it would be expedient to start without delay a concrete dialogue on the entire complex of issues relating to strengthening the security and stability of ocean and sea theaters of war, the elimination of sources of military danger posed by naval activities, and the restriction and future reduction of the offensive components of navies.

I hope this meeting will serve the cause of improving bilateral relations between our two countries and their navies.

Question and Answer Session

Question: Admiral, in the reform area, the political and military reforms, do you perceive that officers such as yourself will be replaced in the Ministry of Defense with civilians?

Fleet Admiral Chernavin: We have not finalized the reforms, and right now we are still at the stage of development. However, on the basis of work completed, we envision the following: as alluded to in my presentation, there will be two structures, a military and a civilian structure.

The civilian structure will have a civilian minister of defense. He will have under him a civilian structure with the usual committees for different purposes. The deputy minister for armaments will probably be part of this civilian structure. Today he is a military man. Some other military officers may also be replaced with civilians.

As far as the military structure is concerned, it could be headed by the chief of the general staff, who will also be the commander in chief of the armed forces. I am not saying supreme commander. Our supreme commander is our president, just as it is in the United States. The chief of the general staff will have his own military structure. We will have four instead of five services, with four commanders in chief. The following commanders in chief will remain: Ground Forces, Air Forces, Strategic Forces, and Navy. Today, as you know, we have five services. In the future there will be no PVO [air defense forces] as a separate service.

As concerns the persons who will remain and who will go, you ought to know that we have significantly replaced many of the close deputies of the minister of defense, and this renewal should become an ongoing process as I understand it is in your armed forces and in your navy. As I said in my presentation, I received Admiral Trost quite recently in the Soviet Union. He was then Chief of Naval Operations, and in 1989 he invited me to make a reciprocal visit to the United States. And, when I finally came, it turned out that my dear host was not Admiral Trost, but Admiral Kelso. So, time flies. As concerns the principle of rotation, we adhere to it as you do and support it fully.

Q: Admiral, on the ground forces, there have been some discussions of having republic in addition to central ground forces. Do you anticipate the same claim on naval forces, or do you think they will remain centralized under your command?

A: You are correct, such processes are underway in our country. Apart from Union-subordinated and organized armed forces, the republics are planning to create numerically small forces subordinated to them. As for the final structure of those forces, and the possibility of their action and participation in crises, their subordination to unified command in order to execute unified plans, and the use of their troops on republic territory, these processes are under discussion right now, and that is why I cannot give you a specific answer on this undecided question.

As far as the Navy is concerned, regarding our Northern, Pacific, and Baltic Fleets, this question has not been raised. But this question was raised to some degree by the Ukraine in connection with the Black Sea Fleet. The Ukraine is quite a populous republic, with forty million people, and has sometimes said that it would like to have its own naval structures. I consider the Black Sea Fleet will remain centrally subordinated as it is today. As for the Ukraine, I believe it would be advisable to organize a division or brigade of border guard ships, as they exist today in all other fleets, but which are not naval units but are in the border guards. Such small structures composed of small ships for coastal operation exist in all fleets, and we will support their being in the Ukraine, similar to your Coast Guard.

Q: What did you do during the civilian putsch? Do you believe in civilian control over the military?

A: Despite the fact that you have asked me a very difficult question, I will try to answer it. First, I see that you do not have a fully correct understanding of the processes which occurred in our country during those three days in August. Your slightly incorrect understanding of those processes can be seen in the way you pose the question. You characterized these events as a military overthrow, and in this connection you express your concern about civilian control over the military organization in our country. I want to make it clear that the overthrow and subsequent investigative processes are not defined as an attempt at a military coup. It is called an attempt at a *coup d'état*. That is a more precise definition of these events. Judge for yourself. Among the leaders who tried to head these events were primarily civilians of the very highest rank. They included the vice president—a civilian, the prime minister and chairman of the government—a civilian, and the only, single, real military man was the minister of defense, Marshal Yazov. And at that, even he, while issuing the order to send troops into the capital, ordered that there be absolutely no confrontations with the population and that under absolutely no circumstances were weapons to be used. That is why the military structure in those events was very limited.

As for the second part of your question, about my position in those days, it was this: I am deeply convinced that the armed forces are intended for the defense of their country against an external enemy. I believe that they should in no case become a tool for settling political affairs or for use against their own people. Proceeding from that position of principle, I made my choice, and I followed it through to the very end. That would be my answer to your question.

Q: Will the Soviet Navy again play a role in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, and if so, what?

"I don't know if anyone has ever had as many ships as they needed. There were always too few. I think of ships the same way as money, because you never have enough money."

A: The Soviet Navy today maintains a presence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean with very limited forces. During the Persian Gulf events, when twenty-nine nations were conducting military operations there, we took our ships away so that they would not become entangled or drawn into this conflict situation. The controlling staff for these forces has been removed to Cam Ranh, and we now have no such force control staff in that area, in the Indian Ocean. As far as our navy in the South China Sea is concerned, at Cam Ranh it is a very limited composition of forces, which has been greatly reduced. The base is not being used as a military base but rather as a material-technical base for forces

going to the Indian Ocean or nearby areas. I repeat, the composition is very limited. We proposed that the Soviet and U.S. navies in the area withdraw from both Cam Ranh and the Philippines, in the interests of a healthier atmosphere in the region. So far there has been no positive resolution to our proposal.

Q: In 1986 the Soviet Union asked the United Nations to consider the establishment of multinational naval peacekeeping forces. If a UN naval peacekeeping force is created, will the Soviet Navy play a part? What shape might such a part have?

A: There have been such initiatives, but they have produced no positive results. Before the events in the Persian Gulf developed, the U.S.S.R. did not block the UN resolutions by voting [against them] in the Security Council. As far as peacekeeping missions are concerned, that is a political question and must be discussed at the highest level of our political leadership. I personally think that the UN will in the future organize some joint peacekeeping operations which will not exclude the participation of the U.S.S.R.

Q: Will the Black Sea Fleet be reduced in the near future?

A: As I have already said in my presentation, the Navy has been carrying out reductions for the past three years. I cited figures on the cuts in those three years as two hundred units navy-wide. This year another fifty units are being cut. This is navy-wide, including the Black Sea Fleet. Whereas once upon a time our cruiser *Zhdanov* used to pass through the straits often, as you know, there is no longer such a cruiser in the Black Sea Fleet. Often the aircraft-carrying antisubmarine cruisers *Moskva* and *Leningrad* used to pass; the *Leningrad* is being withdrawn from the Black Sea Fleet and will pass no more. These are two concrete examples of two of the largest ships being cut. I could give you more, but I think that that is sufficient for you to be satisfied with my answer.

Q: I would like to ask you if there is any chance that our aircraft carriers stationed in the Pacific Ocean might be able to visit Vladivostok, for example.

A: I gladly welcome the mutual port visits that our countries have recently renewed, and I think it is unfortunate that they were the first since the last visit to Boston in 1975. These exchanges have now been restored with the recent visits by ships of both of our Pacific fleets to Vladivostok and the U.S. West Coast. The same is true of the Atlantic fleets, where our ships visited the U.S.A. and yours came to Sevastopol'. We spoke with your Chief of Naval Operations and agreed to continue such visits in the future. With regard to the types of ships making the visits, this is your own internal affair. You have to decide what ships you are going to send, and we are not going to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. If you decide to send aircraft carriers to us, we will make no objections.

Q: Could you give us what percentage of sailors and officers in your Baltic Fleet come from the Baltic republics, and what effect does this have on the fleet?

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A: One can find the percentage by comparing the total population of the Baltic republics, some three million, to the total population of our entire country. As for how it will be in the future, the decision was made that by the end of this month all persons from the Baltic republics will be released from military service to return home and will no longer be required to serve in our armed forces. They will be replaced by others.

Q: I have a somewhat difficult question, since the Soviet armed forces have divested themselves of Marxism-Leninism, and most officers are Party members, and the armed forces have very large Party structures, etc. What is your opinion of the work of the commission to remove the Party from the military, and what will come of this?

A: We have made a decision to de-partify the army, and I support it. We are already implementing those decisions.

To respond to your assertion that the Soviet Navy "sailed" on Marxism-Leninism, this is not completely true. Every sailor should have a system of knowledge that constitutes his professional personality. A navigator has navigation science, a submariner his knowledge of submarines, and the professional personality of an aviator comes from his knowledge of his field. The same holds true for your country, or any other. One person has his beliefs and another his own, while a third may not believe in anything. And, nonetheless, one could not say your navy was "sailing" on one particular belief. With regard to specific party membership and adherence to its regulations and programs, our country is rapidly creating new parties, and I do not think that membership in any party would be a hindrance to professional military service.

Q: I am a simple submariner, with a simple question. I commanded the Atlantic submarine force from 1974 to 1977, and we were all looking at each other through periscopes a lot. You had more than I did. I would like to compliment you on the professionalism of your forces, and I was also impressed by the numbers you had, namely, the number of classes you had and the number built. My simple question is, when will you have enough?

A: I have recently twice met with General [Colin] Powell, once in Washington and once when he came to my country to speak to the General Staff Academy, and we discussed carriers. The general spoke of the problem as follows: the U.S. has never had as many carriers as it needed but is still planning to cut back to twelve from fifteen, to reduce their number. Let me now apply this to submarines.

I don't know if anyone has ever had as many ships as they needed. There were always too few. I think of ships the same way as money, because you never have enough money.

With regard to the size of our submarine forces, we are now reducing them, and greatly. We have almost equal numbers [to the U.S.] of attack nuclear submarines, with only a three- to four-unit difference, but there was a time when

we had built many diesel-electric submarines. Most of the diesel-electric submarines have reached the end of their terms of service and are being retired, to leave us with a much smaller force. As for ballistic missile submarines, in accordance with the treaty on strategic arms limitations we are cutting these back by a figure of twenty to twenty-five. At this time we have fifty-nine ballistic missile submarines with 912 launchers, but there will be significantly fewer.

As to the number of periscopes on our submarines, I visited one of your *Los Angeles* class, and I do not think I would be divulging a military secret if I said that I counted two periscopes. All of our submarines also have just two periscopes.

Ψ

