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Naval Command Course

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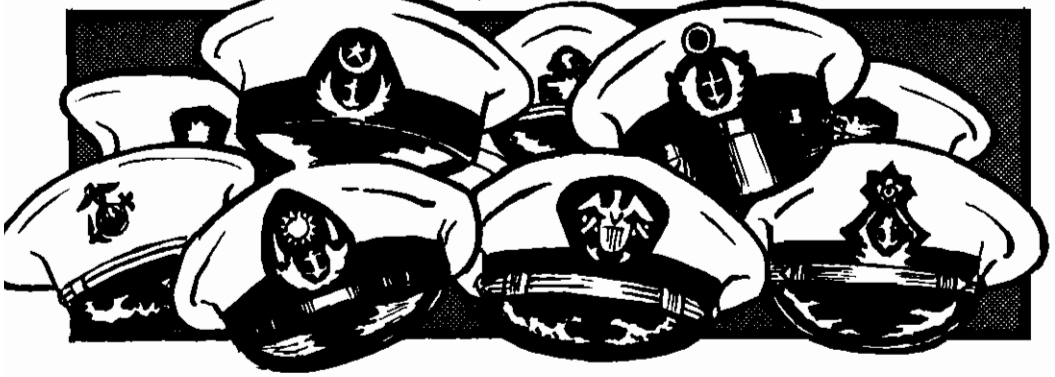
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The Naval Command Course: **A MULTINATIONAL SEMINAR**

by
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"Communism is no longer the threat it was once thought to be to the free world." This provocative statement was made recently to an international audience in Newport, R. I., and achieved the desired effect of initiating a spirited discussion. The freewheeling nature of the discussion, which ranged from economic tactics to incidents on the high seas and from space feats to probable Communist political objectives, was a routine part of a unique course of instruction — one of tremendous potential for the future of the free world but relatively little known throughout the sponsoring U. S. Navy. The discussion was a seminar in the Naval Command Course, one of three resident courses of instruction at the U. S. Naval War College, Newport, R. I. The aim of this article is to look briefly at the Naval Command Course, to try to determine what it is and what makes it unique. To start, let us go back to its inception.

In early 1956 newspaper headlines throughout the world reflected the

international turmoil of the day. The Cyprus question was on the front burner and close to a boil. The Middle East was again simmering. Farther to the east, India and Indonesia had just completed a mutual aid treaty. The Peronista Constitution had been revoked in Argentina. In each of these areas, and more, the United States had alliances, aid missions, or commitments of one kind or another. As the leader of the loose coalition known as the free world, the United States was asked to extend various forms of assistance to other nations. In the field of military aid, she was often asked to help in the training of naval personnel. Frequently, maritime nations expressed an interest in sending officer students to the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R. I. This interest fell on receptive ears, but there were questions to be resolved before the way was clear.

Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, in the fall of 1955 had directed the President of the Naval War College to study the problems of establishing a course of instruction for senior foreign officers. The idea of foreign officers at the War College was not new. There had been foreign observers of war games and other War College activities from as early as 1894. But there had not been full-time foreign students, and

it was a full-time course of instruction that Admiral Burke supported. He recognized the potential such a course would have and sought to translate the idea into reality.

Thus, in early 1956, a small group of U.S. naval officers met at the War College in Newport to try to work out the details. Their studies indicated that the idea was sound and feasible with the proper financial backing from the Navy Department. Orderly progress would allow the course to begin in August 1957. Then they met with a group from the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Not only was the financial backing available, Admiral Burke was impatient! He didn't acquire the nickname "31-knot Burke" from sitting on his ditty box. Orderly progress be damned! All ahead flank speed! The War College group turned to with a will and a deadline to meet. If possible, the course was to convene with the regular U.S. resident student courses on 17 August 1956. That was just a few short months away.

Planning and execution went forward concurrently and on many fronts. Blueprints were scarcely dry when carpenters and plumbers began to work from them in Sims Hall. Classrooms, lecture rooms, conference rooms, administrative offices, a library, projection booths — all must be provided and soon. At the same time, and of more importance, there was continuous consideration of the curriculum. What to include, what to exclude? The new course was being designed with a single thought uppermost — to provide the best possible curriculum for the foreign student. And the name of the course? What should it be called? That was important but not nearly so important as to have curriculum and physical facilities ready before the students arrived. The new school was subsequently named the Naval Command Course

and became a resident school of the Naval War College, parallel in organization with the School of Naval Warfare and School of Naval Command and Staff.

In order to provide a student body for the new school, the Chief of Naval Operations extended invitations to selected maritime nations of the free world to nominate one well-qualified senior naval officer to attend a particular academic year of instruction. Space limitations dictated a class size of 20 to 30 students. Such a class did turn out later to have advantages from the standpoint of the development of class unity, but this was not the primary consideration when the initial planning was accomplished. Because of the numerical limitation, not every nation could be invited to nominate a student for every class. This fact, however, added to the selectivity which U.S. planners considered appropriate to the type of course they were organizing. The idea was underscored by the mission of the course approved by the Chief of Naval Operations. The Naval Command Course was "to assist specially selected senior Free World naval officers to prepare themselves for higher command responsibilities within their own navies, and to familiarize them with U.S. Navy methods, practices, and doctrines." The mission provided the framework within which the warp and woof of academic endeavor could be woven to form the curriculum for the year's study.

Much discussion of the appropriate academic content preceded the final design of the first year's curriculum. The students would be senior naval officers. Many would normally have commanded the largest ships or air squadrons in their own navies. The majority would have graduated from their own War or Command and Staff Colleges. These factors dictated advanced professional study. The

students would come from many different cultures and would possess, in themselves, a variety of experience which might be called forth for their mutual education. Moreover, they would be in the United States for a full academic year. This length of time would provide them opportunity to travel and to meet Americans from all walks of life — to know U.S. culture and institutions in a much more comprehensive way than would be possible in a shorter stay. Should not these considerations be taken into account also in the curriculum design? The decision was made that all of these factors should be accorded suitable weight in constructing the curriculum. The principal emphasis of the course for professional content should be on seapower and international affairs related to seapower. Individual writing and group participation would provide for a sharing of individual experiences. And, finally, a series of trips could provide direct observation of appropriate events and places. The soundness of the original curriculum planning is evidenced by the fact that, although evolutionary changes have occurred in course content and minor studies have been added or deleted to take account of advancing technology and shifting trends, the basic concepts are unchanged.

Through the early summer months of 1956 plans took shape for the first class. Equipment was assembled. The faculty was ordered in. Lesson plans were completed and lectures prepared. Finally, in August, 23 students converged on Newport from the far reaches of the globe to begin an experiment in international living and a course of professional naval study. This was the first Naval Command Course. It set a pattern which has generally been followed by succeeding classes.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Captain Kenneth H. Lyons, U.S. Navy, holds a B.S. in Naval Science from the U.S. Naval Academy, a B.S. in Electronics Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and an M.A. in International Affairs from The George Washington University. Captain Lyons also attended the Navy Intelligence School, the Armed Forces Staff College, and is a graduate of the School of Naval Warfare at the Naval War College. He was a member of the staff of the Naval War College at the time this article was written.

Captain Lyons, a naval aviator, has served as Assistant Naval Attache at Taipei, Taiwan, and on the staff of the 2nd Fleet. He was Commanding Officer of Attack Squadron 75 and Commander of Carrier Anti-submarine Air Group 56.

Captain Lyons is presently assigned as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. *Allagash* (AO-97).

The general basis of the curriculum has been explained. Let us now look in more detail at the curriculum laid out for the present class at the Naval Command Course. The study of seapower, as indicated above, is the main emphasis of the course. This study is subdivided into four parts. In the first part the student examines the meaning of the term "seapower." Some who are accustomed to thinking solely in terms of navies begin to appreciate here the other aspects or elements of seapower — the industrial base of a nation, the shipyards, port facilities, and inland communications networks that link farm, forest, mine, and factory with the sea. They begin to appreciate the importance of ocean transport that carries the bulk of intercontinental trade and of fishing, perhaps the best hope for feeding the world's burgeoning population. So,

too, are they apprised of the importance of the study of the air/ocean environment which exerts so strong an influence over other factors. The limits of their vision expand to include space and other scientific advances that influence the ways in which the seas may be exploited. In this beginning of the study of seapower, then, the term is defined, the element identified, and finally the role seapower plays in the formulation and implementation of strategy is examined.

The second part of the study of seapower brings the naval officer back to more familiar territory. It is called Naval Operations. Here the student looks at the elements of naval power and their application. Also, and this is a surprise in view of the title, he has the opportunity to look at U.S. Army and Air Force operations. This not only acquaints him with these important U.S. armed services but also reminds him that navies do not operate in a vacuum. He will be refreshed in his knowledge of areas of the navy with which he has had experience and provided background in others. Included, in addition to the areas already mentioned, are studies of aircraft carrier and antisubmarine operations, amphibious and mine warfare, logistics, and military management.

The third part of the study of seapower gives the student a chance to apply his learning to the solution of planning problems. Here the student gains an understanding of the composition and functions of naval, joint, and combined staffs. Tough problem situations are laid in various parts of the world, and the entire Naval Command Course student body is subdivided into various commands for the purpose of solving the problems. In one exercise a particular student may function as a task force

commander. In another, he may be a staff officer. The particular problem may be a cold war or a hot war situation. Three of the problems, following the planning phase, are played as war games. The full facilities of the Navy Electronic Warfare Simulator (NEWS) at the Naval War College are made available to the students for two of these games. But the stress is on the educational aspects of the game rather than on the decision as to which side "won" or "lost." It is in this third part of seapower that some students get their first experience in working with an international staff. Some have remarked at the conclusion of a war game that the sociological lessons of working in such an intercultural environment are, themselves, sufficient justification for going through the problem.

The final part of the study of seapower looks to the future. It gives each student the chance to hypothesize himself into a position of authority and to examine the ways he would try to influence the development of seapower to serve his national and other free world interests. This can be a rather heady experience. This part of the study comes at the end of the year, however, and the student by this time realizes that even the wealthiest of nations and the most determined of leaders must operate within constraints. These constraints — economic, political, social — serve to keep this part of the study within the bounds of reason.

The other main study area, as already indicated, is international affairs. Included in this study are international law, politico-military aspects of world geography, the U.S. system of government, current world problems, international organizations and defense arrangements, and world resources and the economic aspects of war. International law is studied

as a combined course with the other resident students at the Naval War College. This is a course of study — with its primary consideration of the law of the sea — in which the Naval War College has achieved a degree of fame through the years.

The next part of international affairs, world geography in its politico-military aspects, is studied, to the greatest degree possible, in conjunction with the operations problems of the third part of the study of seapower. The U.S. system of government is taught by the resident civilian professor at the Naval Command Course, Professor August C. Miller, Jr. This part of the study may seem out of place in international affairs until one remembers that the students are not from the United States, so it really is "international" for them. The study of current world problems consists of lectures, seminars, and panel discussions of selected contemporary problems. Where possible, these are scheduled to coincide with foreseeable events, such as the convening of the United Nations General Assembly, the Latin American Foreign Ministers' Conference, and the like. The study of international organizations and defense arrangements examines the United Nations, NATO, CENTO, SEATO, the Rio Pact, and selected bilateral treaties. In that part of international affairs in which world resources and the economic aspects of war are studied, an appraisal is made of the material resources of various coalitions of nations, and the problems inherent in the mobilization of those resources for war are assessed. The wide sweep of international affairs studied in the Naval Command Course is not surprising in view of the truly international character of the student body.

Seapower and international affairs as they relate to the curriculum have been examined briefly. Do these two

major studies represent the total of the curriculum? No. There are at least three other portions of the curriculum which go under the name of associated programs. In the three associated programs the student is apt to find one of his most demanding individual requirements of the year, and he may also find some of the more pleasant and profitable days of the course. The associated programs are the introductory period, the research and presentation program, and the field study trip program. Let's step in for a closer look at each of these.

The introductory period is essentially what the name implies. This period represents the first days of formal study of the Naval Command Course student in Newport. During this period he meets the officials of the Naval War College and the leaders of the surrounding civilian community; he is introduced to the academic procedures employed through the following year. He knows by the end of this brief period that the year to come may be interesting, but, above all, that if he is to keep up he must, in the words of Vice Admiral John T. Hayward, President of the Naval War College, "run intellectually."

The second of the associated programs is the research and presentation program. Whereas other studies in the curriculum make use of committees, seminars, group and staff studies, the research and presentation program is essentially an individual effort. In this program each Naval Command Course student is required to write two papers and present these papers orally in front of his colleagues. The first paper is a briefing of his own country. The second paper is a formal research paper on a subject of interest to naval students. It is the second paper, the research paper, which has proved to be among the most demanding individual re-

quirements of the course. The student may also find, when the paper is completed, a sense of satisfaction that offsets the long hours required in the study for and writing of the paper.

The last of the associated programs is the field study trip program. This consists of a carefully constructed schedule of trips and visits away from the Naval War College. These provide the student an opportunity for firsthand observation of many activities of interest. These trips vary in length from one day to two weeks. As might be expected, the activities selected for visits run heavily to those which directly support the formal classroom studies of the student. Thus, he examines naval and other military installations — ships, airfields, amphibious landing beaches, naval logistics, and training commands. He sees an airborne troop drop, a Strategic Air Command Center, the Headquarters of the North American Air Defense Command. He investigates the Pentagon and the United Nations Headquarters. The trips undertaken in this program do not, however, solely support the academic curriculum. This program also recognizes that an important part of the year of residence in the United States for many students comes in the opportunity to get to know as much as possible about the American way of life. Therefore, the attempt is made to show as many political, economic, and cultural patterns of this nation as possible. Obviously, there is no end to worthwhile trips along these lines, but there is a practical time limit. Within time limits, a wide variety of visits is arranged — from Disneyland to Wall Street; from the Supreme Court of the United States to the San Diego zoo; from the *Detroit Free Press* to Colonial Williamsburg, Va.; from Bourbon Street in New Orleans to

The Loop in Chicago. Along the way, in the large cities of the nation, the student observes urban renewal projects — the slums as well as the modernized sections. He explores an American farm; he visits homes of private citizens for people-to-people contact. He sees the Manned Spacecraft Center, a cross section of industrial factories, research centers, governmental agencies of many types, electrical power plants, and large universities. The days “on the road” constitute a type of education not possible to achieve in any other comparable way. Many students regard field study trips as highlights of the year.

From the foregoing discussion of the curriculum planned for the student, an appreciation is gained for the fact that the student is kept occupied with academic pursuits. But no matter how well conceived the curriculum, the extracurricular activities may be, in the final analysis, of equal importance to the student. The reason for this is that an unstated objective of the course is certainly to foster international understanding. And such understanding does not come automatically nor mechanically but slowly, as individuals gradually come to know each other well. It comes from living together on a day-to-day basis: from talking together, exchanging viewpoints, from arguing together, from eating strange American food together. In short, it comes from such close, continuing contact that an individual is recognized and respected for what he has to offer as another human being. His culture, that seemed so strange at first, is now recognized as another way of life, still different, but with its own special contribution to make to the free world of nations. And this kind of social dynamics is constantly at work in the Naval Command Course.

students, in the strange environment in which they find themselves, are wary, a bit cautious, and self-defensive. Gradually, things begin to loosen a bit. Then on the first trip the feeling of class unity blossoms. A small example illustrates one way this might come about.

The bus is waiting in front of the motel ready to depart for the day's activities, but one of the Naval Command Course students has not yet boarded. Suddenly the missing student comes running from the motel, breathless and quite obviously not long from his bed. His classmates, waiting in the bus, break into applause as he boards the bus. The late one grins sheepishly as he sinks into his seat, and the feeling grows that all are in the same boat — the more they pull together, the easier and more pleasant the year will be.

The recently retired Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral David L. McDonald, in talking with the students of the Naval Command Course recognized the value of extracurricular activities when he said, in effect, to them: "Gentlemen, the most important part of your being together here in Newport lies in your getting to know one another. The faculty here tries hard to make the course interesting and valuable for you. But the most important thing you do is to rub shoulders, live together, and get to know each other. As I travel about the world and meet and work with other Chiefs of Navies, it is much, much easier for me in those cases where I have known my counterparts as individuals before."

If extracurricular activities can have that kind of importance, it might be well to see what opportunities exist for Naval Command Course students to involve themselves outside of school hours. Relating to such considerations are characteristics of the students themselves, of Newport

the family circumstances of the students, the number of students in a Naval Command Course class, and the social activities of the Naval War College as a whole.

Remembering that one of the operating rules of the Naval Command Course is one student per country represented and that class size has ranged from 21 to 31 students in a given year, what sort of person is the naval officer who attends the course of instruction? He is the equivalent of a commander or captain in grade. He will have had 15 to 25 years of commissioned service and will be from 35 to 45 years of age. Typically, he is married and, in about two cases out of three, his wife, with or without children, will come to Newport for at least a part of the academic year. The geographical origins of students are about equally divided among Latin Americans, Europeans, and Asians. All married officers are encouraged by the Naval War College to bring their families to Newport. However, each nation determines for itself whether or not it will pay travel expenses for families to accompany the husbands. In general, the Asian nations do not defray this type of travel expense for families and, as a consequence, few Asian families have come. Another handicap to overcome in some cases has been the school situation of children. For example, they may be approaching especially demanding college entrance examinations at home which they cannot afford to postpone, or their school calendars may be out of phase with that of the United States. Despite the difficulties, there is added potential for increasing international understanding where family members accompany the naval officer head of the household.

Efforts are exerted to make the stay of Naval Command Course students' families in the United States a mean-

ingful and worthwhile experience. The local public and parochial schools are quite accustomed to teaching foreign children. And the usual case has been that even children who spoke no English on arrival are soon quite fluent as a result of school, play, and television viewing — all using the English tongue. For the wives, there is a wide range of activities available through the Naval War College Wives' Club. Bowling, badminton, golf, riding, antique club, and book club are just a few of the activities open to them. In addition, Naval Command Course faculty wives and interested civilian wives in the community plan a variety of short trips of historical and cultural interest.

Newport has much of historical interest itself. But there are other attributes that make this a good location for the Naval Command Course. Its relatively small size (about 40,000 population) means that the special features of the Naval Command Course can be recognized in a way that would not be possible in a large metropolitan area where this group would be only one of many competing for the attention of the citizenry. Newport, its citizens, and service clubs have taken the Naval Command Course to their collective bosom. Naval Command Course officers and wives are much in demand as guests at and as speakers before a variety of organizations within the local community.

The size of each class, averaging about 25 officers, adds to the growth of interpersonal relationships in a way that might not be possible in a class of 100 or 200 officers. This size means that when on a field study visit, the entire class travels together in the same bus or airplane, stays at the same hotel or motel — in short, develops a community spirit as a result of being a community

The entire faculty and student body of the Naval War College contribute to the extracurricular activities of the foreign student while simultaneously exposing him to such pieces of Americana as the picnic and the potluck dinner. In addition, there are the more formal receptions for introducing the Naval Command Course student to military and civilian personages. But outside of these parties, Naval Command Course students have proved themselves to be enthusiastic competitors in the Naval War College bowling league. In addition, they have taken an active part in the Naval War College Gaieties — a spoof of the school year produced by students at the end of the year. From all of these activities, plus the approximately 20 percent of their lectures and seminars held jointly with U.S. resident schools at the War College, Naval Command Course students have plenty of opportunity to know and make contact with their U.S. counterparts.

Through activities in and out of class, the Naval Command Course students forge bonds of friendship during the school year. By the end of the year they are a band of brothers who feel free to argue among themselves but are quite cohesive in their dealing with outsiders. So what happens when, at the end of the year, the class graduates and the individual members return to their native lands? The sort of thing happens that one would expect among good friends. They write to each other, and they go out of their way to see each other when the occasion presents itself. They meet at international gatherings of many types.

Beyond these individual actions, the Naval Command Course faculty tries to facilitate continuing contact among graduates by means of a "newsletter." At Christmas a letter is solicited from each alumnus. In the

letter the graduate is invited to recount the major events of his year — personal news as well as changes of rank and duty assignment. When the letter is received in Newport, it is published, together with others from the same class, and distributed to all members of the class. By this means class members keep well informed on news of their *confreres*. Through the newsletter, good contact over the years has been maintained among the graduates. The comments contained in the newsletters confirm the fact that the spirit of friendship built through the school year in Newport persists long after the individual's return home.

How does one summarize the value of 11 years' operation of the Naval Command Course? One way might be to point out that there have been 274 graduates to date. Of these, 70 have advanced to flag rank within their own navies. Some of the total number have not yet progressed to the point of consideration for such advancement. So the final number who become commodores or admirals may turn out to be a remarkably high percentage. Fourteen Naval Command Course graduates have become Chiefs of their Navies, including at present those of Colombia, The Dominican Republic, Germany, Japan, the Philippines, Venezuela, and Vietnam. Many more have advanced to positions of high command responsibility such as those envisioned by the mission of the Naval Command Course. But one has to be careful in this type of statistical game. There is no doubt that Naval Command Course students are carefully selected

before they arrive in Newport. A substantial number of them would undoubtedly advance to flag rank with or without the "help" of the Naval Command Course. Nevertheless, both the high professional standards and the informational content of the course certainly augment the professional growth of the individual officer.

Does the Naval Command Course increase international understanding? Claims for achievements in this area must, necessarily, be subjective, but one thing appears clear: never was international understanding more urgently required. If international understanding comes from living together so closely that friendship gives rise to freely expressed opinions and freedom from artificial sensitivities based on cultural or national origins, a fair case can be made for the increase in understanding among Naval Command Course students.

In conclusion, perhaps the feelings of graduates, as expressed with great regularity in their annual newsletters, are the best guides to the value of the Naval Command Course. Consistently, year after year, and in many cases long after graduation, former students write that the year they spent in Newport was one of the most meaningful years of their lives. The benefits of the course to the students, to the United States, and to the free world are difficult to measure with mathematical precision, but the benefits exist. All who know the Naval Command Course well would say that it has been a successful experiment in international naval education.

