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by

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"Trends in US/USSR Relations: Looking Forward to the Future"

I think I can introduce our next speaker as a faculty member thanks to the Bates Fellowship in which he is serving, spending a month on the campus, and this allows us to claim an esteemed statesman.

Helmut Sonnenfeldt was born in Berlin in 1926; and, as the European clouds of war and persecution clouded the continent, his parents sent him off to England where he went to school, where he entered college as a physics major and from where he headed for America when the waters of the Atlantic were somewhat calmed by the year 1944. He joined his parents here and immediately joined the Army in counterintelligence, of course speaking German fluently. He then went to work for the State Department as a clerk, GS-3. Put away a little money and entered Johns Hopkins University where he graduated with great distinction--with a B.A. and M.A., and then became a foreign service officer in the State ^{Department} in 1952. He rose there to the highest rank of all--that of career minister having hit all the wage rates, all the GS numbers from 3 on up, and all of the FSO numbers. He became properly known as a Soviet and East

European expert, being a research chief at one key part of his career, and then of course we all know he became a Presidential appointee as Henry Kissinger's European expert. Those are my words and I think that describes it to the layman.

Today, he is both a faculty member and a trustee of Johns Hopkins University. He's busy with the Atlantic Council of the United States. He is frequently read and will be Sunday in The New York Times and The Washington Post. He is affiliated with the Council of International Institute of Strategic Studies for whom he is doing several things including writing an article for Adelphi Papers, and right now he's lecturing ongoing seminars with our future military leaders here in Newport--Helmut Sonnenfeldt.

Admiral Stockdale, thank you very much; Mrs. Stockdale, ladies and gentlemen. I seem to be the only private citizen that's been standing in front of you during these three days. I don't know whether that makes me a statesman or irresponsible. I have no staff so I have no text of a speech.

Since the Admiral commented on my coming here in 1944, I'll say that if I stood up here tomorrow it would be 34 years to the day that I first saw America, and Admiral, I knew it was America and not Asia. And I haven't forgotten it ever since. But I came over on a 100-ship convoy zigzagging for 27 days from Bristol, England and we got to Nantucket Light on the 30th of March and then it took two more days to get us all into New York City and various other ports--that made it April Fools' Day

which may explain some things that happened later. In any event, I did not think 34 years ago off Nantucket Light that I'd be standing right here doing this sort of thing in due course.

I have, I may say, had the privilege and the pleasure and the intellectual profit of coming to the Naval War College on many occasions over the last many years. As somebody earlier noted, not always in these extravagant quarters and it's been a real honor as well as a challenge for me to have been selected as the Bates Fellow this year. This is a dry run for my Bates' lecture in two weeks.

My topic has to do with "Trends in American-Soviet Relations." Then, I think it says, "Looking Forward to the Future" after that. I do, in fact, look forward to the future and I'll explain why. I thought what I ought to do in about 20 minutes or so is to try to put this into some perspective. We've heard a great deal--as you inevitably do at occasions such as this--concerning the Soviet track and the evolution of Soviet military power. I thought it might be useful to put this into somewhat broader perspective and talk a little more broadly about the challenges and opportunities it poses for American policy. And then, I want to have as much time as your schedule and your restiveness permit to take questions. I know that Secretary Woolsey's airline is gonna not leave until the last passenger's aboard. So your safe from that score.

I think the first thing to say--it's been said here in many different ways but I think it's important to stress again--is

that what we're facing in the Soviet Union, we and the rest of the world, is a long term problem and it is a problem of historic proportions. That is to say, we are witnessing a process of the emergence of a great nation (a great country) as many nations wrapped in one not always with wholehearted approval. Emergence of that country for the first time in its history as a power with global interests and global aspirations, and that is an historic process that's been going on for some time now but it's accelerated in this generation. And the meaning of that for Americans, who by nature tend to be a problem solving society, is that there are no quick fixes or easy solutions or definitive solutions to that particular problem. It's going to stay with us for a long time to come. And also for Americans who up until only 30-some years ago--as I think Dr. Kissinger pointed out from this podium a few weeks ago--for Americans who have been accustomed through the preponderance of their history to retire to their own shores and let the problems of the world play themselves out without too much impact on the fortunes and well-beings of Americans, we also have to recognize that this is a problem along with some others that we cannot back away from.

We are in a geographic, literal sense an island, but we are an island in an era where the world has shrunk, as has been said so many times. But what it means for Americans is that the traditional American approach to foreign policy--to foreign problems since at least the War of 1812--of either of isolating ourselves from the affairs of the world or of occasionally

turning to the world and exerting great energy to deal with some particular problem, ~~that~~ those choices are no longer choices for Americans. We are now, though, an island part of the world, and we have to live with its problems including the one of the emergence of the Soviet Union as a power of world, and global dimensions.

The problem very broadly stated for American policy, American strategy, is to manage this process--the arrival on the global scene of the Soviet Union--in such a way that we will not have to endure a catastrophic war on the one hand or suffer injury to our interests and values on the other. The trick is to do both of those things. This, ladies and gentlemen, is obviously a national problem for the United States, as indeed it is a problem for many other countries who are witnessing and could be victimized by the same process. It is a national problem for Americans. There may be, to pick up some of the ~~treads~~ treads of the conversation here in earlier sessions, many things that need putting in order in the Navy house. But above all, when we are thinking of this kind of ~~4~~ issue--the issue of how to deal with the Soviet Union--it is our National house that needs to be put in order first of all and then we can talk about the particular subdivisions of our houses that may need to be put in order as well.

Now we in this group, need not recite the growth of Soviet military power in the last 35 years, nor is it perhaps all that profitable at this point to rehearse again the debates that have *been*

going on in this country since the end of the Second World War-- whether the initial motivation of Soviet military buildups were defensive or whether they were offensive. I think it can perhaps be granted that the initial Soviet impulse after the Second World War and during the Second World War, as they looked to the postwar period, was one of taking the steps that whatever sacrifice required to prevent that kind of disaster from striking again and it might well be that the determination at the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the postwar period to maintain large military forces was essentially one motivated by this kind of concern about the past and concern about preventing it from recurring in the future. But we learned very quickly that however defensive, however security-motivated, the Soviet military decisions in the late '40s and the early period of what came to be called the Cold War, ~~they~~ they involved, very quickly, actions that spelled the insecurity of all those who had to live adjacent to the Soviet Union and to the regions that came to be occupied by the Red Army in the aftermath or during the Second World War. So the distinction between what was defensive and offensive became blurred very quickly and it certainly became as much a concern for the Soviet Union's neighbors and then for the United States that there seemed to be a Soviet view of security that required the virtual insecurity of all others if it was to be satisfied. And that, of course, is what brought the United States back to the areas adjacent to the Soviet Union, as all of these countries all around the perimeter

of the Soviet Union recognized that they could not themselves face this military power that was accumulating in the Soviet Union. So the United States ~~walk~~^{broke} with its own tradition and formed its first peacetime alliances in order to help maintain a military balance around the periphery of the Soviet Union for those nations that felt threatened and insecure by the growth of Soviet power ~~into~~^{and for} those nations that wanted to look to the rebuilding of their own war-ravaged societies and economies.

Now this process then put the Soviet Union and the United States into direct competition and into direct antagonism, and it made the nature of this competition not simply one related to the periphery of the Soviet Union on the Eurasian landmass, but because of the fact that the United States already was a strategic power through its navy, through its air force, *it* transformed a continental military and security confrontation into one on a worldwide basis. Technology, of course, had much to do with this, for just as technology conferred upon the United States the capacity to project power at great distances so did technology in due course provide the Soviet Union with the means to send aircraft at great distances and to transform what had been essentially a coastal navy into an oceangoing navy, and to transform short-range rocketry into missilery of longer and longer range until it became continental and global in scale, and likewise to take the conventional high explosives of World War II and transform them into the nuclear explosives of the late '40s and early '50s. So technology, whatever the precise

Soviet intention with respect to their role in the world, technology conferred on Soviet military power the instrumentalities for making that power felt on a worldwide basis. And the Soviet Union, despite the containment barriers that our alliances have placed around it in Europe and in the Middle East and Asia, began to leapfrog those boundaries by the uses of technology in the mid-'50s.

Now, there is no question that this tendency to exert power at greater distances than had been traditional for Russia--although the Russians had episodes of it--that this was powerfully influenced by the ideology of Marxism, Leninism that animated Soviet behavior. But the technological growth of Soviet military power, the fact that their principal competitor--their principal opponent, as they saw it (incidentally also in many respects, their principal model), the United States^A was a global power. And their ideological impulses, their universalist impulses, mutually reinforced each other. And thenⁱⁿ this process of mutual reinforcement, the Soviet Union in the '50s began to become a power with global reach and global interests and global ambitions. It coincided of course with a process of decolonization which opened up for the Soviet Union many of these opportunities from which it was previously ~~A~~barred by the fact that these regions of the world continued to be parts of the empires of Europe and the United States. Now that is a process that began at that time, and I believe is a process that is going to continue, although with fluctuations, for a long time to come. I think as we look at

it and as we see the charts in our books and lectures and readings about the growth of Soviet military power in this process we need to be conscious of the fact that this is not power that has grown up without vulnerabilities and shortcomings. You take just the naval side of it--I think you know better than I that even though Soviet naval forces are today present and visible and will, I think for the rest of our lives and our children's lives, and beyond, be present and visible in distant places, they can do that only with lines of communications back to their home ports that can and are extremely vulnerable. They cannot reach the world oceans without passing through the constricted waters leading from the Black Sea and the northern waters and the Far Eastern waters. They do in fact, in some ways not dissimilarly from ourselves face periods of block obsolescence for numbers of their naval vessels. And, as an interesting echo of what happened to the Germans before the First World War, and in this one particular respect we can perhaps learn something from the German-British naval competition, the Soviets are in their naval activities and in many of their other military activities dependent to a considerable degree on access to various kinds of base facilities, and we have just observed in the last two years in the Mediterranean that through the loss of the Soviet bases in Egypt, the Soviet naval squadron in the Mediterranean is actually today less able to perform its functions than it was a few years ago. It is (if I may parenthetically interject this, since there is a long story in The New York Times about Turkey

this morning and a long overdue effort to see if we can make some progress on the deadlock there) ~~it~~ it is one of the ironies that at precisely the time when Soviet naval power in the Mediterranean is perhaps more vulnerable and less formidable than it was for several years because of the loss of land based facilities and ~~the~~ intelligence support and so on ~~that~~ that they obtained from those ~~that~~ that we should have a problem with the two members of NATO that form the Southeastern portion of our alliance which are essentially self-inflicted problems. Remember that the first countries to which the United States committed itself after the Second World War, in reversing its tradition of no foreign alliances and commitments, were precisely Greece and Turkey, and it is an irony indeed that at this particular time it's where perhaps in some ways the most serious problem--not the only serious problem--but the most serious problem that we face in our alliances is taking place.

Well now, Soviet military growth--the emergence of the Soviet Union as a power with global ambitions and a global role is what we have been facing and we'll have to contend with, but we need to put something else in the scales as we look into the future and as we look at our own policies and choices, and that is that the overall evolution of the Soviet Union apart from this area of military power has been extraordinarily uneven. We've had some discussion in lectures here, question periods, and in our seminars about some of these economic problems that the Soviet Union faces. In fact, we had a rather ominous

reflection about the petroleum problem this morning. But the fact of the matter is that after 60 years, the Soviet economy remains a very unbalanced economy, an economy which is far less effective in diffusing technology, utilizing technology, than our own and ~~of~~ the economies of other industrialized countries.

^{An} Economy which is still the only major one that is unable to feed its own population yearⁱⁿ and year out without having periodically to rely on external sources of supply. They do have a very difficult climate but above all they have a system of agricultural production and a system of economic priorities that has left their agricultural system seriously deficient.

~~The~~ Soviet society, is despite the revolutionary claims and the supposedly revolutionary heritage, perhaps the most rigid and stratified society in any industrialized country today. It does provide certain advantages for the system because there's a certain discipline and a kind of ~~an~~ inertia that in some respects makes it an easier country to rule. But in terms of the process of modernization, the process of growth, the Soviets have denied themselves many advantages, many opportunities by maintaining as rigidly stratified a society that's as highly an immobile society as they have. Compared to the Soviet Union terms of mobility-~~vertical~~ as well as horizontal-~~we~~ are infinitely more revolutionary than they and so are all of the countries of Western Europe. It is, I would say, perhaps the single most rigid country []] socially, the single most rigid society socially, in the world today.

There is in the Soviet Union an unresolved nationality problem. It has been submerged for many years by the monopoly of power wielded by the Communist Party and the predominance of horror wielded by the great Russians. But again, as many of you students here and others have been studying, the demographic facts are beginning to run against the Russians and the population of the Soviet Union. Birth rates are much higher in the other nationality groups. It remains one of the major unsolved problems in the Soviet Union.

There is, in this very hasty and incomplete list, finally no orderly process of succession in the Soviet Union and we have consequently seen since Stalin's death, but in his own case in the 1920s as well, this very unstable and debilitating process of arranging for the succession to a fallen or deceased leader. Above all, perhaps for purposes of our own policy and our own choices, the Soviet Union over the last 10 years or so has become far less insulated from the rest of the world than it once was. Its economic needs are such that it has by deliberate decision gone outside the Soviet Union and has accepted certain inroads into its ~~orthodox~~^{doctrinal} methods of running its economy. Soviet domestic practices, the repression of people, the repressive nature of the system generally is no longer a matter exclusively of Soviet concern. The rest of the world regards this as a matter of legitimate international concern. There is no argument among us in this country or anywhere else about that. The argument usually turns on the best methods with which

we might affect the way that Soviet rulers treat their people, but in any event the Stalinist period in which these repressions could be carried on in isolation from the rest of the world, without the knowledge of the rest of the world, those days are over. The rest of the world finds out about it very quickly, and some Soviet groups have external constituencies that make the faith of their people within the Soviet Union a major concern for themselves. And, I think, as far as the Moslem population of the Soviet Union is concerned, we will see in the future the development of a constituency for those populations outside the Soviet Union perhaps not dissimilar from the constituency that now exists for repressed minorities in the Baltic States or the Jewish population or the Ukrainians. So the Soviet Union has become a more porous place than it used to be and the opportunities for exerting influence in the Soviet Union from the outside have become greater than they used to be.

Now very quickly, apart from all of these things, I think it is worth^{while} for Americans, as we look at this Soviet Union that concerns us and troubles us so much, it is worth^{while} for us to note that the international communist system which was to have been the, and^{which} most of us saw 20 and 30 years ago as the hard core from which the Soviet Union would be expanding or would attempt to expand^{has}, in fact, proven to be far from the monolith that we used to think it was; or^{to} know about the split with Yugoslavia as long ago as 30 years ago, and then the much more virulent division with China, but even within the area itself

that has not officially and formally split away from the Soviet Union, there are many crosscurrents. And I don't think we can think properly of the Communist system as being simply and totally an instrumentality of Soviet power the way we used to 25 and 30 years ago. In fact, it is important to note, for us and others, that as international institution builders the Soviets have proven to be quite ineffectual except where they have had actual physical power in order to make their authority stick, but they have not built what they'd like to call a commonwealth or an international institution, an international grouping of nations and even Communist Parties in which diversity and discipline are properly balanced. The Soviets are not among the great institution builders of history. And this^{is} incidentally quite relevant to some of the concerns that we have, legitimately have, about Soviet activities in Africa and the rest of the world--most of which are carried on through the means of military power. Many of the countries in the third and fourth world have had recourse to Soviet support--political and military--while they were in periods of conflict with neighbors or with former colonial metropolitan powers, but once it came to building up their own economies, once it came to the process of modernization, once it came to educating their own people, once it came to building institutions, it turns out that the Soviet Union has relatively little relevance and in most places--not all--relatively little staying power as an external force. This makes the problem of Soviet projection, of Soviet military

power no less important, but I think we Americans, looking at the world that we face the rest of this century and beyond, can take some comfort--although we're also challenged--from the fact that the Soviet Union as a model for others has not been particularly effective or particularly attractive.

In this situation, to summarize it very quickly, we have the grow of military power, we have the growth of Soviet influence around the periphery and at greater distances although fluctuating, we have greater Soviet penetrability from the outside into the Soviet Union and greater Soviet reliance on the international system and the international economy than we used to have, and it seems to me that it is in these latter areas--the areas of Soviet vulnerability, the areas of Soviet weakness, and those areas where the Soviet Union, like the rest of us, cannot avoid living in the world where the opportunities for imaginative and careful policy initiatives open up for ourselves and others--an indispensable prerequisite of taking advantage of these aspects of the Soviet system as the maintenance of the military balance. Without that, these Soviet vulnerabilities, these other trends in the Soviet evolution will tend to be minimized because military power will dominate the scene. So, we cannot under any circumstances avoid the imperatives of maintaining military balances at the strategic level with respect to Europe where our principal alliance commitments are and with respect to the rest of the world. We've talked about many components of this in detail. There are many disputes and arguments

beyond this generality, but less anybody suggests, ^{Jim} I sure not in this audience, that a military balance is not a prerequisite for an active and imaginative policy of utilizing the vulnerabilities and the unevenness of Soviet evolution, I just want to be very clear about that: There is no effective policy vis-à-vis the Soviet by whatever description without the maintenance of a military balance.

If you maintain that, then these other aspects of the evolution provide a great many opportunities for affecting the manner in which the Soviet Union emerges as a power, the manner in which forces utilized, and the kinds of stakes that the Soviet Union as indeed we ourselves and others develop in a more orderly international system. That, incidentally, is how I view the matter of linkage. I think much too much of the discussion about linkage has had to do with finding substitutes for maintaining the risks of adventurism at a high level. When we have an Angolan episode and we fail because of Congressional action and whatever other reasons to provide the wherewithal to those groups that were contesting the Marxist group and the Cubans, but then argue that we should stop grain shipments in order to stop this Cuban-Soviet involvement in Angola, we're deluding ourselves. The first essential to dealing with a Soviet adventure is to maintain the risk at a high level, and the same in my view applies to the question of the Horn of Africa or to any other place where Soviet military adventurousness makes itself felt. Just let me be clear once again. As long as there is no counterveiling

power which maintains the risk of adventure, there is very little else that can be done effectively to counter that adventure. Once there is counterveiling power, then other instrumentalities can come into play in order to effect the way a particular crisis may develop. So the essence, the essence of what we face over the long term is balancing military power, a recognition of the Soviet system for what it is, and understanding those aspects of the Soviet system that constitute vulnerabilities but that also constitute a gradual tendency of the Soviet Union to become more active within the international system; and consequently, on the basis of a military balance, it can be a long term American policy to draw the Soviet Union into the disciplines of the international system if the Soviet Union wants to have the benefits of being in the international system. What I am arguing for is a long term strategy, a long term view of the Soviet problem in which we look both at the emergence of Soviet power, but also the maturing of the Soviet system in the international community. This requires continuity. It means that when we do change administrations that our tendency to (as I think Mr. Kissinger said on this podium also) to pull up the trees to see if the roots are still there, that tendency needs to be curbed, and we in our own process of becoming more mature and permanent actors on the international stage need to recognize that interests do not in fact change every four or eight years but have a high degree of permanence. And, this is certainly the case with respect to the Soviet problem. So I would say that our greatest problem as a

nation in this third century of existence of our country is a need for persistence and endurance because we no longer have the other options. We no longer have the option of withdrawing from the world or of overwhelming the problems that face us. We have the task of managing those problems and of managing them well and persistently over a long period of time. And in circumstances where we will not be able to tell at any given moment whether we are successful, we have a tendency as Americans to view our problems in term of the games that we play on our playing fields. We want to look at the score card. We want to look and see who is ahead and who is behind. We want to look and see who came out the winner. I think in these situations, and in this one in particular, we have to recognize that that outcome is far down the road and we're going to have to make a lot of efforts with a lot of persistence and accept a lot of ambiguity in the process before we can safely say that we have come out ahead. I am convinced that the American arrangement, the essence of American society, is infinitely more compatible with the basic nature of the human being whether in this part of the world or in any other part of the world, than the arrangement made in the Soviet Union through the imposition of the regime there 60 years ago and adapted ever since. So, I have no doubt about the ultimate result of a world which, while diverse, would be a safe world in which the United States can prosper and its values can prosper -- but I do have to say that we are now in a situation where that outcome is not a foregone conclusion because it requires effort

and where we must understand that we will not know the result for a long time to come. And that I think is a major test for us impatient Americans who are by nature more problem solvers than problem managers, but I think it is perhaps the greatest that we've had since the country was founded in the first place, when the battle was for survival, and I have no doubt in my mind that we will pass this test as we passed that one and so many others since then.