

A New Naval Policy

BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN H. RUSSELL, U.S.M.C.

■ "Hello Marine!" General X, of the *Leathernecks*, sitting in a comfortable chair in an obscure corner of the Army and Navy Club, looked up from his book to see his old friend and shipmate Admiral Y.

Admiral Y had graduated from the Naval Academy a few years before General X, but in their early life they had been thrown closely together on a three-year cruise on the old *Scyphika* and had become fast friends. The Admiral was on the retired list after a brilliant career. He was in a talkative mood.

After a hearty handshake and the usual inquiries as to health, family, and whatnots, Admiral Y sat down in an easy chair next the General.

"Well," he remarked, "I see that Congress maintained the strength of your Corps for the next fiscal year."

"Yes," replied the General, "after an educative process that brought out more clearly than ever the relation and value of the Marines to the naval service and the strength required for their war and peace missions with the Navy." Pushing the button for a boy, Admiral Y said:

"Since I heard of that proposed cut from 15,343 to 13,600, and which I am glad to say was never made, I have been thinking over the question of the Marines and the entire subject of the necessity for them."

"Strength, necessity, and missions, all seem wrapped up together," interjected General X.

"Quite right you are, but nevertheless, I sincerely believe that the Line of the Navy, as well as the Marines, have been exceedingly remiss in not emphasizing the necessity for a stronger Marine Corps."

"Good for you," responded General X. "We Marines are an important branch of the naval service and you and I are not the only famous ones who have thought so. Did you ever read what Lord St. Vincent said about our British cousins the Royal Marines?"

"Not that I recall right now, what did he say?"

"Well, in 1797, and you will remember that was the year of the notorious mutinies in the British Navy, he remarked that he hoped to see the day when, with the exception of the King's Guard and artillery, there was not another foot-soldier in the Kingdom, in Ireland and in the Colonies, except Marines."

"There is a whole lot in that remark and it corroborates the very idea I have been mulling over in my mind about you Marines," replied the Admiral. "Those British Marines are stout fellows. I remember reading that our gallant Admiral Charles Stewart

"He commanded the frigate *Constitution* in her victories over the *Levant* and *Cyane*, if my memory is true," broke in General X.

"Yes, the the very same old salty seaman," answered the Admiral. "Admiral Stewart wrote that as Napoleon viewed the Marines of H. M. S. *Bellerophon* he exclaimed—'What might not be done with a hundred thousand such men.'"

"Mickey Cochrane, of our Corps, quoted him on that

in his article in the Naval Encyclopedia," added General X. "But with reference to your idea about the strength and status of the Corps, perhaps you did not read all that was published about us recently. The necessity of the Marines with the Fleet seems clearly established."

Admiral Y pulled out his old briar pipe, filled it deliberately with an evil type of tobacco he had used since the days of the Academy, lighted it, took a long pull and said:

"Marine, most of us when we think of a Navy visualize only ships. There are, however, many other elements such as personnel, supplies, communications, and BASES, and when I say BASES I mean BASES with capital letters, and—"

"Hey, wait a minute, we have been preparing the Corps for advanced base duties for over thirty years, and have made considerable progress," intervened General X. "The Commandant of the Marine Corps has often set forth that our main job has been to maintain expeditionary forces to seize advanced Bases and perform other land operations for the Fleet."

"Yes, I know that," explained the Admiral, "but you have not sold the idea one hundred per cent to the Navy or to your own Corps. It is one thing to write canned articles, make an occasional address, refer mechanically to them in a dry report, and all that sort of thing, but where can you point out any serious naval thesis that places the Marine Expeditionary force on transports with the fleet as an equal of a, say, a division of battleships, or a squadron of destroyers? Gad, Marine, you want to burn 'em up with the idea. Sweep them off their feet. Just like the crossword puzzle craze, or technocracy or jig-saw puzzles, or President Roosevelt's optimism, did. Make 'em consider your Expeditionary Forces just as they do a division of ships—an essential and intimate part of the fleet."

That stopped General X in his tracks. He thoughtfully replied—"Maybe you are right, at that. We write stuff and maybe nobody even reads it."

"I know I am right," continued Admiral Y. "To say that one Navy is stronger than another because it has a superiority in all classes of vessels is not necessarily true. Right today, even though the United States and Great Britain were on an exact equality with reference to ships, personnel and all that sort of thing, the British would lead by a decisive margin in naval strength because of the existence of naval advanced bases, or sites for them, all over the world, such as those at Gibraltar, Singapore, Bermuda, Halifax, Trinidad, etc. Take those bases away from the British Navy and the power of its fleet would be greatly reduced. Give those same bases to the United States and the strength of our fleet would be proportionately increased."

"There is not the slightest doubt about what you have said," commented General X. "The Major General Commandant in a recent Army and Navy Journal

wrote that Marines could be defined in terms of American trade for they are instrumental in securing the advanced bases which enable the Fleet to protect such trade. He also asserted that Marines are the equivalent of warships because advanced bases enable more ships to be maintained on the scene of operations than would be possible without the bases. Here, let me read what some of the leading naval lights told a House Committee last December. The then Secretary of the Navy testified that the Navy must have outlying bases if it is to protect American commerce and otherwise operate at a distance from the home coast, and that without such bases the number of ships which can operate in a distant locality is immensely reduced. The Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics of the Navy, wrote that the Marine Corps provides an expeditionary and advanced base defense force which is essential to the operations of the Fleet in time of war. He further wrote that the Marine Corps Aviation is a part of the Naval Aeronautic organization of the Navy and in addition to its functions with the Marine Corps in expeditionary work, it is trained aboard our aircraft carriers, operating daily with the naval aircraft units. A recent C in C of our fleet stated that the Marine Corps is the sole land force held in constant readiness for service with the Navy to increase its mobility, its power to act quickly in national emergency by assisting it in the establishment and defense of suitable bases of operation in an operating area. Another high ranking naval officer said that in overseas landing operations the Marines are relied upon and have been utilized to seize and to hold the bridgehead. They constitute the point of the spear first thrown to the front by the Navy when amphibious work is undertaken. A former Secretary of the Navy stated that in a very real and practical sense, bases are an equivalent of ships, and the Navy needs Marines for bases. And when they got done the House and—”

“What do you want?” inquired Admiral Y of a boy who appeared.

“You rang, sir?”

“Too late, I found a match,” replied the Admiral, and then General X resumed:

“The Senate refused to cut down the enlisted strength of the Corps.”

“Yes, I followed the whole thing,” submitted Admiral Y. “The Navy did a good job for you there. But I will admit that you Marines must have done something to the naval-mind to get such testimony from it.”

“We have a few officers in the Corps who understand the subject practically and historically,” drawled General X. “Our Historical Section has developed much material which has cleared the channels of thought.”

“Whoever is responsible, did a good job, anyway,” said Admiral Y. “At any rate, not only has this attack on your strength developed a naval defense for you, but it has made many of your officers to think, to study, and to learn more about themselves than ever before. And you have developed a true character of publicity. Truthful information sent out that tells Americans why the Navy needs Marines.”

“I am glad you referred to publicity,” spoke up the General earnestly, “because it always has been a misconception on the part of everybody. Some people

think we have a high-powered publicity system, while as a matter of fact we have received very little publicity except that which comes from our active status —something happening every day you know.”

“Well, to hark to the statements of your Commandant and the other officers. Every one of them were absolutely correct,” emphatically agreed the Admiral. “There is connected closely with the strength of a nation’s Navy and Marine Corps, its foreign commerce. To preserve its foreign trade a nation must not only possess an adequate fleet but adequate bases. That combination of naval factors will make our fleet capable of crippling the sea power of its enemies. One way of accomplishing such a result is to take away from it the bases from which its naval forces may operate.”

“For want of some Marines an advanced base was lost,” quoted General X; “for want of an advanced base a campaign was lost; for want of that victory a war was lost; and for want of winning a war all was lost.” Admiral Y laughed at the General’s paraphrasic humor, and said:

“Of course there is nothing new about my ideas but it does seem to me that neither the Navy nor the Marines have done much more than talk about them. They should put them into effect in the fleet. Great Britain has, during a course of many years, added to the Empire many minor possessions not because it desired them as colonies but to refuse them to a possible enemy.”

“That reminds me of the possible reasons why we acquired the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1916,” suggested General X. “Many people think that the \$25,000,000 paid for them was wasted; but the ordinary man does not understand that a perfect national defense for the United States would include the possessions of everyone of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, including Bermuda, even though we did not put up defenses or do more than merely deprive a potential enemy of their possession during a period of peace.”

“I think you are again right,” asserted Admiral Y. “Of course fleet bases must be adequately defended and provide the necessary port facilities and supplies. The United States has but one such naval base, at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands, unless the Panama Canal Zone is included.”

“But our Marines at Pearl Harbor are doing merely guard duty,” broke in the General. “They are not in any sense advanced base troops; but there should be a force there, or at least the nucleus of one.”

“Panama can hardly be construed as an advanced base because for all intents and purposes the Panama Canal Zone represents our domestic national defense frontiers,” decided Admiral Y. “In recent years our country has expanded, become a world power. Our foreign trade is now a factor of tremendous importance in our nation’s economic life, and it must be protected. To properly protect it we must have fleet bases in all prospective operating areas. Look at that naval base your Marines acquired at Guantanamo Bay in the Spanish War. Dewey said that the capture and occupation of Guantanamo during the Spanish-American War, gave the fleet a base, without which the difficulties of blockading and capturing Santiago would have been immeasurably increased.”

“Admitting all that, the question arises as to who

should man such advanced bases, if we possess them, in time of peace, and who should acquire and defend them if such is necessary in time of war? The bases are solely for the fleet. In fact as I have pointed out to you they are one of the component parts of a well balanced fleet; they are as necessary as ships, or seamen, or supplies. The command and defense of those bases should be under our Navy—our Marines. To place them under the command of our Army is to take away from our Navy one of its vital factors that go to make up the whole. Moreover the proposition that the Marines are not the permanent garrisons of advanced bases but must give way to the Army is poppycock. A base is always naval. If Army personnel stops there enroute to their battle-fields they should have nothing to do with operating or defending the base. I know you will say that the question can be solved by placing the supreme command in that arm of the service having the paramount interest at the time but that is not true and you know it is not true. In a question of bases the Navy always has paramount interests. Seldom, in the history of the world, have the Army and Navy worked together efficiently and without friction. Just recall Shafter's landing near Santiago de Cuba and Miles' Expedition to Porto Rico. Read any British book on Gallipoli. You will see what happened. Take even our combined manoeuvres in peace time and you will learn the fallacy of paramount interest, divided responsibility, and authority. Unity of Command is a fundamental principle and cannot be obtained without perfect and pre-meditated arrangement."

"There is no question but what you are right, Admiral, about the necessity of unity of command," said General X. "During the Middle Ages, during Tudor Days, and up to about 1664 in England there was never any doubt about unity of command for the Commander-in-Chief was a combination Admiral-General. But when the cleavage came between the land and sea command, each with its independent commander, then came trouble. I cannot but recall the horrible conditions of affairs in 1741 when Admiral Vernon and General Wentworth failed to agree during the attack on Cartagena and in Cuba. While there may have been a few instances, such as the Siege of Havana in 1761 where the Army and Navy cooperated smoothly, there is no doubt but that the chances are against such ever happening. Look at Penobscot Bay in 1779. The Army under General Lovell and the Navy under Captain Saltonstall were hopelessly chaotic. I remember one Army officer, no doubt recollecting the precedence-dispute between an Admiral and a General in Honolulu, who said that during a war in the Pacific the Army would first have to capture Honolulu from the Navy before engaging the enemy. Yet, look at the perfect cooperation Commodore Daniel Todd Patterson gave General Jackson at New Orleans in 1814 and 1815."

"Yes, illustrations might be given by the score," agreed Admiral Y. "Take the Asiatic Station at the present time as an example of divided authority. The Admiral commands the fleet from Vladivostok down to Hong Kong and Canton, the Marine guard at Peiping, and the reinforced Marine regiment at Shanghai, but he has no authority over the Army forces at Tientsin. Their supreme command is at far distant Manila."

"There was one marvelous illustration of cooperation and coordination among the Army, Navy and Marines," suggested General X. "It was in the supervision of the Nicaraguan elections in 1928. The possibility for discord and failure was present. There was no one American official responsible for co-ordinating all their efforts. There was no unity of military command of the naval forces and Guardia Nacional. A rear admiral of the Navy was responsible for naval affairs afloat and ashore. A brigadier general of Marines commanded the Marine brigade. The Guardia Nacional, formed of enlisted Nicaraguans, commanded by Marines, was not under the senior naval officer nor under the Brigade Commander, but was controlled by an Army officer. All in all these Americans gave a wonderful example of American teamwork."

"I hope you are not arguing for the amalgamation of Army and Navy," remarked Admiral Y, "that would ruin both of them and with them our national defense."

"Far from it," replied General X. "The Army has the clear cut responsibility for defending the home land against invasion or depredation, the Navy to assist the Army in a subordinate and incidental capacity. For all maritime and overseas interests this responsibility is reversed in favor of the Navy, including the Marine Corps."

"Let's stick to naval bases, this time," said Admiral Y. "Some day the Navy will wake up and demand that all its bases be placed under its command. That means Marines would man them. The Army would then confine its activities to the continental limits of the United States, which after all is its true mission in our National Defense scheme."

"Admiral, it seems to me that you are giving good reasons for increasing the Marine Corps to at least 30,000 men. We would need at least that number but I am sure that the job in the Far East would be much more economically and efficiently performed by an All-Navy-Marine Team than by the use of American Army and Navy personnel, under a divided command as at present."

"You ought to have 30,000 Marines in your Corps, General. Some of those dollar a day workers in the proposed national reforestation plan, could well be used. Naturally we would need more Marines and it certainly would form an excellent study for the General Board to decide just how many would be required for the Navy and the Marines to relieve the Army of all duty in the Philippines, China, and Hawaiian Islands, with an additional study as to the number required if the Navy took over the Panama Canal Zone."

"What a rumpus that would cause among our brothers-at-arms of the Army," laughed General X.

"Naturally, every organization is trying to sell itself, that is secure new jobs as well as to retain the jobs that they are performing at present," agreed Admiral Y. "But we have heard a great deal about overlapping, paralleling, duplicating and all that sort of thing, so that it is an excellent thing to bring up the subject of whose jobs all the jobs are, and who can do them most efficiently and economically."

"All that I can say," said General X, "is that I hope the Navy brings up the subject we have been discussing and puts it over."

"To return to the subject of bases," resumed the Admiral, "of course our fleet must have an adequate number of strategically placed and properly defended bases. We must defend the Panama Canal. Our trade routes and commercial ships must be guarded in peace and war. The naval policy calls for the Marines to maintain expeditionary forces to serve as *part of the fleet* to help the Navy carry out her missions. We have our war college, our strategic games, and our game boards, and we indulge in drafting all sorts of plans, but they are solely paper plans and consequently work well."

"The policy of Headquarters," said the General, "that is of the Corps, fits in with this naval policy and—"

"Are you sure all your people outside understand that," queried the Admiral, "and further that they are well versed in the methods to carry out plans and methods under that policy? Are they really educated practically as well as theoretically?"

"I hope so, but very little can be done practically without men," responded General X. "Down in the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico the Marines have

been planning and studying this very subject, but as you say it is just on paper. Our Headquarters Division of Operations and Training have been doing fine work. What we really need, though, is more maneuvers with the fleet such as we used to have at Culebra, and like those in Hawaiian waters about 1925. We also need money with which to procure material, such as special boats and other equipment, and for the carrying out of experiments, to develop the material things involved in the mission."

"Some day we will realize that a Navy is not merely ships," said Admiral Y. "Then, you Marines, will come into your own. It may take a war to do it or it might come from such an organization as that Policy Board you used to dream about, when we were shipmates on the old *Tiddle-dy-Winks*. I believe that when the Marine Corps itself is completely saturated with the subject, as it should be, and eats, sleeps, dreams, thinks, talks, acts and exudes advanced bases, there will be marked advancement. My advice is to make advanced bases and shore operations for the fleet your Bible." With that the Admiral got up and walked off leaving General X in a contemplative mood.

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR MARINES, HOME FROM CUBA, 1898



OFFICERS OF THE GUANTANAMO BATTALION

After the return from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, at the close of the Spanish-American War, 1898. Photograph taken at the country home of Lieutenant R. M. Appleton near Ipswich, Mass. From left to right: First Lieut. W. N. McKelvy, Second Lieut. E. A. Jones, Second Lieut. P. M. Bannon, Captain G. F. Elliott, First Lieut. C. G. Long, Second Lieut. S. D. Butler, Captain M. C. Goodrell, Second Lieut. R. M. Appleton, Colonel R. W. Huntington, Commanding, First Lieut. W. C. Neville, Captain B. R. Russell, Captain C. L. McCawley, A. Q. M., First Lieut. H. L. Draper, Adjutant, Captain F. H. Harrington, Second Lieut. L. J. Magill, Surgeon J. M. Edgar, U. S. N., First Lieut. J. E. Mahoney.