

A REPLY to . . .

✪ ALEXANDER P. DE SEVERSKY, LAST year published an article [*This Week Magazine*, 23 Mar '58] entitled "No More Little Wars." In this article he expressed the view that our national defense efforts should be concentrated on a single deterrent force capable of winning an all out nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union and that our national defense policies and the structure of the Department of Defense should be changed accordingly.

Maj de Seversky's position is based on 3 basic conclusions:

1) "We cannot win a limited war fought with traditional forces, regardless of whether conventional or nuclear weapons are used.

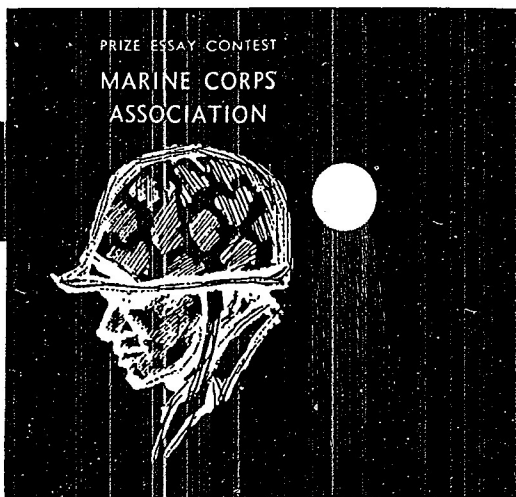
2) "We can make limited war impossible if we make clear to the world that we possess a retaliatory force with the strategic scope and tactical flexibility to crush aggression, and so preserve the global status quo.

3) "We can generate a great economic abundance to share with the rest of the world by concentrating on a single deterrent force, and thereby, we can prove that freedom is dynamic and beneficent."

The opinions expressed by this distinguished American prompted the response contained in these pages.

The deterrent imposed by the Strategic Air Command, plus the many disguises worn by Soviet aggression, clearly demonstrate the need for US forces in readiness, capable of fighting local limited wars.

Most Americans concerned with the vital issues of national defense agree that the US Air Force with its powerful Strategic Air Command poses a tremendous deterrent to the desires of the Kremlin's political and military planners. This deterrent is a vital part of our national, or perhaps more correctly stated, our international, defense efforts. However, the ramifications of this deterrent can be oversimplified, sugar coated and sold to the American people for something that they are *not*, namely the *only* deterrent



GROUP II
HONORABLE MENTION

Alexander de Seversky

with which it is necessary to confront the Soviets.

Stated another way, the very existence of the Strategic Air Command's deterrent capability has the effect of fixing the bulk of the Soviet Union's forces in place, resulting in the increased probability of "limited" conflicts. If the Soviets are of the opinion that the results of all-out nuclear war are not worth the risk involved, the only method of territorial aggrandizement left to them is to destroy free governments by subversion or limited military campaigns.

From a military point of view, limited or local wars can be fought and won without resorting to the use of strategic nuclear weapons or even tactical nuclear weapons unless the enemy chooses to initiate their use. Moreover, the US has a force capable of accomplishing just this, should circumstances require its employment. This force is made up of the ships, aircraft and amphibious units of our mighty balanced fleets. These forces are well trained and already on station in areas adjacent to the world's trouble spots.

Before proceeding farther, I think it is necessary to define the terms, "strategic nuclear weapons" and "tactical nuclear weapons." In other words when does a tactical H-bomb become a strategic H-bomb? Is this definition determined by the target for which the weapon is employed; or by the size of the weapon; or by the armed service releasing the weapon?

For the purposes of this writing, I shall consider a "strategic nuclear weapon" to mean a weapon released against an industrial or military target outside of the immediate area of operations and a "tactical nuclear weapon" to be one employed within the area of operations to influence the outcome of an immediate battle or engagement, i.e., against enemy troop concentrations, installations or armament.

Maj de Seversky's views with regard to air power are well known and have been dramatically stated;

however, this writer would like to advance the proposition that the existence of Strategic Air Command bases around the perimeter of Soviet influence has the effect of *decreasing* the possibility of Soviet nuclear attack against the US and our Allies, thereby *increasing* the probability of local limited conflicts in areas the Soviets desire to penetrate. If this conclusion has any merit, then it logically follows that the US must be prepared to counter Soviet aggression in such areas as the Middle East and Southeast Asia with forces designed to wage limited or local campaigns successfully.

In view of the increased probability of limited war, complete concentration of national defense efforts on a single deterrent force, i.e., the Strategic Air Command, is a dangerous gamble. Such concentration amounts to nothing more than placing all of our defense eggs in one basket.

A look back to June 1950 is sufficient to remind us that the existence of the Strategic Air Command did not prevent the Soviets from sponsoring aggression in Korea nor did SAC prevent the open intervention of Chinese Communist forces in that war. Based on these facts alone, it is realistic to conclude that SAC, powerful as it is, will not prevent the Communists from attempting to penetrate the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

It can be said without fear of successful contradiction that the presence of the US Sixth Fleet is a stabilizing influence in the Mediterranean and that the existence of our powerful naval striking forces (including the combat ready 3dMarDiv

on Okinawa) in the Far East fails to give our enemy any measure of comfort.

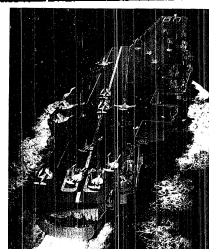
Maj de Seversky has said that the national expenditure involved in maintaining our armed forces (excluding SAC) is "scattering our energies" and "wasting our money, scientific and industrial effort on all sorts of hardware and secondary projects from invasion barges to aircraft carriers." He has also said that continued effort along these lines will deliver us into national bankruptcy.

If these dire predictions are accurate, it appears that we have two alternatives: a) surrender the Free World to the Soviets piece by piece—a sort of freedom on the installment plan—or, b) risk the awesome prospect of all out nuclear warfare by countering Soviet aggression in under-developed areas with H-bombs.

Plainly, neither of these courses of action is very attractive or necessary. The US is far from a bankrupt nation, and even if maintaining our balanced armed forces would bankrupt us, I am sure that most Americans would rather be broke than dead.

Allow me to present what I consider to be a more suitable alternative, compared to those already considered, should the Soviets decide to release their "volunteers" to "liberate" a Middle Eastern or Southeast Asian nation.

First, we could immediately display a "show of force" in the area concerned using our powerful attack carrier striking forces and our missile carrying cruisers and submarines. This method of dramatically



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illustrating the presence of counter force is primarily the Theodore Roosevelt "Speak softly but carry a big stick" technique. I believe this technique is as effective in many instances today, as it was in TR's time. If this display failed to persuade the enemy that he had made a serious tactical blunder then this same force can commence attacks against him using carrier-based jet bombers for heavy high explosive air strikes. Our attack carriers can launch these aircraft from distances of over 1,000 miles at sea. Later neutralization strikes can be launched from 500 miles at sea. Once air superiority has been achieved, our fleet can defend that superiority with aircraft-launched missiles and high explosive surface-to-air missiles.

Our fast, mobile, versatile amphibious troops can ignore hydrographic obstacles by using the vertical envelopment technique. These troops can be launched from helicopter carriers 100 miles at sea, to seize inland objectives. By employing only conventional ordnance, they can seize and secure an area large enough to provide an operat-

ing base for a larger SEATO, NATO or UN force within weeks or even days.

The procedure I have outlined avoids the massing of amphibious and naval gunfire ships, thereby eliminating a tempting target for enemy nuclear weapons. The extensive use of helicopters, carrying troops well trained in the vertical envelopment technique, gives us the advantage of choosing the time and place for the landing and assault phase of the operation.

Visionary? Not in the least. The US Marine Corps and the US Navy possess the capability to conduct such an operation and each phase of the preparation and assault has been rehearsed and tested in training exercises.

What about the use of nuclear weapons? The Attack Carrier Striking Force and the Landing Force have a nuclear capability and, should the restrictions regarding the use of these weapons be lifted, they will be employed in accordance with pre-determined operating procedures. The use of nuclear weapons against cities, housing a friendly

population, can be avoided because our amphibious troops have the capability to seize built-up areas with conventional armament.

Maj de Seversky's desire to establish a Fortress America, launching air and space attacks from the North American continent and establishing an "insuperable electronic nuclear defense which can decimate the enemy" is visionary and certainly not possible within the foreseeable future. In addition, it sounds as expensive as the conventional "hardware" he recommends we scrap.

Maj de Seversky's proposed reorganization of the Defense establishment into a "Department of Air and Space" with subordinate bureaus of "auxiliary units" is not a very practicable suggestion at this time. Further study of this recommendation may result in the opinion that such an arrangement would place considerable military power in the hands of one person or one group of persons thereby endangering our free institutions. It is also possible that concentration on air and space has serious military drawbacks, for there are many military theoreticians who believe that he who controls the ground controls the air above it in the missile age.

I submit that in addition to the Strategic Air Command, the Balanced Fleet with its versatile Landing Force, constitutes a real deterrent to communist aggression. In no measure can we justify releasing strategic nuclear weapons against civilian populations or dropping high yield nuclear bombs on friendly nations in response to the often disguised Communist aggressive techniques. If the US were to rely on this method of countering Soviet aggressive desires, membership in NATO and SEATO would be abandoned by member nations on the double. Certainly our Allies would look elsewhere for cultural and scientific leadership if all the US could offer them was the possibility of defending their nations against Soviet aggression by dropping "friendly" strategic nuclear bombs on their homelands.

Reliance on the Strategic Air Command's deterrent is not enough and it is for this reason that the concept of balanced armed forces must prevail.

US MC