

negative, and the letters of Brown and Bowen are reflective of this refusal to undertake any new thinking. The limit of their imaginations seems to be the relocation of US bases from the Philippines to some other site, never asking whether the bases' missions should be performed at all. And those US government officials who do ask such questions--like Paul Kattenburg, an early dissenter on Vietnam, or Francis Underhill--tend to have their diplomatic careers cut short.

Stephen Rosskamm Shalom

### Response to Gregor:

James Gregor mis-states the fundamental argument of my article. He claims (1) that I reject the general security policy of the United States, and (2) that I believe that in any case the Philippine bases do not contribute to the success of this policy. My actual view, however, was quite clearly indicated: (1) some missions of the Philippine bases I accept (such as defending Japan), but these missions, I argued, can be done without the bases; and (2) some missions of the Philippine bases I believe should not be done at all (such as facilitating intervention in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean regions), though Clark and Subic do contribute--indeed very much so--to their accomplishment.

Gregor's method of argument is illustrated by his expository note 3. (1) Gregor states that "Shalom simply knows" that the US government is far more interested in preserving the Persian Gulf as an American lake than in protecting shipping. I don't simply know this, I provided evidence. I pointed to the Soviet offer to reflag Kuwaiti ships and the subsequent Soviet proposal to have Gulf peacekeeping performed by a United Nations force. These the US rejected, though the latter proposal would likely have done more for the safety of shipping than inserting the US Navy. Gregor does not dispute my evidence, he ignores it.

(2) Gregor claims I know the Soviet Union "really wants 'demilitarization' and 'denuclearization' of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia." I never discussed what Moscow *really* wants, and I'm not even sure what that means. I did say that the USSR has endorsed proposals to this effect and thus that agreement should not be difficult if the US were willing. Is it possible that as soon as Washington indicates that it supports a proposal already endorsed by the USSR that the latter would reject the proposal? Possible? Yes. But nations do not usually endorse specific proposals (as opposed to vague commitments to peace) if they are unprepared for their acceptance. And what better way to find out if Moscow is serious than to take it up on its offers? There is a world of difference between a nation proclaiming that it believes in peace (a rather empty declaration) and a nation proposing that both sides agree to limit their arms or deployments in some specified way.

Might the USSR cheat on an agreement of this sort? Of course, and provisions should be included for rigorous verification. Gregor suggests that the Soviet Union is not serious. Let me put the question directly: if the Soviet Union were serious about Indian Ocean demilitarization, for example, would Gregor favor US agreement?

(3) Gregor says I am convinced that China "really wants a peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea." On the contrary, I specifically stated that China has rejected peaceful settlement of its South China Sea dispute with Vietnam.

(4) Gregor states that it is my view that "it is the United States that postures and commits 'lawless acts'" and that "if the Soviet Union does any of that" I know "that it must be on a 'smaller scale'." What I actually said was that Moscow does not "any more than Washington" seek to promote humanitarian values. It is "fully as capable of military interventionism" as the US. The phrase "smaller scale" that I used specifically referred to the use of naval assets to further political purposes, and I gave a footnote documenting the lesser scale of Soviet naval activity compared to that of the US. Gregor could have disputed my evidence, he could have argued that the Soviet navy has been more interventionist than the US Navy (a tough case to argue). Instead, he just mis-stated my views.

Let me turn now to the heart of Gregor's critique. He claims that the Philippine bases are needed to protect vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs) in the event of an all-out US-Soviet war that does not breach the nuclear threshold. Gregor's argument falls on three counts. First, the likelihood of an all-out US-Soviet war remaining conventional is essentially nil. Second, he severely exaggerates the threat of Soviet attacks on SLOCs. And, third, he does not show that this threat would be any more serious in the event of a bases trade-off in Southeast Asia.

US policy in the event of war with the Soviet Union, even if confined to Europe, is horizontal escalation (i.e., attacks in the Pacific), including the targeting of Soviet ballistic missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs). The airbases of the nuclear-capable Backfire bomber would also be hit. We may presume that the USSR would likewise want to target US SSBNs, though its ability to do so is more limited.

Conventional naval forces, surface and underwater, depend on communications and surveillance networks, attacks on which will also endanger each nation's control over its nuclear arsenal. Moreover, while land-based nuclear forces have various safety mechanisms ensuring that they cannot be launched without appropriate authorization, use of nuclear weapons at sea is not constrained in this way. The US Navy asserts that officer training precludes unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, but who can guarantee that the officers of a US vessel, facing imminent destruction from enemy forces, could resist the temptation to save themselves by using a nuclear torpedo or cruise missile. There is no reason to think that similar considerations won't apply on the Soviet side. Both navies have nuclear weapons fully integrated with their conventional weapons--and the two kinds of weapons are often indistinguishable to the other side until the warhead explodes. This is not a war environment conducive to careful restraints. (See on this matter Ball 1988 and Arkin 1987.)

Gregor says there is evidence that the Soviet Union is planning for a conventional war.<sup>1</sup> The military officers of both superpowers do all sorts of bizarre

planning, but the real question is not the military plans but whether there is any evidence that the Soviet political leadership believes a conventional world war is possible.

Gregor informs us, and I agree with him, that "the general judgment is that the Soviet Union is not disposed to take serious risks." Yet he would have us believe that a nation disinclined to serious risk-taking would risk fighting an all-out conventional war with the United States—a war in which both sides would be going after each other's strategic nuclear forces, targeting each other's communications facilities, entering into combat with dual-capable forces—with the expectation that the United States (and other nuclear powers) will permit Western Europe and Japan to be lost and the United States to be defeated without using nuclear weapons. This is a wholly implausible scenario.

For the sake of argument, however, let us grant Gregor his premise that there could be a conventional world war. How significant would the threat to the SLOCs be?<sup>2</sup>

Gregor writes that "Among the missions assigned the Soviet fleet there is an 'almost obsessive preoccupation with the potential of naval warfare against maritime arteries. . .'" and Gregor gives as his source for this quotation Ranft and Till. In fact, however, the quoted words come not from Ranft and Till but from another analyst, quoted by them to illustrate one extreme point of view on a "matter of considerable controversy." And the quote does not refer to the Soviet fleet having this obsessive preoccupation, but the writings of Admiral Gorshkov. Ranft and Till go on to give their own view on this controversial matter and conclude that interdiction of Western SLOCs "is fairly clearly *not* a primary function of the Soviet Navy" (p. 182, emphasis theirs). Moreover, the significance of Gorshkov's writings is not so crystal clear. Michael MccGwire, whose analysis Gregor commends to us, concludes that Gorshkov's articles were works of advocacy, not statements of Soviet policy, and that naval influence in Soviet policymaking was at its peak in the mid-seventies and declined thereafter (MccGwire 1987:449-64, 474). And James M. McConnell reads Gorshkov as considering traditional anti-SLOC operations as relatively unimportant (McConnell 1977: 583).

Gregor acknowledges that sealane interdiction is only one of the Soviet Pacific fleet's missions, but he says that it is not clear what that mission's rank on a list of priorities might be. What is clear, however, is that protecting its own ballistic submarine force and protecting its home waters from US cruise missile launchers and aircraft carriers are the main Soviet priorities (see e.g., L. Brooks 1988: 21; McConnell 1986: 54; T. Brooks 1986: 87; Dept. of Defense 1988: 126). Ironically, one reason the USSR might engage in maritime interdiction is less for its own sake than for the purpose of diverting western anti-submarine warfare assets away from its SSBNs (MccGwire 1980: 161). And, it is not just the reckless SSBN-hunting policy of the Reagan administration's Maritime Strategy that has led the Soviet Navy to emphasize the importance of defending its SSBNs; western analysts assume that Soviet planners had to anticipate US attacks on SSBNs even before it became explicitly acknowledged by the Reagan administration (L. Brooks 1988: 38).

Gregor tells us that the Soviet SLOC threat in the Pacific must be grave indeed because the Soviet Pacific fleet has "about twice the [submarine] assets available in the

entire German Navy at the outbreak of the second world war." (Gregor likes this comparison; elsewhere he writes that China "has about three times as many patrol submarines as Hitler's Germany had at the beginning of the Second World War." [Gregor 1987: 71; his own figures are 118 to 57 for a ratio of 2.07, which for Gregor is apparently "about three."] But why does he never note that the United States has twice as many submarines as Hitler?)

On the Soviet-German analogy, let me quote the remarks of Karl Lautenschlager (1988), staff defense analyst at Los Alamos:

It is therefore delusive to draw simple analogies between past submarine campaigns and current naval problems. For example, it is often argued that the current Soviet submarine fleet has many times the commerce destruction potential of the World War II German submarine fleet, since a "few" German U-boats sank substantial numbers of merchant ships off the US Atlantic coast in 1942, and the current Soviet submarine fleet is much larger than the pre-World War II German submarine fleet. In fact, German U-boat strength in 1942 was about the same as Soviet submarine strength today, and Germany built more submarines in four years than the Soviet Union has built in the last forty. Due to a variety of changed circumstances, Soviet potential to wage commerce warfare is probably substantially smaller than that of Germany in World War II. (pp. 240-41)

\* \* \*

A projection of the makeup of Soviet submarine forces in 1995 shows serious limitations in numbers required for a commerce warfare capability if current trends continue. Not only are Soviet building rates down to about 7 or 8 boats a year compared with between 60 and 80 in the late 1950s, but the force has taken on several competing but essential missions. (p. 279)

\* \* \*

[with optimistic assumptions, the Soviet navy would have 60 nuclear-powered and diesel-electric submarines] to wage a campaign against *either* the ballistic missile submarines *or* the merchant shipping of the Western Alliance, and this takes no account of subs . . . that will be in transit to operational areas, used for training, and in the yard for refit. Given the notorious reputation Soviet submarines have for breakdowns and low availability, these last factors are significant.

In order to wage a campaign that would seriously threaten Western sealines of communication, the Soviets would need a force of 450 to 500 submarines if the other commitments listed above are to be met as well. Regardless of the impressive achievements of the Soviet shipbuilding industry over the past two decades, there is little evidence that the Soviets will be able to produce such a force or make good



losses they would suffer in what would be an intensive struggle."  
(279-80)

Lautenschlager is not alone in this assessment. Defense consultant Robert W. Herrick (1986: 31) considers the anti-SLOC mission to be the sixth ranked mission of the Soviet navy and comments that "existing naval forces, as large as they seem *in toto*, are far from adequate to add a major anti-SLOC campaign onto the higher priority requirements for pro-SSBN and anticarrier operations. Consequently, it seems likely that the navy would not be tasked for anything more than a token anti-SLOC campaign to force the West to institute convoying for its merchant shipping."

McGwire (1987: 180) comments that "Embarking on a sustained effort to disrupt the flow of shipping to Japan would not serve the Soviet Union's overall strategic objective," and he notes that "Western assumptions about the threat of such a campaign seem to be based on the experience of Britain in the very different circumstances of World Wars I and II." McGwire goes on to say that if the Soviet Union were unable to keep Tokyo neutral it would "surely resort to rapid, brutal, and certain methods, rather than the oblique approach of commerce war, to defeat Japan." Gregor acknowledges this point but then says that the Soviet military command may not succeed in these more direct methods. But it is hard to see how defended sealanes or Philippine bases would protect Japanese ports (or Middle Eastern oil fields for that matter) from conventionally armed cruise missiles.

One gets a real sense of how worried the US Navy is about protracted conventional war with the Soviet Union when one notes that mining would be an obvious addition to wartime SLOC attacks (Bernstein 1986: 247). Yet because mine-warfare forces "do not offer much to a peacetime naval presence or the ability to influence events in peacetime" (Train 1986: 286), the US Navy has invested in very few of these forces, particularly for the Pacific fleet, as was recently revealed in the Persian Gulf.

As I argued in my original article, the main question is not "what is the threat to the sealanes," but whether that threat would be enhanced or reduced by a bases trade-off.

Many sources have argued that the Soviet presence at Cam Ranh Bay makes a significant difference in the threat to the SLOCs. Admiral William J. Crowe testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 23, 1984, that access to bases in Vietnam has become "exceptionally valuable to the Soviet Navy." These facilities "provide the Soviets with a capability to 'strike' and interdict the vital sea lines of communication throughout Southeast Asia." James Linder (1988: 157) writes that "Neutralizing these Soviet bases in Indochina would significantly reduce the threat to the sea lanes of communication in the Western Pacific. . . ." And Alvin H. Bernstein (1986: 247), who notes that while the newer, quieter nuclear-powered Soviet submarines would be used to protect the SSBN force, "If the Soviets did want to deploy their older submarines for the purposes of interdiction after the outbreak of hostilities, a secure Cam Ranh Bay, able to survive the initial stages of the war, would serve as an especially valuable base of operations. Attack submarines could slip away from Cam

Ranh Bay without having to pass through the more easily patrolled choke points to the north."

But one needn't cite only these authorities. Consider these comments: "Soviet air and naval forces now have access to out-of-area bases in Indochina that give Moscow forward projection and surge capabilities that put the sea lines of communication in the South China Sea at risk." Or these: in order to interdict US and allied shipping in the region "the Soviet navy would have to maintain forward capabilities in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. To that end, it is instructive to note that Soviet forces have apparently settled into bases in Southeast Asia. \* \* \* In effect, the Soviet Union now has credible sea denial capabilities in East Asia. By 1980, the repair and service facilities in Vietnam allowed Soviet submarines and surface combatants in the South China Sea to extend the length of their duty tours in the region by about 100 percent. \* \* \* The deployment of Mig-23s in Vietnam . . . allows the Soviet Union to provide landbased air cover over a considerable length of the sea lines of communication in East Asia."

These quotes come from Gregor writing in 1988 (1988b: 153; 1988a: 166-68). But now he changes his position and tells us that in fact the Soviet Union "could very well do without base facilities in Vietnam and still threaten the sealanes." We will perhaps be forgiven for taking Gregor's assurances on this matter with a grain of salt.<sup>3</sup>

Gregor states that the anti-SLOC mission requires fewer naval assets than does defending SLOCs. But this ignores the fact that the Soviet Union has as serious an SLOC dependence as does the US and its allies. To quote a right-wing naval expert:

It is probable that in the event of a major conflict, not only would Soviet forces in the Pacific TVD [theater of operations] have difficulty sustaining their military operations, but their counterparts in the Far East TVD would have supply problems as well. \* \* \* In order to maintain adequate logistic support for its military forces in both the Far East and Pacific TVDs, the Soviet Union must maintain a free flow of maritime traffic along its extended supply lines stretching from European Russia through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea to the Northeast Asian landmass. Central to the defense and maintenance of this lifeline is the availability of adequate support facilities and out-of-area bases located in Indochina" (Linder 1988: 158).

Gregor confines his discussion of this point to a footnote and only to say he can't discuss the matter. But if Soviet warfighting ability in the Pacific depends on keeping its SLOCs open, then giving up Cam Ranh Bay would severely diminish its capability for protracted war, given that many US bases (aside from Clark and Subic) lie between the European Soviet Union and Vladivostok.

With the Soviet Pacific fleet trapped behind narrow straits, its ability to attack or defend SLOCs in the South China Sea would be extremely limited. Submarines might be able to escape to the open sea, but they would have to pass through the straits again for repairs and restocking weapons. In the event of a bases trade-off, the

US Navy would certainly have an easier time moving into the sealanes of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean—even from bases in the eastern Pacific—than would the Soviet Pacific fleet from Vladivostok.<sup>4</sup>

In 1980, Michael McGwire (1980: 175) wrote that the Soviet "naval posture is one of being on guard against the possibility of war, rather than preparing for its inevitability; . . . Nor does the pattern of Soviet warship construction give the impression of an urge to war . . . ." That was before Gorbachev. We are now witnessing the most astounding developments in Soviet foreign policy—changes on the level of basic concepts, policy concepts, and actions (Legvold 1989). The opportunities for reversing the destructiveness of the Cold War have never been greater. But all that some U.S. conservatives see is "a Soviet design to dominate the entire [Pacific] basin." (*Global Affairs*, Spring 1988, p. 218). Gregor terms the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan a positive development, but tells us that "some sort of Soviet presence will remain in Afghanistan after the end of the occupation," citing an article in *The Retired Officer*, a compelling source if ever there was one. Even Ronald Reagan has seen the benefits of arms control, but the International Security Council warns of "the trap of arms control," as it called for the defeat of the INF treaty (*Global Affairs*, Summer 1988, pp. 17, 205-08).

It is time to get beyond such cant. It is not enough to argue that there are risks in pursuing peace, however remote, for there are risks as well in rejecting peace, and these are not so remote. If the US response to Gorbachev's initiatives is continued military build-up, ever larger war games, continued seeking of one-sided advantage, then the Soviet hawks will be proved right, and may once again gain the ascendancy. This might please U.S. hawks, for the hawks in both camps thrive on each other. For most Americans, and indeed for most people in the world, this would be a tragedy of the first order.

Stephen Rosskamm Shalom

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>His source for this is an article in the *Washington Times*, a conservative publication, as are a large number of Gregor's other sources.

<sup>2</sup>Gregor switches back and forth between the phrases SLOC interdiction and "sea denial" as if these were synonymous missions. To some extent all naval missions overlap, but analysts generally consider these as two very different things. The latter involves keeping US aircraft carriers and cruise missile launchers away from Soviet shores, a distinct mission from cutting Western sealanes.

<sup>3</sup>Just so there is no misunderstanding, let me be perfectly clear that I am not saying that Gregor was correct in 1988 and wrong now. He is wrong both times: in 1988 he grossly exaggerated the military utility of Cam Ranh Bay, and now that a trade-off has been proposed he grossly understates its value.

<sup>4</sup>Gregor's alarm about the Soviet presence in North Korea does not affect the argument. Gregor makes it seem as if the entire US naval strategy has been undermined by Soviet access to North Korean ports outside the confines of the

chokepoints at the mouth of the Sea of Japan. (In fact, one of the two ports Gregor mentions, Wonson, is on the west coast, inside the chokepoints.) First of all, however, Soviet naval visits to North Korea are in no way comparable to Soviet access to facilities in Vietnam, and US government sources do not refer to a Soviet base or anchorage in, or even naval access to, North Korea (see e.g., Dept. of Defense 1988: 132-33, or the Joint Staff, *US Military Posture, FY 1989*, p. 27). To speak of the Soviet Union "establishing itself in the North Korean port of Nampo" as Gregor does (1988a: 165) is nonsense. Second, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency, neither Nampo nor Wonson can sustain a large combat fleet, they have not been developed to repair or support Soviet vessels, and no Soviet base is anticipated in North Korea in the foreseeable future (conversation with Lt. Col. Louis Cantolupo, deputy chief of the Korea-Japan branch, Defense Intelligence Agency, 6 Mar. and 13 Mar. 1989). Indeed, the overflights that have Gregor so exercised have been declining in number (Dept. of Defense 1988: 28). Third, US military planners have always factored in the possibility of Soviet-North Korean cooperation in wartime regardless of whether there were peacetime bases (Cantolupo), and a number of factors minimize the value of access to ports on North Korea's west coast: (a) Nampo lies less than 100 miles from South Korea where US-ROK forces maintain clear air superiority, and the North Korean-Soviet rail link is extremely vulnerable to Chinese interdiction; (b) North Korea's west coast is subject to huge tidal changes. "For certain periods of the day, vessels must either move offshore or be stuck in mud flats. These conditions and the proximity to North Korea induce the ROK to avoid any major naval bases on this western flank" (Olsen 1986: 342); and (c) to get to the open sea from Nampo, vessels would still have to pass between South Korea and China (Nampo is less than 200 miles from the home port of the Chinese Northern Fleet in Qingdao [*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 Aug. 1985, p. 23]) and then get past the Ryukyus.

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### Riposte to Shalom:

Stephen Shalom is probably correct. I am not at all confident that I understand what he has attempted to say. While I am prepared to accept some of the responsibility for the confusion, I do think it is a responsibility to be shared. I am not sure Shalom always manages to say what he means.

Thus, in writing a review of the monograph on *The Philippine Bases* by Virgilio Aganon and me (Shalom 1988a), Shalom maintains that we provide a case for U.S. retention of access to the Philippine facilities that "by and large consists of the usual Pentagon justifications along with the standard misrepresentations" (*ibid.*, 116).