

The American Mercury

NAVY BRASS IMPERILS OUR DEFENSE

B Y

WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE

AS WE begin to rearm and plan for another war, it is discouraging to note that the Navy hierarchy is still playing its old game of rule or ruin. Far from supporting the feeble steps toward unification, the admirals are sabotaging unity with might and main; and while other men are considering how to make the country strong, the admirals seem concerned only with how to proliferate their own bureaucracy.

By their actions the admirals are showing their usual contempt for the hopes of the American people. For the people want unification. We want an end to the wasteful struggle between rival bureaucracies. We want a single,

intelligent war organization with a single, intelligent plan for the destruction, if necessary, of our enemies.

But the admirals are opposed to us. Every effort to eliminate duplication; every effort to offset the burgeoning costs of war by getting more value for our war dollar; every effort to create a single strategic plan for war against Russia — all these are being opposed by the Navy's efforts to expand itself, to buttress its claims to command in vital areas, and to grasp for itself strategic missions for which it cannot qualify. Whatever progress is made has to be made against the practiced obstruction of the admirals.

Readers of the MERCURY are famil-

WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE is the author of *The Case Against the Admirals*, *The Fight for Air Power* and a novel, *Mud on the Stars*. He is a frequent contributor to the MERCURY, whose last previous article was "The Backwardness of Navy Brass," in June 1946.

iar with past phases of this ancient, debilitating struggle of the Navy against the public welfare. No journal has done more to illuminate it. So this article will report only the Navy shenanigans of 1948.

To understand the current machinations one must first know the basic thinking about war with Russia.

The target date is 1952. No military man in Washington believes that war is likely before then. There is sound reason for this. Wars between two great adversaries don't just happen. They start when one of the adversaries believes it can destroy the other's industry. The men in the Kremlin know that Russia cannot now destroy American industry. If they started war now, we could atomize their industry but they couldn't atomize ours. So if the Russians want war, they will start only when they believe that they can atomize our ports and our industrial heartland. And they are unlikely to believe this before 1952.

Therefore, our war aim is to maintain our advantage over Russia; to be able in 1952 and thereafter to destroy Russia faster than she can destroy us. And our hope of peace lies in Russia's knowing that we have this advantage and in our being able to maintain this advantage until some sort of world control can be evolved.

The simple price of peace in our time is that we prevent Russia's rulers from ever coming to believe that they can destroy American industry while their own survives.

So the problem for our war planners is this: how in 1952 and thereafter can we deliver the most atomic bombs to Russian industry, and how can we prevent the delivery of Russian atomic bombs to our ports and industry?

A proper general strategy is readily apparent. We maintain air bases as close as possible to Russia — on Britain, Iceland and Greenland; in Africa; in Alaska and Japan. If war comes, either with airplanes or guided missiles we begin the systematic atomization of Russian industry. We safeguard our bases. We safeguard the supply lines to our bases. We protect our great ports, our shipping, our industry, our homes. When we have disarmed Russia our own armies can move in and take over what's left.

In such a strategy the proper rôles of our various services are just as readily apparent. The Air Force should strike the blows and help protect the bases and the homeland. The Navy should help protect the bases and should safeguard our shipping and our ports. The Army should be held in readiness to invade at the proper time.

II

But this is all too simple for the admirals. It denies them a "strategic rôle." It reduces them to an "inferior command position." It relegates the Navy to "support." It will allow too few admirals, too few Navy "supreme commands," too few excuses for the Navy to proliferate. So the admirals

are promoting their own grand plan for war against Russia.

The plan has been presented to Congress. In essence — though the Navy officially disclaims it — their plan is the "Gallery Plan." Rear Admiral Daniel Gallery has proposed that the Navy construct vast 65,000-ton aircraft carriers — more than twice the size of the biggest battleship the admirals have ever wasted money on. Each carrier with protection and complement would cost around \$500 million. As war approached these great carriers would be escorted to positions in the Mediterranean, in the North Sea, in the Arctic, and off Kamchatka.

From the decks of these mammoth carriers — each one would be so big that a four-star admiral would have to command it — long-range jet bombers would take off with atomic bombs and drop them on Moscow, Stalingrad, the Donets Basin, the Ural industrial area, etc. But, big as these carriers would be, they wouldn't be big enough for the bombers to land back on them. When the bombers returned they'd be ditched and the personnel would try to save themselves.

Thus, according to the admirals, the first phase of our war would be this succession of Doolittle raids by the Navy. In the second phase the Marines — also commanded by admirals — would secure and safeguard bases from which our Air Force could begin operations. Presumably the Air Force would only stir up the dust of destruction already wrought by the

Navy; and later our Army would move in and police the dust.

Only an admiral can perceive the advantages of the "Gallery Plan." First, it would allow the Navy to build more big, expensive ships, and the Navy is now hard put to justify any more big ships. Remember the battleship? It was the "backbone of the fleet" in Navy propaganda as late as 1942. But now the Navy Command winces whenever it hears of battleships. During the war the admirals built eight battleships at a cost of \$100 million each, not to mention vast quantities of labor, steel and other critical items. Not one of these ships ever fired a justifying shot; they are now in moth balls; the *Kentucky* was abandoned half-finished; and not even the Navy has any plans for using battleships in 1952.

As a matter of fact the admirals now in control of the Navy opposed the building of the battleships; they refer to them today as "King's Folly." The battleships can only be scrapped to relieve the scrap iron shortage. If the admirals who are responsible for them lived in Russia, they would have been court-martialed and shot.

Unless the admirals can sell Congress on the "Gallery Plan" and super carriers, the Navy may never build another ship bigger than a sub-chaser. The "Gallery Plan" is the last hope to keep the Navy in the big ship-building business.

The additional advantages of the plan — to the admirals — are that it would provide a strategic mission for

the Navy; it would let the Navy be the "first line of defense" and thus deserve the lion's share of our war monies. It would justify larger appropriations for the Navy's land army and place the general direction of the war in Navy hands. Initially, it would reduce the Air Force to the function of guarding the homeland, and subordinate our ground army to the Marine Corps and Navy command.

These, as I say, are advantages which only an admiral can perceive.

III

The disadvantages of the "Gallery Plan," on the other hand, can be perceived by any citizen-in-the-street. Why should we spend money and materials on 65,000-ton carriers to operate off Kamchatka, in the Mediterranean, in the Arctic and in the North Sea? Don't we have Alaska and Japan off Kamchatka? Don't we have the entire continent of Africa bordering the Mediterranean? Don't we have the islands of Britain, Iceland and Greenland?

And why should we risk a 65,000-ton carrier in the Mediterranean? Carriers couldn't operate in the Mediterranean in 1940. Is it likely that they will be able to in 1952?

Why not let the Air Force strike our first blows at Russia? Instead of striking with a few suicide bombers from carrier decks, why not strike with clouds of land-based bombers? Why not let the Air Force be our first line of defense? Why not let the Air Force have the strategic mission?

Why build any more carriers at all? We have scores of them, from big Essex-types down to jeep carriers for convoy escort. There won't be any islands to hop in 1952. There won't be any Russian surface fleet to destroy. There'll be very little Russian shipping to attack. And our allies, the British, have a considerable navy which should be more than a match for anything the Russians may have on the surface.

So why should we expand our Navy now when the realities seem to recommend an expansion of our striking power? And why shouldn't our Navy be content to concentrate on the task of helping to safeguard our bases, of safeguarding our shipping, and, above all, of safeguarding our ports from the very grave threat of Russian submarines with atomic bombs?

As a matter of fact, while frantically struggling for "command position" and "strategic missions," the admirals are neglecting to prepare defenses against Russia's most powerful weapon. The admirals now have their heads so high in the air that they have lost sight of what travels under the sea.

We know from intelligence reports that the Russians are planning submarine attacks, with atomic weapons, on Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk and New Orleans. They hope to atomize these great ports with a Pearl Harbor stroke, and thus render us incapable of supplying our allies and our advance air bases. Our ablest planners concede that Rus-

sia may be able to accomplish this; they think we may have to supply our advance bases entirely by air.

Then why isn't our Navy concentrating on sub-killing? Instead of proposing 65,000-ton carriers for suicide attacks on Moscow, why aren't the admirals developing new surface and undersea sub-killers? The Russians are actually ahead of us in submarine development. They captured the German sub experts who were far ahead of our Navy when the war ended.

The Russians expect to use only one Navy weapon against us. They don't want battleships or carriers or cruisers; they want only the best submarines in the world — with atomic bombs to hurl at our ports. Why isn't our Navy concentrating on this one pure "naval" problem of the Third World War?

The answer is not too complex for the citizen-in-the-street to understand. The admirals don't want to play on a team; they want to be the whole show. They don't want "defensive assignments" or "supporting rôles." They want to be the "first line of defense"; they covet supreme commands and big appropriations.

IV

In addition to their promotion of the super-carriers and their neglect of the undersea threat, the admirals are guilty of a whole series of maneuvers against unification.

They deceived the people in the matter of moving Marines to the

Mediterranean. That battalion of Marines wasn't sent to the Mediterranean to influence the Italian elections. It wasn't a move in the chess game between Truman and Stalin. The Marines were sent to the Mediterranean only because the Air Force reopened a field in North Africa, only because the Army is in Greece and Trieste.

Under our present "unified" defense system supreme command is given to the branch of the service which seems to be most concerned with a particular area. The admirals know that if war comes with Russia the Mediterranean may be the most important area. The service which wins supreme command in the Mediterranean may produce the Eisenhower of the Third World War. So watch the struggle in the Mediterranean; not the struggle between the United States and Russia, but the struggle by the Navy to win supreme command. More Marines will be sent there; more ships will be concentrated there; for the admirals are determined to create a Mediterranean Command.

Defense Secretary James V. Forrestal is being used by the Navy to wreck unification. When the admirals were finally forced by public pressure and executive order to make some gesture toward unification, they succeeded in having Mr. Forrestal promoted from Secretary of the Navy to Secretary of National Defense. The Navy propaganda maintained that he was "particularly fitted to begin the process of unification."

As a matter of fact Mr. Forrestal has continued to function as Secretary of the Navy. He has taken his counsel from Admiral William D. Leahy; he has not made a single decision contrary to the Navy; he has done the cause of unification nothing but harm.

A case in point is the recent Key West Conference. Unification was initiated last year by an executive order from President Truman. The day the order was issued the admirals began a fight to have it rescinded. The battling over the order — and over "command position" and money — became so severe that the Key West Conference was necessary. The Conference was a dog fight, and the Navy had the most dogs. Mr. Forrestal and Admiral Leahy, representing the President, voted solidly against the Air Force and the Army with the result that the executive order — the very order which had initiated unification — was rescinded!

So we have the paradox of Mr. Forrestal, the man who was appointed to effect unification, voting to rescind the order which had initiated unification. But this should not be surprising since Mr. Forrestal, as Secretary of the Navy, had led the fight against unification.

The executive order was rescinded over the objection of General Spaatz; and immediately following the Key West Conference General Spaatz submitted his resignation as Chief of the Air Force.

The Key West Conference also attempted to produce a united defense

program for presentation to Congress. The Navy representatives insisted upon a 55-group Air Force instead of the 70-group force which General Spaatz insisted was "minimum." The Navy also insisted that the Air Force equip its bombardment groups with old-model B-29s instead of the new B-50s. The Conference generally upheld the Navy viewpoint, and Mr. Forrestal presented the program — essentially a Navy-dictated program — to Congress.

W. Stuart Symington, Secretary of the Air Force, opposed Mr. Forrestal before Congress — an unprecedented action — and Congress voted overwhelmingly against Mr. Forrestal, the Navy, and the Administration. The vote in the Senate was 74 to 2 for the full 70-group air program; in the House it was 343 to 3.

Mr. Symington was prepared to resign if Congress failed to sustain him. Mr. Forrestal was expected to resign after he had been so thoroughly repudiated, but as this is written his resignation is not yet announced.

After the Key West Conference had rescinded the executive order, Mr. Forrestal announced that a "Memo of Understanding" had been substituted for the order. But first the Air Force and then the Navy disavowed the "Memo," so at present there seems to be no understanding at all.

V

The merger of the Air Transport Command and the Naval Air Transport Service into the Military Air

Transport Service has been widely proclaimed as the "first fruit of unification." The Air Force is in control of it and will do its best to make a success of it.

But what has not been proclaimed is the jokers in MATS. Before assenting to MATS the admirals so loaded the agreement with restrictive provisions that they can sabotage it whenever they choose.

Six months from today the Air Force will report MATS a success. The Navy will call it a "dismal failure."

For a number of years there has been a gentleman's agreement between the Army and Navy called the "60-40 ratio." According to this agreement the Air Force was to operate about 60 per cent of our airplanes and the Navy 40 per cent. Until 1948 this was understood to mean sixty airplanes for the Air Force, forty airplanes for the Navy.

But recently the admirals have promulgated a new understanding. Henceforth it is to be 60 per cent of the money for the Air Force, 40 per cent for the Navy air force. The joker is that many of the Air Force planes are big, expensive bombers. By making 60-40 apply to money and not to number of airplanes, the Navy can obtain more airplanes than the Air Force has. And it is the number of airplanes which governs collateral expenses. Whoever has the most airplanes can hire the most men — the biggest ground crews, the most collateral equipment.

The Navy has begun construction of an air base at Annapolis. The initial expenditure is \$12 million but they will spend \$30 million on it before it is finished. Yet the Navy has several air bases within 30 miles of Annapolis. Why are they building the new one? So that Academy instructors can more conveniently get in their flying time and thus draw flight pay.

The Navy is doing the same thing everywhere. The cynical plan of the admirals is to make the Navy so large — to put facilities in so many Congressional districts — that no economy-minded administration will be able to pare it down.

The Navy is vigorously promoting its subsidies for every college which will accept it. It pours money into any school which will allow it to recruit pilots from its student body. Every week scores of college professors are flown to Pensacola and other Naval Air Stations for luxurious vacations at the taxpayers' expense.

Since the war ended in 1945 the Air Force has stood pat on one program — the program for 70 air groups. During this same period the Navy has increased its demands for airplanes from 5000 to 14,000. Yet what are these 14,000 airplanes to do, since Russia has no surface fleet, and these Navy planes are not the type to carry bombs to Moscow?

Twenty years ago Navy airplanes were the "eyes of the fleet." Now the Navy line is that the Navy is an air force; that all surface units are subordinate to the air.

So what we have created — or allowed to be created — is two great air forces, and the Navy air force is left without a justifying mission.

VI

Two solutions are possible. One would be to transfer the Army and the Air Force into the Navy. The Navy is a complete, unified service in itself. It is a vast land-sea-and-air bureaucracy. The admirals have their own land forces, their own sea forces, their own air forces. Their air force is their striking force; everything else is in support. It is, in fact, a great air force with the necessary land and sea support. Give the Navy our land-based aviation, expand the Marine Corps, and the Navy would be the only war organization that we need.

Moreover, there are brilliant airmen in the Navy command — just as smart as anybody in the Air Force. And these Navy airmen don't really believe in the Gallery Plan. They don't believe in 65,000-ton carriers.

They know that the job of destroying Russian industry cannot be done from carriers. But they are quite willing to build the carriers and waste the money in the hope that they can make the Navy bureaucracy so vast and so strong that it can swallow the Army and the Air Force.

It seems unlikely, however, that the Navy will swallow the Army and the Air Force. Congress has chosen the Air Force to be our striking force. The Air Force is to receive \$3.5 billion in 1949; \$5.2 billion in 1950; \$6.5 billion in 1951; and \$7.3 billion in 1952. A big bite for even the admirals to swallow. So if there is to be a solution at all it must be a merger, a real unification of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

Not a make-shift unification with a Forrestal at the head of it, but a real unification with a single, responsible commander, and with a single staff which can concentrate our money and our men on the weapons which seem most likely to be decisive in 1952.

CRADLE SONG

BY FRANCES FROST

Rockabye, my twentieth century baby,
rockabye on the luminous mushroom's top.
When the wind blows, my radioactive baby,
the heart of nations and your heart will stop.
When the atom breaks, my sweet sun-blasted baby,
the mushroom and the cradle of love will fall,
and down will come my blinded star-crossed baby,
cities and seas, the millioned earth and all.