New ways to talk with allies and adversaries

COMMUNICATIONS & COLLECTIVE SECURITY

by Henry M. Jackson

When NATO came into being in 1949, not a few believed that before long it would succumb to threats from without. They thought the fledgling organization would prove unequal to the task of keeping Soviet power from spilling over the boundaries of the Alliance. But they were wrong.

Still others believed that NATO would succumb to problems from within. They doubted that Alliance members would be willing to subordinate their own narrowed interests to the interests of the community as a whole. But they too were wrong.

Only a handful of the collective security organizations in history have matched NATO's record of longevity. At the age of thirty-four the Alliance is not just alive — it is flourishing.

For all our partnership's successes, important problems do beset it from time to time. The Rapporteurs' Report to the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, *Alliance Political Developments*, discusses many of these problems in great detail. And the report correctly stresses that we have not been doing enough, soon enough, to consult with each other on critical political issues. In this connection I cite just two examples.

Example one concerns our failure as a community to move more quickly than we did to seize the initiative in the quest for nuclear peace. There were warning signs of impending trouble some two years ago. In all NATO countries increasing numbers of people were questioning the depth of their government's commitment to seeking peace-serving arms cuts. They did not think their governments were doing all they should to occupy the high ground on the issue of mutual and major arms reductions.

Some of us on the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly urged our governments to act in concert to remove any reasonable doubts on this score. We urged consultations aimed at formulating and then advancing arms reductions proposals that would make plain the NATO community's devotion to the cause of peace. But the consultations were too long in coming, and we now are paying the price, for there are many citizens in our community who are not yet persuaded that we want to negotiate in good faith with the Soviets at Geneva.

The problem of the Soviet natural-gas pipeline provides another example of what can happen when we get caught off guard. On the one hand, none of us is indifferent to the tragic happenings in Poland. And none of us wants to endanger our community's security, either by giving the Soviets militarily useful technology or by becoming excessively dependent on energy sources outside our control. On the other hand, nobody wants to deny equipment sales to our manufacturing companies and their workers, if it can be avoided, and nobody wants his country to get the reputation of being an unreliable supplier.

Given such wide areas of agreement among NATO members, it should have been possible for our community to agree upon a position on the pipeline. But we failed to consult early enough and to search hard enough for a generally acceptable approach. So national positions hardened and months elapsed before we could solve a problem that need never have arisen in the first place.

Our Alliance needs a better early-warning system for spotting impending political troubles for the partnership. The system must be one that alerts us to upcoming problems *before* they reach crisis dimensions.

We now possess elaborate early-warning systems to locate possible trouble in the military realm. We employ

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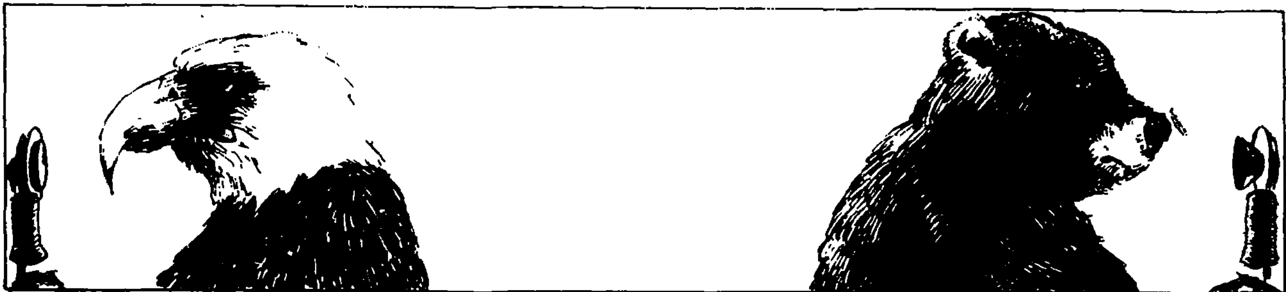
Robert Durham

batteries of super-sophisticated intelligence-gathering and analytical techniques to flag potentially dangerous military moves by our adversaries. We likewise employ elaborate management-control techniques to identify prospective technology-development problems that, if uncorrected, could delay the introduction of new weapons systems into the military inventories of our members.[i]

The immensely successful nuclear submarine-construction program offers a prime example of the use of such early-warning techniques. The system employed by Admiral Rickover and his key aides included the regular preparation and issuance of so-called "critical items lists." These lists drew early attention to management and technological-development problems that required quick and decisive remedial action to avoid slowdowns in the building of the submarine fleet.

Our partnership now needs the political equivalent of such critical items lists. Thus, the North Atlantic Council might regularly identify for the Alliance issues just over the horizon that have the potential for developing into pipeline-type controversies. The council might at the same time request that members report back to it the steps being taken to handle and correct such problems. I would put high on such a critical list the huge problem of the debt overhanging many Eastern bloc and developing countries, notably Poland and Mexico, and the evident dangers to international financial stability.

UPDATING SAFEGUARDS

If it is essential that we consult with our friends and allies in timely fashion, it is just as important that we talk with our adversaries. The Rapporteur of the Political Committee quite correctly reminds us of a key point of the Bonn Summit communiqué: "The necessity to keep the lines of communication open-- in CSCE, in arms negotiations fora, and in personal meetings, such as those pursued by both U.S. Secretaries of State, Messrs. Haig and Shultz, and with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko."

This need to keep open the lines to the Soviets is dramatically true when war threatens, and nuclear war most of all. Yet today we still lack an adequate communications safeguard against the outbreak of a nuclear war started not by deliberate design but by accident or error or misunderstanding.

There are scores of major issues about which our partnership has one view while the Soviets have another. But surely there is one issue on which the members of our Alliance should agree with each other *and* with the Soviets: the necessity of everybody doing everything they can to prevent an unwanted war. Nobody would win such a war— not the Soviets, not the U.S., not the other fifteen members of the Alliance, not any other nation.

Right now there is only one institutional mechanism for direct consultation between Washington and Moscow when war-threatening developments occur: the twenty-year-old hotline. But the hotline is a relatively antiquated teleprinter system that requires a time-consuming encoding and transcription process. President Reagan has proposed an exploration of ways to update the hotline technologically to permit voice communication, and certainly this should be done. But even were the hotline thus modernized, it might not serve its purpose when the president and his chief security advisors are scattered about on trips and unable to confer readily with one another. Last year President Reagan was out of Washington for more than a hundred days. And so were the secretary of state and the secretary of defense. I would be surprised if the time spent away from Moscow were much different for the Party chairman and his top security advisors.

The moral of the situation is obvious to me: We need additional arrangements for keeping matters from getting out of hand when one side has reason to question the intentions, and especially the nuclear intentions, of the other. This view, I might note, is shared by many of my Senate colleagues, among them Senator Sam Nunn, who this year initiated a U.S. Defense Department study of ways to prevent nuclear war by accident.

Toward this end I would like to see the Soviet Union agree with the U.S. to establish as quickly as possible a "Joint U.S.-USSR Consultation Center"—a new institution to facilitate immediate information exchange and consultation when things happen that could trigger a nuclear war that nobody had planned or wanted.

The joint center would be a permanent organization located at some mutually agreeable place. It would be in operation, fully staffed, every hour of the day, every day of the year. Secure unilaterally controlled communications systems would link the staffs to their respective capitals. The center's staffs would include technical experts and military representatives. But the make-or-break issues of nuclear war or peace are not technical or military—they are political and diplomatic—and the center's staffing should reflect this fact.

The center would supplement, and work in tandem with, the hotline. It would be alerted instantly when incidents occurred that could spill over into nuclear war. The staffs would communicate by talking with each other face-to-face, and each side would report its assessment as quickly as possible to the top level of its government. The two staffs would be *known* quanitites to each other, and this would assist them in understanding and in judging the credibility of their counterparts.

The center could work on crisis prevention as well as on crisis resolution. It might draft codes of conduct under which each side would agree to refrain from actions—certain types of readiness exercises, for instance—that the other side might regard as provocative and threatening.

Quite probably it will take long and difficult negotiations to reach an accord on arms reductions of the nature and dimensions the world needs. And there are bound to be setbacks along the way. Some people may be tempted to stop trying. But a joint consultation center that so clearly serves the interests of both the Soviets and the West should be negotiable at an early date. Success here would fortify our resolve to persevere in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks in Geneva for as long as may be necessary to achieve success.

The circumstances of the early '80s are not the circumstances of 1949. As times change, the Alliance will undergo many changes. And so it must, if it is to serve the interests of its members. But the all-important truth remains: There must be political early-warning systems, advance plans and preparations; we must have in place before crises occur the institutional mechanisms whose job it is to help resolve them. We cannot entrust the fate of our peoples to improvisation and the hope of muddling through.