

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
ARCHIVES
RECEIVED
JUN 13 1910

Beckman Winthrop
June 1, 1910

1910
74

It would be presumptuous for a layman to address you on technical naval matters. Those are subjects of which you necessarily have a far more intimate knowledge than any laymen can acquire. I shall therefore confine myself exclusively to questions of naval administration and policy, especially in so far as they affect this institution.

Since it was established in 1884, the War College has steadily and increasingly demonstrated its usefulness. It was organized contemporaneously with the beginning of what we call "our new navy", and is indeed the outcome of the high development of the art of war in modern times. In the early days of the human race, individual and personal combats determined the ownership of property, or the leadership in the tribe. Courage and physical strength were the requisites for supremacy. Foresight in planning attacks, intelligence in action, although naturally of advantage even in those earlier

days, played a very insignificant part, as compared with brute force and bravery. Mankind in attacks and defense was but little superior to the beasts of the forests. Rude weapons were by degrees developed and as population increased, the tendency of individuals to band themselves into gradually growing groups for offense and defense against the neighboring tribes became more and more marked. Those groups weaker in numbers or in implements of war were compelled to devise means to counteract this handicap. This was the beginning of strategy--the rude attempts to overcome by foresight a more numerous or better armed adversary.

As national forces and resources increased, as new and complex weapons were invented, as the results of war became more serious and far-reaching, the need and importance of strategy became more and more marked. Through greater intelligence and foresight in plans and preparation Themistocles won the battle of Salamis, and Nelson the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar, in each case against superior numbers. Captain

Stewart in the Constitution captured the Cyane and Levant, and Admiral Cochrington won the Battle of Navarino through more skillful strategy. To-day, the necessity of readiness, of foresight, of strategy in its broadest sense, is vastly more vital than ever before. In the navy, adequate and careful preparation for war has been made the more essential through the extraordinary increase in the complexity of warships and their various accessories in the past half century. In the lifetime of some of our own officers there have been more revolutionary changes in the form of battleships and their armament than in all the preceding centuries of the Christian era. This extraordinary development is still going on, and with even greater activity. A vessel which was new ten years ago passes to the second line to-day, and in another decade will be obsolete. New features are also being evolved: Submarines, now a necessary part of every navy, are of such recent development that they have never taken part in actual warfare, if we except the "David" boats of the Civil

War, while the part aeroplanes will play in the next war is purely a matter of conjecture. Events in these days move rapidly. No longer is there a long interval between the declaration of war and the first blow, or between the first blow and those succeeding. We can not prepare for war after it has been declared. If we are to be prepared when war comes, all must be in readiness before the war clouds dim the horizon, else it will be too late. A day's delay after the outbreak of war is now fraught with more serious consequences than a month's inactivity a century ago. No longer can warships be constructed in three or four months, as was the case in the Civil War and in the War of 1812. In these days, a war would in all probability be concluded in a much shorter period than is required to construct and equip a first class battleship. The contract time for completion of our latest dreadnoughts was thirty months. In an emergency this could probably be reduced one-third or to about twenty-months. The battle of Manila Bay occurred eight days after the beginning of the Spanish War;

the decisive stroke at Santiago only seventy-one days. The Japanese-Russian war was commenced, and in fact declared, by the attack on the Russian Fleet at Port Arthur in February, 1904. Less than sixteen months later the battle of the Straits of Tsushima took place, which virtually marked the end of the conflict. In neither of these cases would there have been time to build a single battleship, much less a fleet. In fact, the elapsed time from the beginning to the end of the Spanish-American war would have been insufficient to turn out one twelve-inch gun, or even to make and season one pound of smokeless powder.

With such rapid development in the art of warfare, and with such formidable weapons and intricate machinery, when one misstep may cause irretrievable disaster or a slight advantage at the outset may mean victory--strategy, foresight, readiness in plan as well as in material, become all important; Our plans of action under various circumstances and conditions must be mapped out in the beginning. No longer will we send

out a single vessel on a roving cruise to search for and engage an enemy of approximately the same strength. Cruises like those of Hull in the Constitution in 1812, or Porter in the Essex a year later will never be repeated. Our fleet must be kept together and operated on a well defined and carefully considered plan. There should be adequate colliers and repair ships, sufficient and extensive maps and charts, ammunition and spare guns in plenty, a vigorous and carefully trained personnel,--in fact we must always conduct our navy as if we anticipated the outbreak of a serious war. Strength and courage are essential, but without sagacity and foresight, strength and courage may avail nothing. Our country has never suffered from the lack of courageous men to fight, but in every war in which we have engaged it has seriously suffered from lack of preparation. With untrained men, with ships not in fighting trim and a plan of campaign undecided upon, this country would be in a pitiable condition in any serious war, in spite of its great resources. It might

be possible to buy an ignoble peace, but the purchase, however little or however great the price, would cost us far more in prestige, in our national self-respect, and in our individual character than in mere money. Character is of far greater importance than cash, and peace at the expense of character is far more detrimental to a country than war, however harrowing or sanguinary it may be. But better than either is the avoidance of war by our preparedness for it--by our ability to strike the first blow, for it is the first blow that counts more and more as the complexity of war increases. We are fortunately a peace-loving people. We will not rush heedlessly into war, and if we are prepared no nation will be apt to attack us. There is no danger of the brutalizing effect on our national character of a large navy, as so many of our opponents seem to fear. Since we have paid some attention to our navy this tendency has certainly not manifested itself. I think I may safely say without undue national pride, that no country has ever acted toward other countries with such altruistic

motives as have marked our course in recent years toward Cuba, the Philippines, and Porto Rico. Our action in twice voluntarily retiring from Cuba after having established peace and order has justly won for us the applause of all disinterested nations; and those of you who have been in the Philippines or Porto Rico know the unselfishness and high ideals that have marked our nation's policy toward those races recently brought under our control.

The importance to this country of an efficient navy has been fully demonstrated in the various wars in which we have engaged. The surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown was assured by the victory of the French Fleet under de Grasse at the battle of the Capes. The successes of our navy in the war of 1812 counteracted our losses on land and were instrumental in securing advantageous terms of peace. During this war the navy also prevented invasion from the north by its victories on Lake Champlain and Lake Erie. The blockade of the southern ports in the Civil War, the greatest and most successful

blockade in history, not only prevented the importation of war material by the South but starved and impoverished the Confederate States by preventing the exportation of their agricultural products. Had the Southern States ever secured the supremacy of the sea held throughout by the Federal Navy, not only would New Orleans, Mobile, Charleston, and Savannah ^{have} continued as open ports, but New York, Boston, and other northern seaboard cities would have been seriously threatened. Under such conditions the final results of the war would have been problematical. More recently, the two naval victories of Manila Bay and Santiago brought the war with Spain to a prompt termination.

Due to our geographical situation our future wars with foreign countries must be largely if not entirely determined by naval conflicts. The United States can never be invaded by any European or Asiatic power so long as they have control of the sea. With our fleet annihilated, most of our coast cities could be taken and our insular possessions

could be invaded and captured without great difficulty by a foreign power controlling the sea. With our fleet victorious, the safety of our coasts, our colonies and our commerce is assured. We are all desirous of universal peace, I am sure--naval officers ^{even} far more than the average civilian, for they have all either personally experienced or have studied past conflicts, and realize full well the horrors of war. When universal peace comes, however, it will come by means of an international tribunal--a court of final resort--with adequate physical power to enforce its decrees--a tribunal whose jurisdiction will be defined and whose constituency will finally be established by those nations who are so powerful as to hold the world's balance of power at the time. I do not mean to say that other nations will not be consulted, but merely that the powerful trio or quartet, as the case may be, will finally dictate the scope of the court and the manner in which it shall be constituted. And I for one have such a high regard for the inherent sense of fair play and of honorable dealing in the

people of the United States that when that time comes, whether it is in our lifetime or not, I desire this country to be an active and leading participant in creating the world's appellate court.

The Naval War College can play a part of incalculable importance in the question of our preparedness for war. It is not a school merely where officers may enjoy the advantages of a post-graduate course. It is an institution of learning in its broadest sense--one where the participants not only acquire but also create and disseminate ideas to advance still more their profession. It is a place where the experience of the past may readily be made to do service for the benefit of the future; where officers of distinction in the service ^{may}/under the most favorable conditions exchange views and confer with each other; where plans of attack and defense are prepared, and where suggestions for the improvement of the personnel and materiel of the navy may be evolved. The opportunities afforded for conference, for an exchange of views are of the

greatest value. I have ^{very little} ~~no~~ regard for the man who can not make up his own mind, but I have even less for one who egotistically refuses to listen to advice--not necessarily to adopt the suggestions tendered, but to benefit and to acquire breadth of vision by the exchange of ideas.

This Naval War College was the first institution of its kind to be established. Many other nations, however, have followed our example. The Royal Naval War College at Portsmouth, England, conducts two courses of instruction each year, which include strategical and tactical war games, naval history, international law, and a number of technical subjects of a post-graduate character, such as naval architecture, marine engineering, army organization and intelligence duty. The classes usually number about forty members, including officers of as high rank as rear admiral. This institution has been the natural growth from the "war course" or special course of studies for captains and commanders, established in 1900 as a part of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich.

The German Naval War College at Kiel is intended, first, "to instruct selected officers in the principles and art of naval warfare, in the duties of the staff, and preparation for war;" and, second, "to furnish a post-graduate course in the languages, in higher mathematics, and in technical matters relating to the navy". The course is two years in duration, the winter months being passed at Kiel, and the three summer months spent in the vessels of the fleet, at navy yards and private works, or in the study of languages abroad. The number of officers under instruction is about thirty or thirty-five, and is composed entirely of lieutenants, varying in age at present from twenty-eight to thirty-two.

The French Naval War College, at Paris, is more of a post-graduate school for higher technical studies than a war college; although there is a growing tendency toward the adoption of the principles of a war college in its proper sense. The classes average about twenty-members, selected from the *grade* ~~ranks~~ of lieutenant~~s~~, ranging in age at present from thirty-

five to forty-one. The rewards for the successful graduate of the course of one year are various, including preference in selection for certain desirable details, and an advancement of six months in seniority for place on the selected list for promotion.

The necessity of a war college as an adjunct to an efficient fleet has also been recognized by Japan, a country which in its recent war furnished her American and European sisters a brilliant example of skill and foresight in its preparedness for the conflict.

But good personnel, good materiel, and an efficient strategy are largely dependent upon a proper system of administration at headquarters. "In times of peace be prepared for war" is such a trite saying and expresses such a self-evident necessity, that one would naturally assume that the Navy Department itself was at all times so constituted that if war should come, no change in organization would be necessary--only an extension on the lines already established.

Yet, in the reports of various secretaries of the navy you will find repeated year after year the same complaints and arguments against the then existing system. In an address delivered before this institution by one of my predecessors in 1896, the following statement was made: "Our present naval administration, under existing law, is well and wisely administered so far as the Secretary of the Navy can control it, and yet I fully believe that in the event of war it would of necessity, have to be changed and modified in many respects, both with regard to the efficiency of the personnel and material". The outbreak of the Spanish war, less than two years later, proved how true his statement was. The existing organization of the Department had to be materially changed. Certain naval officers of ~~flag~~^{high} rank were hastily summoned to Washington to form, with a few of the bureau chiefs, a board of strategy. Although the highest praise must be given to the officers who composed this directing board, valuable time was unavoidably lost and much energy wasted in smoothing out the rough places

necessarily existing and in getting the temporary makeshift organization into working order. That it did not result in failure is a high testimonial to the training and adaptability of officers in our navy. After the war the board was abolished and the old order resumed and continued without change until last fall when a vital reorganization was made by the present Secretary of the Navy--a change that competent naval critics, both at home and abroad, regard as the most far reaching step forward in naval administration since the Civil War. By the creation of four new divisions in Departmental affairs and by the appointment of aides or advisers, each of whom, though without executive authority, is required to keep in close and constant touch with matters assigned to his supervision--ready at any time to advise the civilian secretary on technical matters-- the Department has been placed upon a business basis, a basis intended to be efficient not alone in peace, but one which without radical reorganization can meet

the increased labor and burdens in time of war. A civilian secretary with full responsibility is essential, but he can not be expected to perform^{as} efficient service without technical advisers--each one of whom, unincumbered with petty administrative details, can coordinate and view broadly the various units which properly fall within his sphere. The three great divisions, Operations of the Fleet, Personnel, and Materiel, are the groups under which the various elements essential to form an efficient navy logically fall. It is a division based on sound business principles, and one which will make for the advancement of the fleet, whether in peace or in war. A Division of Inspections was also created--a division no less important than the other three. The need for constant systematic inspections has long been recognized and earnestly desired by officers in command of ships and stations. The beneficial result of this system is already noticeable, although it has been only six months in existence.

With the present form of organization in Washington,

with the personnel as a whole imbued with a high sense of duty and responsibility never before exceeded, with the materiel in excellent shape, and with this war college firmly established where selected officers may supplement and increase their knowledge gained at sea by study and conference, I feel that we may look forward with confidence to maintaining and increasing the efficiency of the fleet--that object for which we are all striving and for which the Navy Department and this college alone exist. Legislation, however, on several subjects is still essential if we are to reach the highest state of efficiency. A personnel law which will confer command rank at a much earlier age than at present upon those officers who have shown themselves possessed of high professional attainments and of the qualities necessary to command; a naval reserve law, ensuring an adequate number of trained men in time of war;; and, most important of all, the adoption of a carefully considered and consistent building program for the next few years, including, in addition to battleships, tor-

pede destroyers, and similar combatant vessels, repair ships, colliers, hospital ships and other auxiliaries in such numbers as will enable our fleet in time of war to be independent and self-sustaining, are among the most salient points on which legislation is necessary. ~~Congress has this year authorized two additional battleships, ⁶ destroyers, and ⁵ submarines, but neglected to appropriate for a much needed repair ship or any additional colliers. Let us hope that it will realize the necessity for the auxiliaries, as well as the battleships, before it is too late.~~

Gentlemen, I congratulate you upon the opportunity you have to be of great benefit to the navy through the possible results of this summer's conference. Whatever research work you may do, and whatever suggestions may be the result of your conferences, your labor will not be in vain. So much may depend upon the efficiency of a single ship, so many vital issues may be involved in its success or failure in battle, that no preparation for this ~~supreme~~ test that can be acquired

research or by study of the experience and lessons of the past should be disregarded, And is it too much to add that the result of our future sea engagements may largely depend upon the tactical lessons taught on the game boards of this college. As was said by George Washington in an address to Congress one hundred and fourteen years ago, "The art of war is at once comprehensive and complicated. It demands much previous study, and the possession of it in its most improved and perfect state is always of great moment to the security of a nation".

Pearson Winthrop
June 1. 1910