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The Barometer

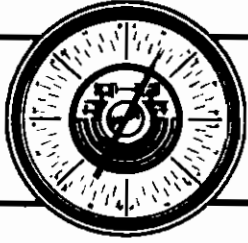
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THE BAROMETER

(Capt. Ernst G. Kray, *Federal German Navy (Ret.)*, comments on Comdr. Clyde Smith's "The Meaning and Significance of the Gorshkov Articles," March-April 1974.)

I disagree with the conclusion of Comdr. Clyde Smith in his otherwise excellent analysis of the Gorshkov articles in the *Naval War College Review*, March/April issue, stating: "that Soviet naval strategy will generally remain defensive and deterrent for the next several years and perhaps for a decade or more." Such a statement might diplomatically fit into a détente policy toward the U.S.S.R. but neglects, in my opinion, the character and practical application of overall Soviet policy. It is my earnest belief that Russian naval strategy will remain an integral part of Marxist-Leninist ideology which is the core of Soviet state policy.

In discussing the naval strategy of a great power, one cannot separate it from its overall policy, and for Russia it has been a history involving centuries which have led to a tremendous expansion of power and realm. The question is, what is defense; what, an offensive strategy? Is there an offensive deterrent? Concerning the U.S.S.R., Rear Adm. Henry Eccles, USN (Ret.), gave an outstanding answer in the *NWCR* issue of December 1971 (page 49), which I may quote as follows:

According to an unpublished study by Dr. L.C. Haimson, Russian handbooks of championship chess have advised promising players since the 1930's not to

follow a "strongest position" strategy, but rather to force their opponent to make some definite commitment on the board, even at the cost of some loss in position to themselves. Once the Russian player has induced his adversary to commit his pieces to a particular position on the board, and to commit his mind to working out the possibilities of a particular kind of strategy, he is then advised according to this theory of chess, to make a radical switch in strategy and to confront his opponent with a new set of problems for which his pieces are not effectively disposed and for which his mind is not prepared.

It is precisely this kind of national strategy which Russia followed and the Soviets practice nowadays. As Dr. C.C. Jacobsen, also in the *NWCR*, issue of March 1972 (page 46), justifiably warns:

As this survey indicates, a belittling of Soviet capabilities is not only becoming militarily dubious, but it might be seen, per se, to represent a misconception. It thus appears clear that the political value of a fleet arises from the mere capacity to make its presence known and is not contingent on relative military strengths . . . It is a navy's political value which is strategically relevant in times of peace.

Applying Comdr. Clyde Smith's conclusion, the instruments of Russian

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naval strategy in the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean, and East of Suez would be defensive forces, but against whom? According to the Marxist-Leninist and Sokolowsky's strategy, it would be against the capitalist-class enemy who always is offensive and against whom the Socialist powers have to defend themselves. This is not a cold war statement nor ideological trash, but our daily experience with Soviet strategy which basically was expansive, is expansive, and thus offensive.

Admiral Gorshkov states (*NWCR*, page 21):

Naval might has been one of the factors which has enabled certain states to advance into the ranks of the great powers. Moreover, history shows that states which do not have naval forces at their

disposal have not been able to hold the status of a great power for a long time.

How has the Soviet Union attained this end? At the expense of other and existing great and naval powers, of course. Who can call such a policy and its instrumental strategy "defensive"? And where is the defensive character of a deterrent that in size and kind frustrates, without being applied in combat, other powers?

In dealing with publications of Soviet generals and admirals, one should always bear in mind that every written line and statement carefully and precisely fits into the accepted Soviet ideological and political framework. If—as in this case—a defensive strategy is being offered, it is precisely what Moscow wants us to believe.



Let us dare to read, think, speak and write.

*John Adams: Dissertation on the Canon
and the Feudal Law, 1765*