

The Russians are coming!!!

by Glenn Walton

Retired Vice-Admiral Douglas Boyle had some provocative things to say in a lecture entitled "Are we Prepared?" held at King's College a few weeks ago. Mr. Boyle, who hasn't always seen eye-to-eye with the Canadian government on defense policies, began with the question, "If families find it so difficult to keep peace, how can countries be expected to?" Dividing the world into two camps, he said that today we find ourselves faced with a choice between two totally opposed ideologies, capitalism and communism. The communists, led by Russia, believe, as Marx did, in a revolution that will be made to happen by the workers. They also believe in "military intervention, if successful."

Russian expansion, he went on to say, has proceeded in three steps. The first was their annexation of Latvia, Estonia and Finland. Step number two was the dominance of Eastern Europe after World War Two. Finally, the 50's and 60's have seen further expansion in Korea and Vietnam. Recently, according to Admiral Boyle, Cambodia has fallen, with Russian help, to the communist Vietnamese. Cuban troops have been used to "suppress the Angolan people", and Iran is now in danger. "Just imagine what instability would result if their oil were cut off" he warned.

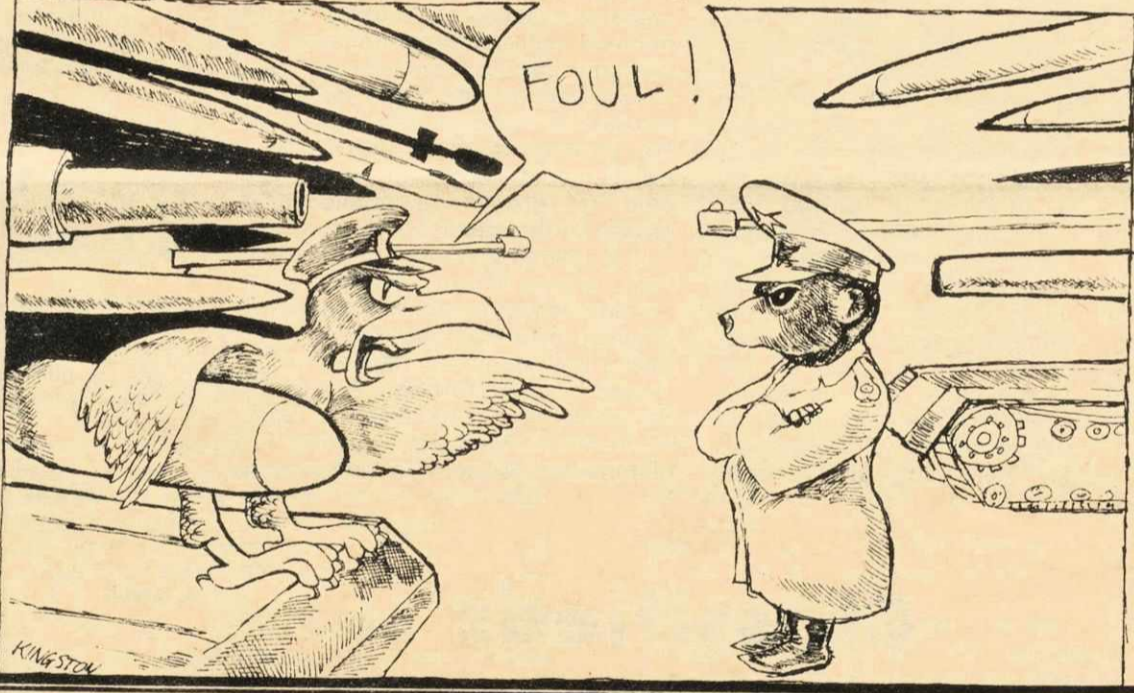
As a sign of Russian intentions, the speaker pointed out the great arms buildup since the humiliation of the Cuban crisis, when the "great Russian bear licked its wounds, vowing never to be beaten again." The Russians now have the third largest merchant marine in the world, and with the Warsaw Pact troops, outnumber Nato by three-to-one in Europe. "They have the largest submarine fleet in the world. The Germans almost won the war with that many subs" he said.

All, however, is not lost. Nato is safe, "at the moment", and such words as detente are not being used as much as they used to be. SALT, and the neutron bomb are in the news. What does this all have to do with Canada? he asked.

In the 60's, Canada was "fairly well-prepared." Since then, the navy has declined to 9,000 men and 21 destroyers, accompanied by reductions in the army and airforce. Only 2.2% of our GNP is spent on national defense, whereas NATO wants its member states to contribute 3.5%. "This is a sad commentary on Canadian concern" the speaker said, adding that he had to "hang my head in shame" whenever he went to Washington.

Admiral Boyle then asked his audience (made up mainly of members of the Royal Commonwealth Society and the Canadian Club) how long Canada would continue to enjoy valuable intelligence from NATO under such policies. "If Canada wants to remain a sovereign nation, we must know what is happening on our seas and coasts", pointing to the large number of Soviet fishing vessels before our very coast, including intelligence gatherers.

Boyle then mentioned a book he'd read, entitled *In Retreat*, in which a 1985 war was predicted. "I agree with this scenario," he said. "If there is a world war, Canada will be drawn into it." He did not elaborate on this, only stating that it is not his belief that it would be a nuclear war. "I admit the cost would be hard to justify. As a peace-loving nation we do not desire a large military machine. But we do need to contribute a good one", something impossible under "crippling defense policies." At present \$4,300,000,000 is being spent by Canada on defense. "Sometime you and I are going to die", Admiral Boyle warned, "and I believe our armed forces are going to be used."



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Entering the 1980's, many of the peace-loving citizens of Canada do not indeed desire (as Douglas Boyle puts it) a large military machine. Many feel, uneasily, that the human race has botched things up almost beyond hope of repair, even pinpointing that unhappy event at some symbolic date. There are several, usually arbitrary signposts along the way through our unhappy century, symbols of quenched hope and the ultimate inhumanity of our times: Auswitsch and Hiroshima, Dallas in November 1963, test-tube babies. A few more. A quick look around at the world today is the quickest antidote to optimism, and only the most ardent believers can seriously maintain, as Leibnitz once did, that all is for the best in this, the best of all possible worlds.

Enter, stage right, the Admiral Boyle's of the world, a missionary gleam in their eyes and everyone else's tax dollars in their pockets. Our problem they tell us, is not that we're spending too much money on bombs, but too little. the threat from without, can, and will be met, but only with great sacrifice. If we are to meet the challenge of the next war (and there will be a war, they assure us soon) more billions will have to be spent on the military.

It is a simplistic vision, one particularly suited to the military mind, with its blacks and whites, good guys and bad guys, charts and figures. One of the enduring images of the 60's is that of the technocrat before his war board, long pointer in hand, justifying to an increasingly sceptical Amer-

ican public just one more bombing, one more expenditure to bring the enemy to their knees. It was all a matter of numbers, and the war, with just one more push, would soon be over. When it wasn't, the powers in the Pentagon presumably shared that surprise experienced by the British in another, earlier war, when the enemy, instead of lining up in the field of battle like gentlemen, hid behind trees and bushes, taking pot-shots at His Majesty's troops in a most ungentlemanly way. The lessons of that revolution got lost somewhere on the way to the military-industrial dream, and its shrine on the Potomac came to resemble the War Ministry it had so unceremoniously undone two centuries before.

The scenario closest to the hearts of our military today is that of the Russian Threat, which has replaced the German and Chinese Threats of yesteryears. It is a necessary, no, essential part of military strategy, for it contains the justification for massive arms spendig by our western governments. Without it, the military would be emasculated, soldiers without a cause, killers without a war to do it in.

The scenario merits attention. The figures are available and much quoted, and certainly the more blatant examples of Russian aggression such as Prague 1968, cannot easily be forgotten. Nor should they be; it would be a disservice to the aspirations of so many to sacrifice memory to the expediencies of detente diplomacy. It would be a shortsight serving none but the men in the Kremlin.

We are concerned here mainly with Russian expansion on a global scale, and with the naval strength of which Admiral Boyle so alarmingly speaks. It must be comforting, in a way, to believe such a scenario, for it certainly simplifies an extremely complicated situation, and precludes seriously thought about relations between member states of this poor ravaged earth. Saying that Cuban troops "suppress" the Angolan people may or may not be true, but it lets one conveniently ignore the fact that the situation leading to the Angolan war was caused by suppression of the black majority by Portuguese colonialists. The scenario of Russian expansion is based on assumptions that are, in my opinion, simplistic at best, and at worst, historically and politically unfounded.

The first is that naval warfare is an effective and decisive way of waging war. It isn't. Naval warfare is by nature inefficient, ruinously expensive, and ultimately ineffective, useful mainly to demonstrate "presence". World War II was not, by any stretch of the imagination, "almost won by the Germans" because of the great number of subs they had. The navy was decisive only in the fight for Pacific islands, and it can be argued that only the bomb ended what could have dragged on for quite some time. Indeed that is the justification for dropping it given by the military in the first place. The point to submarine warfare, in these days of over-kill, is that both sides possess the ability to wipe the other off the map several times over, and, considering the relative impunity the subs enjoy, it's a danger all but impossible to counter. We now are at the point where anyone with the bomb is in a position to set off a holocaust.

The second assumption is that the Soviet Union has the world Communist movement in hand. Any observer of the world scene must be struck nowadays by the distended nature of Russian strategies, and the temporary character of alliances, on the part of many developing nations, with the Russian bear. Remember the Egyptian/Russian friendship? Or the hegemony once enjoyed by Moscow over European communist parties, a thing that, with the advent of Berliquer and Eurocommunism, is as dead and buried as Russian-Chinese friendship? Russian influence in the Middle East is, in the light of Camp David, at an all-time low, and with American Chinese rapprochement, the worst dreams of the Kremlin are now being realized. The new Indian government is "rethinking" the friendship treaty signed by Indira Gandhi. It is hard to think of an area in the world where Russian diplomacy isn't in full retreat.

If there is one, it's in the poverty stricken nations on the African continent. Certainly the richest nations of that area, Nigeria and South Africa, are firmly in "western" hands. Liberation movements, for lack of an alternative, look to Moscow for arms and support, but have a tendency to boot the Soviets out when, as in Somaliland, local squabbles take precedence over ideological solidarity. Angola, the one rich nation in "red" hands, has discovered that without the managing class that fled to Portugal after the collapse of the Portuguese empire in Africa, the economy collapses. Already the Angolan government is negotiating with the Portuguese to get back some of the refugees who now sit in Portugal waiting for word that they can return to their homeland. It will be interesting, now that the war is won, how much the Cuban presence in Angola is appreciated.

This is the point which exposes the basic Russian weakness: respected and loved by no one, the success of their global plans will hinge on any economic help they can provide developing nations. To coin a phrase, "How can you expect a country that is itself economically weak to be of much help to others?" The anemic Russian economy, never strong, is now so tied up in the production of armaments to the detriment of other sectors of the economy that it looks increasingly to transfusions of western money and technology to keep it going. It is notoriously mismanaged and inefficient, and coupled with a vicious climate, unable to produce even enough wheat to feed its people.

It is one of the lessons of history that no one, since the days of the Roman empire, has ever succeeded in dominating the whole world. If there is a Russian Threat, it is a second-rate threat, carrying no moral or intellectual weight with it. It is, after all, those qualities which have a way of enduring, even in bad times. If this sounds optimistic, it is because there is no alternative in today's world than but to hope.