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In My View

Robert E. Walters

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Ian Oliver

IN MY VIEW . . .

Sea Control in the Arctic

Sir,

Commander Dennis M. Egan and Major David W. Orr, in their interesting and excellent article, "Sea Control in the Arctic: A Soviet Perspective" (Winter 1988), are on to a good point. Unfortunately, there appears to be a flaw in projecting a Soviet invasion of Alaska, which is only the fringe of the Arctic.

If it is true, as the authors imply, that the Soviets have, or could obtain, control of the Arctic Ocean, then why bother with Alaska? The Soviets could build undersea ships which could pose the threat of an amphibious assault upon any part of the North American Arctic. A glance at the globe indicates the most tempting approach would be the Hudson Bay which penetrates deep into North America. Although it is relatively shallow, the Hudson Bay is still navigable. This would threaten the American heartland which is only about 500 to 600 miles from the bay.

One might question whether the Soviets would be interested in attacking the United States. It would be well to recall that they did try to overthrow the Mexican government in 1971. Moreover, Professor Michael Voslensky, a prominent Soviet historian who defected to the West, explains the aggressive nature of the Soviet government in his book *Nomenklatura*. He maintains that since the Soviet regime is a minority government, having obtained less than 25 percent of the vote in 1917, and since "it cannot count on intimidation forever and is terrified of what will happen on the day its subjects tire of living in fear," then "no amount of détente or 'good conduct' on its [the West's] part will cause the Soviet leaders to . . . abandon their objective of destroying the Western system." (A more detailed argument is provided on pages 325-326 of Voslensky's book.)

Robert E. Walters
Winter Park, Florida

KAL 007 Reviewed

Sir,

In the Spring 1988 issue of the *Naval War College Review*, Major James W. Spencer, U.S. Air Force, reviewed Seymour Hersh's book, *The Target is Destroyed: What Really Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew about It*. The review is certainly fair in pointing out some inadequacies in the book. I would point out one other that would have bolstered Hersh's major point and seems to have been overlooked by both Hersh and Spencer.

All the countries involved in the incident are members of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Immediately after the incident, the ICAO Council met in Montreal and ran its own investigation, the results of which were amply set out by Hersh in his book. But the Soviet legal argument, asserting a right to defend its airspace by force against a nonthreatening aircraft or an aircraft whose only threat was the threat of overflight, was discussed only as a political matter. In fact, as everybody represented in the ICAO Council knows, it is easy to refer legal questions for an "Advisory Opinion" to the World Court at The Hague. There is no veto over such referrals and no problem of jurisdiction. But it was not done.

It cannot be that the United States was concerned about an adverse opinion. The United States would not have been a "party" to the case. The major injury is to the security of international civil aviation, and the primary burden of argument would have been borne by Japan, South Korea, and, presumably, all the countries whose civil aircraft might stray over a neighbor's territory. A review of precedents, like Israel's paying compensation for forcing down a Libyan civil aircraft in 1973, even when formally at war with Libya, leaves little doubt as to the outcome. Failure to present the question for adjudication does not make civil aviation safer; to leave the Soviet position with any shadow of credence risks the lives of innocent passengers.

This failure implies either unbelievable incompetence on the part of all the states members of the ICAO Council or, much more likely, the unwillingness of the United States, South Korea or Japan to present a full argument. The implication is that one or more of them had something to hide and pressured the other members of the Council not to take the case to its logical end. Sherlock Holmes, remembering the significance of the dog's silence in the case of "Silver Blaze," would have had no difficulty solving this one, although, not being Sherlock Holmes myself, I am left with a continuing doubt. It is not doubt as to the law; only doubt as to whether the default was the result of barely credible incompetence or a need to conceal unpleasant facts of the sort inferred on the basis of perhaps less convincing evidence by Hersh.

Alfred P. Rubin

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

Medicine of War: A Second Opinion

Sir,

“For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:20

The Spring 1988 issue of the *Naval War College Review* included an article by Captain Arthur M. Smith, MC, U.S. Naval Reserve, entitled “The Influence of Medicine on Strategy.”

In this article there is a reference to the South Atlantic war (1982) and one of the contenders, the Argentine Republic. The article mistakenly reports that Argentine physicians treated war injuries with techniques that caused some tetanus and gas gangrene in the soldiers.

It is necessary to point out that the treatment of war traumatism and wounds is no different than that applied to peacetime injuries. This is rudimentary knowledge and it is part of the basic training received by the students in the School of Medicine in our country.

The Argentine Naval Medical Corps, in its task of taking care of the casualties that occurred in the South Atlantic Operations Theatre, has only recorded two cases of gangrene that developed in personnel whose evacuation to a forward surgical team was delayed for tactical reasons.

Juan Antonio Lopez
Capitán de Fragata Odontólogo
Argentine Navy

Eduardo Eugenio Feliner
Capitán de Fragata Médico
Argentine Navy

Medicine at War: A Response

Sir,

It is unfortunate that Argentine medical records contain little description of technical gaps in wound management during the Falklands war. The lay press and British medical literature staked their claim on observations of the hundreds of Argentine wounded, some previously treated by their own physicians, who received care at the British surgical facility at Ajax Bay and on board the British hospital ship *Uganda*. Though Drs. Lopez and Feliner argue that methods for treatment of both peacetime injuries and war wounds are identical, they contradict the time-tested realities of war wound management emanating from the era of the Napoleonic wars.

Drs. Lopez and Feliner are not alone in their view concerning the equivalence of civilian and combat wound management rules. Regrettably, in our own nation, under the pseudonym, "Combat Casualty Care" training, similar misconceptions abound. Courses labeled "Advanced Trauma Life Support" and "Advanced Cardiac Life Support," modeled on the types of acute medical situations seen in the civilian setting, are also being heavily relied on to prepare our military medical personnel for war. Although students are dressed in camouflage clothing and the courses often are conducted in a field setting, this form of training concentrates on civilian illnesses and injuries. These are excellent training vehicles for the civilian setting but do not address the surgical realities of the extensive missile, blast, crush, and burn injuries unique to the combat setting. This civilian-oriented policy also presupposes the Vietnam model of unfettered air superiority, with rapid helicopter evacuation of the critically injured to high-tech, relatively fixed medical facilities (e.g., fleet hospitals), within easy flying distance of the forward extent of the battle zone. Can the feasibility of the latter truly be assumed in contemporary threat assessments?

Arthur M. Smith
Captain, MC, U.S. Naval Reserve

Shipyards

Sir,

The article on shipyards by Paula Pettavino (Autumn 1988) is superb; and accurate!

The world changes faster than we seem willing to accept. Nuclear bombs and vastly improved technology across the board result in thoughtful avoidance of the cataclysm which would be caused by their use. We do not need to be similarly ready in the future as we were in 1940-41 for what then needed to be done in shipyards, but we certainly need revitalization, by the Government, of this basically essential industry.

L.V. Honsinger
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

