

The Collins Report:

Prelude To A New Security Debate

Presented here are excerpts from a study by John M. Collins, "American and Soviet Military Strengths, Contemporary Trends Compared, 1970-1976." The study was prepared for the Senate Armed Services Committee and first published in the Congressional Record of Aug. 5, 1977 under the auspices of Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). The Carter Administration had sought for six months prior to publication to suppress the report because of its dramatic conflicts with the Administration's national security and scientific policies. The now-notorious Presidential Review Memorandum - 10 (PRM-10), prepared by Zbigniew Brzezinski's National Security Council, was originally scheduled to be released at the same time as the Collins study. Collins, a retired Army colonel and Congressional Research Service (CRS) Senior Specialist, was threatened with being fired if he didn't stop trying to get the report published after the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee refused to do so, calling the report "not up to acceptable levels of competence." To this day there has been a virtual press blackout of the contents of the Collins report, even though Capitol Hill is reportedly buzzing with talk of its contents and suppression.

The editors of the Executive Intelligence Review believe that Colonel Collins has made a vital contribution to a much-needed new national security debate, and we are pleased to present important excerpts of the report here, together with comments and analysis by our military-strategic editors. As it will show, the report itself represents the starting point for stepping out of the framework of controlled monetarist defense discussions by dismissing all of the current or projected "official" plans for increased military capability, and hinting at the fact that the problem does not lie directly in the military realm. It should be noted that before it was originally released within the government, the report was thoroughly reviewed by the defense and intelligence communities who advocated its publication. Only the National Security Council rejected it outright.

At the very outset of the report, Collins qualifies his method.

"The U.S.-Soviet military balance is just one component of the U.S.-soviet strategic balance, which is just one aspect of the U.S. global balance with other powers that determines our total defense demands. Political, economic, geographic, social, psychological, scientific, and technological assets that are

central to any strategic balance are considered here only as they directly affect relative strengths of U.S. and Soviet armed services, along with respective allies." (emphasis in original — ed.)

By concentrating on "military only" areas of discussion, the report obviously limits itself, but it appears that Collins is partially aware of that fact, in view of his constant hints at a broader *strategic* realm, and the predicates which he chooses to explicate in detail, such as the following.

On the Question of Science

"Classic dangers develop when new systems based on new technology burst on the scene.... Still, creativity alone confers no advantage unless tied to procedures that translate inventive ideas into tangible instruments deployed in correct combinations and sufficient strength.

"'Victory' is achieved when one participant unveils technological superiority so pervasive and pronounced that opponents can neither cope nor catch up. Since indicators of rival success often surface slowly, losers sometimes cherish illusions of winning until too late. Conversely, they may long be aware that they have lost, but lack any way to rally....

"In the past, Soviet scientists stuck close to a policy of conservative incrementation that featured slow but steady progress. The R and D community designed around difficulties. Current indications, however, suggest a significant change, characterized by expansion in the scope of Soviet basic research, greater emphasis on innovation, and increasing inclination to take technological risks on speculative projects that promise big payoffs if successful....

"Controlled thermonuclear fusion could pave the way for limitless power supplies. Wing-in-ground effect aircraft able to skim the sea's surface apparently offer great promise as part of an antisubmarine system. Techniques subjecting certain substances to pressures exceeding a million megabars could transform matter into new forms of unfathomed importance. High energy lasers have endless applications.

"(The United States') predominance, however, shows signs of perishability that make many intellectuals lament our lack of momentum.

"Causes include uncertain goals that make it

troublesome to chart a sound course for defense technology. Insistence on practical products is becoming more pronounced. Fund requests for abstract research are frequently cut or cancelled. Sharp fiscal caution extends to other R and D sectors. Consequent tendencies to tolerate few failures sometimes impede rapid progress....

"Nevertheless, the United States still holds unsurpassed abilities to compete technologically, and could consistently create superior products, *if policies and priorities changed.*"

(emphasis added—ed.)

Collins locates the military strength of the United States in part in its capacity for industrial and technological innovation. Without that, or with a decreased capability, there is no such thing as military strength, nor is there a population able to support scientific, industrial, or military endeavor. Contrasted to the Soviet Union's scientific policies, the Carter Administration cut-backs in all forms of advanced "basic research" and technological application, as evidenced in the fusion program as one key example, have to be reversed if the industrial might of this nation is to expand.

The Scenario for War

"Soviet power alone would pose serious potential threats to NATO's center sector, even if most satellite forces were pinned down for local security and air defense purposes.

"*Warsaw Pact Capabilities:* The Soviets, in concert with selected allies, could exercise all or part of the following combat capabilities if they chose to run serious risks:

"Inflict catastrophic damage on the continental United States with strategic nuclear weapons as a prelude to war in Europe.

"Invade Western Europe with little or no warning, using air and ground forces now in East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

"Support conventional operations with tactical nuclear weapons targeted against NATO forces, airfields, ports, command-control centers, and supply installations.

"Challenge NATO for air superiority over Western Europe.

"Reinforce initial efforts rapidly with ready reserves in European Russia and Poland.

"Seriously inhibit reinforcement and resupply from the United States by interdicting trans-Atlantic air and sea lanes.

"Mobilize additional combat power.

"*Soviet Intentions:* Capabilities just enumerated are tempered by Soviet intentions, which separate possibilities from probable courses of action.

"Bearing that backdrop in mind, premeditated Soviet attacks across the Iron Curtain, even for limited objectives, seem likely to occur only if Moscow entertains serious doubts concerning NATO's defense abilities and-or resolve. Even then, issues would have to be immediate and immense, unless Kremlin leaders believed actual risks were low in relation to anticipated gains. Whether those

"History indicates that the Kremlin's hierarchy is essentially conservative, despite its revolutionary traditional character, communist doctrine, and unshakeable convictions that time is generally on their side tend to repress impulses and reduce unwarranted risks. Political, economic, social, psychological, and technological competition have superseded naked force as policy tools since the Cuban missile crisis, although military power looms increasingly large as a possible option."

conditions will soon be satisfied is a matter of serious concern in the U.S. intelligence community and among net assessment specialists.

"*Soviet military doctrine:* Soviet military doctrine suggests that the Warsaw Pact would have three main objectives if a major war should ensue: early destruction of NATO's defense forces; early occupation of NATO territory; and early isolation of Western Europe from its U.S. ally.

"Unclassified analyses conclude that Soviet concepts for such operations stress surprise, shock, and quick exploitation. Conventional and nuclear capabilities would be used in combinations suited to the occasion, without any scruples concerning collateral damage and casualties. Employing nuclear arms is not considered escalatory, since Soviet strategists contend that political aims, not weapons systems, establish the scope of war....

"NATO can no longer defend in depth, even if forward positions proved pregnable. Its forces formerly could fence with the foe all the way to the Pyrennees if necessary along established lines of supply and communication.... Every lucrative military target, including command and control centers, airbases, ports, and supply depots, is within reach of Soviet IRBMs and MRBMs. An enemy breakthrough would compel NATO to retreat across Belgium toward Dunkerque or south toward the Alpine wall. Even if France invited NATO back in emergency many handicaps would remain, since facilities there have deteriorated or been dismantled....

"If strong enemy elements cracked through the crust, our main line of resistance could be enveloped, unless friendly forces quickly regrouped behind the unfordable Rhine, the first major defensible terrain feature to the rear."

On forward defense and the neutron bomb, the alternatives currently being offered for the defense of NATO, Collins says:

"The prescription for forward defense originally was a political expedient to ensure wholehearted

participation by West Germany, which has persistently rejected any proposition that arbitrarily cedes German ground. The objective, therefore, has always been to block major attacks and stabilize the situation quickly.

"The task is imposing.... The first sharp Soviet surge would sever friendly supply lines.... Airfields also would be overrun."

And:

"Severe civilian casualties and collateral damage would be unavoidable if tactical nuclear weapons were exploded in large numbers... Neutron weapons available to NATO, but not the Warsaw Pact, would alleviate such problems very little."

The most important aspect of this essentially correct scenario of what would happen in the event of war is the fact that Collins debunks one by one all the alternative postures being offered by the Carter Administration through the Committee on the Present Danger, NATO Commander General Alexander Haig, and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. That posture is for a short-term conventional buildup in Europe, complete with "wunderwaffen," reinforced forward defense and neutron bombs, designed primarily as a political expedient to keep Europe under control similar to the way in which Collins describes the origins of the forward defense concept. The military values of these policies would be nil.

The report makes the very important distinction between Warsaw Pact capability and intent — an intent tempered by political constraint. Contrast this to the insane opinion of CPD members Richard Pipes and Paul Nitze, who make no such distinction, arguing that the Soviets will absolutely launch a first strike as soon as they feel they are able, and say that a U.S. first strike capability is necessary to stop it.

The CPD circle is trying to distort the Collins report to suit its own purposes, but it can readily be seen from the report itself that there are major differences between the two positions. It was Evans and Novak, the main CPD mouthpieces, who originally selectively leaked the story of the Collins report as well as the story of PRM-10. The CPD is trying to use the common features of both reports — the indefensibility of Europe — to bolster its position and to keep up the "Mutt and Jeff" routine on defense discussions. Either option, the PRM-10 non-defense of Europe, or the Haig short-term buildup would lead to the same suicidal results sketched by Collins.

For these reasons, full-scale debate on the report must be opened up, beyond any "military only" limitations. The most important question on the table is the reindustrialization of the United States and maximized use of our scientific potential to the benefit of the entire population. Collins' Clausewitzian military analysis must be extended to the political and economic spheres in order to be effective — as Collins himself hints in his report.

— Ron Kastner and Bob Cohen