ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND NATIONAL POWER

Colonel Philip B. Klein, USAF

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Reviewed by: Colonel P. B. Klein, USAF

Date: 13 May 1960

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1959-1960

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CONTENTS

SPEAKER--Colonel Philip B. Klein, USAF, Member of the Faculty, Industrial College of the Armed Forces

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Reporter: Ralph W. Bennett

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Publication No. L60-155

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COL. KLEIN: General Mundy, General Houseman, Ladies, and Gentlemen: Several years ago, 27 to be exact, when I was an aspiring flying cadet, I found it expedient one morning to leap over the side of an airplane and come down to old Mother Earth in a parachute. Fortunately, I landed in a plowed field. I guess it would be a little more accurate and descriptive to say that I landed in about forty acres of plowed furrows, which I knocked the tops off before the wind stopped dragging me, and I almost started plowing the back forty before I got slowed down. But after I got down safely, I gathered up my canopy and all my shroud lines and harness and everything and held them in my arms and started down the lane toward the farmhouse where the farmer lived. It was obviously where the farmer lived. It stood on the farm where I had landed.

About a hundred feet from the house I met this farmer. He was not nearly as surprised as he was puzzled. He didn't have visitors like this coming down with a vertical envelopment every day, but he managed to contain his surprise. But he was certainly puzzled, and finally it came out. He said: "There's one thing I don't understand. After you decide that it's time to go over the side of an airplane, how in the world do you manage to get all that stuff and string on without getting it all tangled up?" He said: "It must take an awful lot of practice."

Well, gentlemen, I suppose that some of you think you've received

a lot of "string and stuff" in the previous units of this course, and that you're having a little difficulty to keep it from getting all tangled up.

In this study that we're starting today, the Economic Capability for International Conflict Unit, we are going to try to sort some things out and see if we can't put them together in some kind of orderly fashion and make something really useful out of them.

The previous units of study that you've been through have served really as stepping stones, each one in turn to the next unit. And now has come the time when you're going to get a little practice in the art of weaving whole cloth out of bits and pieces of string and stuff, so to speak.

I'm afraid I mixed up a few metaphors there. I'm not sure how I got from stepping stones to whole cloth so quickly. But that's it, gentlemen. You're going to get a little chance now to put some of these things together and make some whole cloth out of the bits and pieces that you've had individually.

Of course, you'll find that this unit is just another stepping stone toward the Final Problem, which is, of course, the last unit in the school year. You'll get fully immersed in that once you get back from your international overseas trips.

For the next month now we are going to be analyzing the economies of the principal countries of the world, and trying to assess the economic strengths of the two power blocs that emerged from World War II; that is, the Communist bloc of nations as this bloc has evolved since the war, and the free world allies.

We will set out in the hope that we will be able to form some fairly definite conclusions as to the economic capability for international conflict of the free world allies. And then we'll want to do the same thing for the Communist bloc, and compare the capabilities of the one coalition with those of the other.

Having sort of sized up the situation in this fashion, we will want to come up with some recommendations as to what action we think the United States should take to increase the economic capability of the free world, the western coalition, to engage in international conflict of various forms and degrees of intensity.

By the term "various forms of conflict" of course, I mean the three classical cases--first of all, a protracted cold war continued for an indefinite period; second, the limited war,or limited wars occurring concurrently; and, finally, the all-out nuclear war where presumably both sides would be going for broke.

Now, when we assess the economic capability of a nation for international conflict, I believe it is very important for us to recognize the fact that the plainly visible, on-the-surface powers and strengths are not all the capabilities that we must consider. There are other assets that certainly must be considered. These are usually hidden. It may be, in fact, that these latent capabilities might easily spell the difference between sudden defeat and eventual recovery. I think this is true in all kinds of wars, particularly in the thermonuclear war.

Certainly what would have to be done, or what could be done, to

get a nation back on its feet after a thorough nuclear pounding I suppose no one will ever be able to predict with any really meaningful degree of accuracy. But you can be certain that things would have to be done by unorthodox means, and according to no clearly defined rules or principles, and by or through ad hoc agencies or institutions that simply will not be in existence when the first nuclear strike occurs, if it ever does.

All of these unpredictable things that would need doing promptly after a nuclear attack could and would get done only if there is this latent power, this hidden resource, hidden strength, that lies beneath the surface--a power or capability which can be called into being the instant the national fabric starts to come apart at the seams.

I personally believe that it would be only a nation's reserve strength of this kind, its stamina, its toughness, and its hardness and resourcefulness, that would see it through a crisis of this kind.

Now, these hidden strengths, admittedly, are at best somewhat hard to measure and even hard to define. But I think they are measured in terms of such things as flexibility, convertibility, versatility, adaptability, resiliency, and such things as, I suppose, plain old guts on the part of the people to carry on even though the world might seem to be collapsing all about them.

So, in making your study, gentlemen, again I say, it's very important that you try to determine the nature and amount of this economic resiliency in the countries that you survey. This is particularly true in coming up with your overall assessment of the strengths of the two power

blocs.

Sometimes I think you can tackle a problem more profitably by a circuitous route rather than by making a frontal, head-on assault. One pretty good way, I think, to assess strength is to measure weakness, if you can. I think weaknesses are usually more apparent, or perhaps I should say they are more easily recognized and are more assessable, than are dynamic strengths.

Now, if the overall strength of an economy is to be accurately assessed, of course all of its elements must be fully integrated into one single power package. The strength of this package, of course, is no greater than the strength of the weakest link or bond or element which holds your whole package together.

Can you find the weakest link in our own economy, say? Or can you find the weakest link in the Communist economies? Do either of them have a critical weakness, a so-called Achilles' heel, that might make it impossible for them to survive a protracted cold war, or dig out and recover from the effects of a sudden all-out nuclear war?

What are the things that we should be doing to eliminate any such weakness as these that we may find, so as to maximize the probability of our survival no matter what fate may have in store for us as we live dangerously on from year to year?

The problem, gentlemen, is to determine how best to employ our resources, and utilize our time, to the greatest possible advantage before we are seriously hurt. And somebody has to think, and rethink, and

think again, and keep on thinking about these things. And, gentlemen, in brief that is exactly what this unit of study is all about.

In studying the economies of the various countries, of course, you will be looking into such things as gross national product; the patterns of trade, both domestic and foreign; national income; financial stability; balance of payments positions; and other things which are almost entirely economic in nature. But by analyzing these purely economic factors in just plain, cold, economic terms, and taking no account, or very little account, of the human and natural resources, the political stability, the national aspirations, the cultural and social patterns, strategic location, and other such things--ignoring these latter factors is sure to make your study fairly useless, I can assure you.

While we want to concentrate primarily on the economic forces at work in the various countries, we must be sure that we give ample consideration to all of these other factors that may have a very definite bearing on what we are really trying to assess and measure.

As an example, you will probably determine that certain countries are significant to us and we are interested in them almost entirely because of their geographic or strategic location; that their economies, as such, mean very little or practically nothing to us. In fact, from a purely economic standpoint they might even be a definite liability, that is, as a member of our coalition. Yet these same countries might be very vital to us because they are in a position to afford us military base rights without which we would find it most difficult to maintain a truly effective

deterrent capability.

From an economic standpoint a country like this would certainly be a liability to us if we had to support its economy financially to keep it politically aligned with us, because this would act as a drain, or at least as an additional strain, on our own economic resources.

And this drain, of course, would have to be reckoned with in our analysis of the overall eoonomic resources and the capability of the free world to engage in warfare. You could say, I think, that this would be an example of a military requirement, affected or influenced by political considerations, and having economic implications that would have to be considered and entered somewhere certainly on your hypothetical balance sheet of comparative economic capabilities.

Another point: Say you concentrate your study on a single country, like the Philippines, or say, Australia, and you set about assessing its economic capability to wage war. Well, you start reading down in your research. You read down one page, you lick your thumb, turn the page over, read half way down the next page, and, gentlemen, your research is practically complete, because any country, acting individually, all alone, has very, very little capability to wage war, any kind of war, strictly on its own. But, just the same, we certainly should take a look at such countries, because their absence or presence on our balance sheet might make a tremendous amount of difference in determining the economic capability of the free world allies when considered as a bloc. The true significance or importance of these countries might

be out of all proportion to their size or economic stature.

Let's move off down another little lane here and see if we can turn up something that might be useful.

Suppose you determine that a country does have a very strong, well-balanced, and flexible economy, indicating that it has a very considerable economic capability for war; and without any question, it has the material strength and capability to wage war. But what about the attitudes, inclinations, and temperaments of the people in this country? Would they be willing and disposed to make the necessary personal sacrifices to divert the country's economic resources into national security channels if the situation degenerated into a hot war? Or might they just be inclined to say: "Well, gentlemen, let's sit this out. We have had experience in wars before, mixing up in the melee. Why don't we just take a cue from Switzerland and Sweden and some of these other countries, which have so successfully stayed neutral?"

What I'm getting at here, gentlemen, is that having a capability to wage war, and being willing or disposed to exploit that capability to the fullest limit could be two quite different things. And in your studies, if you are of the opinion that the capability any particular country has for engaging in war cannot be counted on to materialize fully, for whatever reason, then I think certainly a footnote on your hypothetical balance sheet calling attention to this important reservation would be necessary.

How about the human resources and the natural resources? How about the materials for production, or the food supply? How much should

the peacetime apparent capabilities be discounted to make them practical for wartime conditions, of course taking into account the sensitivity of the economy to possible shortages of these requirements?

You will also want to look at such things as transportation systems; communications networks; the size, quality, and other characteristics of the labor force; and many other factors that have either a direct or an indirect bearing on a country's ability to keep a wartime economy functioning efficiently and effectively. In fact, practically every piece of a nation's fabric, in one way or another, has a significant bearing on the strength of its economy.

Gentlemen, we have prepared especially for this study this R-209, a monograph on economic capability for war. I'd like to call your attention to the suggested study guide in the back of that. I think you'll find it very helpful if you'll just look at that guide, as not exclusive and not all-inclusive. But you will find it helpful. I think you will find the text interesting and also helpful. Don't forget that you've got this. It covers more ground also than I'll be able to cover here this morning.

Certainly you won't have time to make an exhaustive study of even the principal countries of the world. We know that. But you can get, and certainly we want you to get, an overall sensing of the strengths of the two power blocs; and a useful understanding of their comparative or contrasting characteristics. You will certainly need this before you can do any good at all in the Final Problem.

A word of warning. The scope of this study is broad. We realize

that. We've got a very short time to get it all in. Don't become frustrated. And don't get too fascinated with details. Don't get on one facet and dig down clear to the center of the earth on that one little isolated part of an economy. Set the perimeter first, get the scope of the thing set definitely in your mind, and then dig just as deep as you have time to go in the time that we have allotted to this course. We want you to get the wide-angle lens picture, in other words, the broad coverage, and just as deep as time will permit.

Now, in the second part of the study you're going to be trying to come up with some recommendations for action the United States should take to increase the economic capability of the free world allies to engage in international conflict.

How can we put our resources to work more positively and dynamically? As we try to come up with constructive ideas in this area, we want to make certain that we don't lose sight of the fact that our material resources in this country are certainly not unlimited. And we must avoid waste and inefficiency at every turn.

Let's run through a little exercise now that I think will serve as an example of the sort of analysis that we will be making in trying to come up with some suggestions as to what we might be able to do.

Let's consider one of the so-called neutral countries. We'll take India, for example. That seems to be a good example that everybody likes to kick around a little bit. As you know, India is determined to remain neutral in this East-West power struggle if she possibly can. But suppose

we were able to get India firmly aligned with the West politically. What, exactly, would we gain if we were successful in doing this? From an economic standpoint would India be an asset to us, or would India be a liability to us? Would we be quite as well off if we could just be sure that India would continue to remain strictly neutral?

We might turn that proposition around. From an economic standpoint, what would we lose if India suddenly for some reason became aligned with the Communist bloc and slipped behind the Iron Curtain? She might very well be much more of an asset to Russia than to us. If this appeared to be the case, would it pay us to devote enough of our time and attention and money to be sure that she didn't slip behind the Iron Curtain?

Well, let's assume that we have sized up the situation carefully and we have decided that we will sort of pre-empt India's neutrality, so to speak, by according her a really significant and useful amount of economic and technical assistance. Well, how much is this enlightened self-interest assistance likely to cost us? Or, to put it another way, to what extent would we have to tap the overall resources of the western coalition to engage in a program of this kimd? We give it considerable study and we think it will be manageable and we'd like to proceed.

But another thing that we've got to ask ourselves before we start is, "What are our chances of success?" The rate of progress that we might be able to make in that sort of a program might not be enough to satisfy the minimum aspirations of the Indian people. Half way through the

program they might just jump over the traces and say: "To heck with this. Let's adopt the Communist routine. They seem to get there so much faster." And they point to Russia and they point to Red China. If this happens, then possibly all of our treasure, effort, and time will be lost.

Whenever I hear of impatient people like these countries are, all these people--they expect miracles almost--I am always reminded of this little six-year-old precocious youngster that belonged to a salty sea dog in the community. This sea dog, this boy's father, was quite renowned as a swearing man. In fact, he couldn't say six words without four of them being swear words. And this precocious little lad was entering school, enrolling in school, the first day. The teacher got his name, his age, his address, and who to notify in emergency, and all those things. And finally, just before she was telling him to take off--"Now, son, we're through with you"--she said: "Well, now, Morris, I suppose you already know your ABC's." And he frowned up at her and he says: "Hell, no. Pecker damn. I've only been here for ten minutes."

Well, this is the way some of these countries are. They expect miracles. In ten minutes they want to see things change, figuratively speaking.

So, in spite of our best efforts, half way through the program we might lose the interests and affiliations of these people, and then everything would go down the drain. We would have lost everything that we had put into it.

But if we can't operate here, where might we have operated more

effectively to increase the economic capability of the free world to engage in international conflict on a coalition front?

Well, gentlemen, there are very many critical things, I suspect, that we should be doing right now--today. Things that aren't getting done, however, possibly because we are simply blind to the need. And you can certainly rest assured that at least some of these things will require much more time than we possibly have left in many cases if we decide to go ahead and do them.

I'd like to carry that example that I started with just a little bit further to illustrate what I mean.

You have decided, now, that you're going to embark on a very substantial program of economic assistance to one of the under-developed countries; not necessarily India, but it could be. We are going to do this to speed up the economic development in this country; and once this is done, we would hope that this would increase our capability of the Western coalition to engage in international conflict. Whatever the cost, we are prepared to undertake the job, because we think it is of crucial importance to the security of the West. Well, now, let's see what we're liable to be running into.

If you are going to start developing or expanding a primitive or backward economy, the very first thing you aregoing to need is capital equipment; that is, equipment that makes things, that produces things, which in turn produce other things, and so on. Well, where are these equipments going to come from?

I have a couple of Greely-graphs here--that's what I call the vu-graphs that Mr. Greeley makes up for us--that will help show you what an aspiring country faces, an under-developed country.

(Chart 1) Gentlemen, there's what you call a vicious circle. Here's the situation right here. Capital equipment is lacking. We'll take those four words. Now we'll see what it costs you.

The capacity to save in this under-developed, backward country is small, because real incomes are low. Real income is low because productivity is low. In other words, there are not very many machines working here and not much is being produced. Productivity is low largely because capital equipment is lacking. And capital equipment is lacking because the capacity to save is small. You go from there right around here; and, gentlemen, after you've gone around here a few times, you can gin this thing up to 1800 rpm and you'll still never break out of this vicious circle.

Now, let's assume that maybe there are a few people that hoard a little money (Chart 2) and maybe there would be some funds available for investment. Let's see. We've got some money to invest. We start up here. There's very little incentive to invest in this country, because the purchasing power of customers is small. There's a very narrow market. People don't have the money to buy things. It isn't going to do much good to produce them if they can't buy them.

Here's why they can't buy them. The purchasing power of customers is small because real incomes are small. Real incomes are small because

productivity is low. We've heard this before. Productivity is low because capital investment is small. And capital investment is small because the incentive to invest is weak. So, you see, we haven't really gotten anywhere even there.

Well, suppose we assume for the moment that somehow or other this country does manage to break up these vicious circles that I've shown you here; and an increase in production does seem possible, that is, so far as producer things are concerned. Does this mean that we're really ready now to blast off and get this satellite really up in orbit? No. Not quite yet anyway, because we have sort of overlooked something that most people think is fairly important.

This is something that the trade calls "social overhead capital." I doubt very much if very many of you have ever heard of that expression before--social overhead capital. This is just a sophisticated term for what we normally call at our level "public services." It's such things as railroads, highways, a mail service, communications networks, power systems--all such stuff as that.

If these facilities do not exist in at least minimal amounts, then there is really no use producing a lot of things. Nobody would know that they were produced in the first place. And if they were available for purchase, they couldn't get there to where they were, to buy them. Few orders would come in, deliveries would be slow; and probably next year's model would be out before people even knew what last year's model looked like.

Well, gentlemen, I think that this is not exactly the way to make a quick profit and engage in a thriving business. And, needless to say, this presents a real snag. This is really a snag. I think you are individually or personally familiar with the situations regarding public services and the social overhead capital in any typical under-developed country.

But for the sake of getting on with our little case study here, let's just eliminate that snag--remember now, we're going to eliminate this by pretending that it doesn't exist, for the moment, by sweeping it under the rug, so to speak. It's too awkward to get around; so we'll just ignore it. We'll assume that we've got this social overhead capital --all we need of it. We've got it running out of our ears. No sweat on social overhead capital. Where does this leave us?

The expert economists say this, and here I want to quote: "Once a minimum foundation of social overhead capital exists, then a group of entrepreneurs with vision enough to see the potential markets, and who have the willingness to invest capital on a wide front, can successfully break the circle of economic stagnation."

Well, that's where we are. As that little kid said, Pecker damn. Now it seems that all we need are entrepreneurs. Are these people lurking about sort of among the ranks of the unemployed just waiting to be pressed into service? No. Not exactly. The situation is not quite as happy as that. In fact, it turns out that these entrepreneurs are in extremely short supply.

Well, why is this? Assuming that you don't already know, let's get a Greeley-graph up here and see.

(Chart 3) Gentlemen, I want to relate this to your own personal experience and give you a real idea of what a vicious circle is. I call this "DuPont Circle." I think you all know what DuPont Circle is like.

Here's the operator's word-- entrepreneurial ability. This is what we're speaking of. Economic conditions in underdeveloped countries are not conducive to new ventures in industry. Lack of new business adventures limits opportunity for business experience and training. And, of course, entrepreneurial ability is developed mainly by actual business experience and training.

So, we're still in pretty much of a bind because of the shortage of entrepreneurs. But, gentlemen, this is only the beginning. We've just barely scratched the surface on enumerating the difficulties that you run into when you start talking about or start doing something about a backward economy.

The next snag you hit is the shortage of civil servants. Unfortunately, at least the initial stages of any really significant program of economic expansion in an underdeveloped country must be almost wholly administered by the local governemt. This means that competent civil servants and public administrators will be needed right at the very outset. Are they available? Well, of course they are not. The situation is exactly the same as for the entrepreneurs.

I could have prepared many more of these vicious circle slides, but

I think I've given you enough of them to point out what I'm really getting at here. There's certainly a lot more to this business of developing infant economies and lagging economies than you might at first think. It takes more than just money--and I guess you could sort of tag that as the understatement of the spring season.

But, in spite of all the difficulties involved, we do have opportunities where we can strengthen our position in world affairs by helping some of these less-fortunate countries. And today, of course, as you are well aware, we have very significant programs of mutual assistance and programs of foreign assistance.

In fact, in the past ten years we have appropriated something like 45 billion dollars for economic and military assistance to some 40-odd countries. I don't think it's too important whether the bulk of these funds have gone for military assistance or for economic assistance. What is important, though, I think, is what countries have received this assistance; and, possibly even more important than that, what countries have not received significant portions of this assistance.

Now, I'm not going to bore you with a lot of figures showing where these military assistance and mutual security economic assistance funds have gone. But I would suggest that in your committee work you take a really good, close look at these mutual assistance programs and see if you think we are using this money to the greatest possible advantage for the free world.

We want to keep the partners we now have--certainly--and, of

course, we want to get the neutral countries and the so-called uncommitted countries aligned with us too, if we can. Of course the question always comes up, Well, can we afford to do this? Can we afford to go out and underwrite the economies of N number of lagging, infant nation-states that are just coming into the fore?

A former ambassador to the United States, Sir Oliver Franks--you may recall when he was here, U.K.'s ambassador to the United States--defines the problem this way: Here again I quote.

"The under-developed nations face a vicious circle." He agrees. This is an entirely different quotation from the charts that I had. So this man agrees too that it's a vicious circle. "Low living standards and free, broadly democratic societies cannot produce sufficient saving for capital." As the chart there shows, the vu-graph. "This circle can be broken in one of two ways. It can be broken by tyranny, which, by enforcing hardships on the people and holding down their standard of living, forces the savings for rapid development"--This is what Russia, did, of course. This is what Red China is doing--"or it can be broken by capital from outside which gives a free society the chance to develop and remain free. This vicious circle for country after country will be broken one way or the other in coming years. We have had evidence in the Middle East how real and how urgent these problems are. I do not understate when I say that the world balance will shift decisively against the West if we fail."

Are we according these countries the kind and amount of assistance,

gentlemen, that they really need within our capability to provide assistance? There is a really wide area here, gentlemen, that's open for original thought in this particular segment of our foreign economic policy; and I suggest that you look into it and see if you can come up with some useful and timely recommendations concerning our mutual security programs.

I have dwelt at considerable length on the subject of aid to underdeveloped countries just as one case in point where you might find it profitable to dig deeper.

Of course there are many other areas to explore. What about our international trade policies? Can we improve on these, either to win friends to the West, or to increase the overall strength of the Western coalition at the expense of the Communist bloc?

Another area: Does it really make sense, say, for us to deny France and England certain atomic information which we know they are going to get one way or another anyway? If they have to expend vast sums of money and exert a terrific national effort just to discover what we already know, gentlemen, this may not be conducive to increasing the overall strength of the Western coalition, I submit.

I'm not going to try to answer these questions, because they're very involved and complex. They have no simple answers and no straightforward answers, of course. But these are the kinds of things that we would like to have you consider in your studies. Again, I have just barely scratched the surface in making these few suggestions as to where you

might find it profitable to concentrate your studies.

Now, in concluding I want to make one observation of fact, which I am sure you will recognize as truth, but which may have escaped your notice almost completely.

Gentlemen, nowhere in the United States certainly are you going to find a composite group of some 140 persons who are any more generally informed on domestic affairs and world conditions than you who are sitting right out there in front of me. And you're going to find no group who are more inherently capable of making substantive recommendations on increasing the economic capability of the free world than you. You may not have thought of that, but that is certainly true.

What are these things that we should be doing to increase the strength of the free world, and gain the maximum possible measure of security for the uncertain years that lie ahead?

Gentlemen, think about these things, and in your committees discuss them. Voice your thoughts. Even though your thoughts are not fully jelled yet, your ideas are not fully jelled, sound off. You may do nothing more than just inspire somebody else to think. Sometimes when we think out loud, we often start a new train of thought in somebody else's mind. Then his thoughts generate, and he speaks his mind, and gets somebody else to thinking. And, first thing you know, with all this concentrated effort eventually, collectively, you may come up with some kind of a recommendation that would have really true exceptional merit.

Well, I've talked long enough; probably too long. Just a couple of

parting sentences.

Gentlemen, don't forget now that you have this. It will be a help to you. If you get all tangled up in your thinking, go back to this monograph. Read it again. I'm sure it'll help you keep your perspective and help make your problem more manageable.

Well, gentlemen, we're ready for questions or observations, oral presentations, or any comments you want to make, or whatever you want to do. You call it. If you have any questions, I'll try to answer them.

QUESTION: In your area assignments I didn't see India mentioned among the countries.

COL. KLEIN: It's carried in Southeast Asia. You didn't see Pakistan either, or Afghanistan, or any of those countries. Instead of listing all these countries individually, we just lumped them all together and called them South and Southeast Asia.

For any questions like this, gentlemen, we will have a committee meeting, an administrative meeting, following at 10:30, where we can answer them. I thought possibly some of you might have some comments on under-developed areas, or what our efforts are like in helping people out, and that sort of thing, that you might want to get up and make a speech on.

If you have no questions, we'll just call this thing off, and we'll see you at 10:30, then, in the administrative meeting.

Thank you very much.

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