

Capitol Punishment . . . By Art Buchwald

New Hope for NATO

NOW THAT France is pulling out of NATO there is room for another country to come in. Several nations have been proposed for membership but, for one reason or another, their applications have been rejected. For example, in the case of Spain, the members have vetoed Franco's application on the grounds that the Spanish still condone bull fighting, which is against everything NATO stands for.



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The most obvious candidate for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is strategically located, has a large standing army, which could cover Europe's northern and eastern flanks, and it has several ports that could easily be used for supply depots.

NATO's main role in the past has been to contain the Soviet Union. But if the Soviet Union was permitted to join NATO, this would become a minor role, and our financial and military commitment could be cut in half without endangering European security.

Another advantage of having the Soviet Union in NATO is that the Russians already have nuclear weapons, so we wouldn't have to supply them with any. This would solve the major problem that the United States has had in dealing with its North Atlantic allies.

BESIDES its geographic location and its ability to field hundreds of thousands of troops, the Soviet Union could also make a large contribution to NATO in the field of intelligence. The Western allies have been spending billions of dollars

trying to find out what the Russians are up to. If they joined the NATO pact, we would have the right to ask them, and this would save us a tremendous amount of time and money.

Some critics argue that the Soviet Union already belongs to the Warsaw Pact made up of the Iron Curtain countries and it would be hard for the Soviets to withdraw from that pact to join ours.

But NATO has far more standing in the world than Warsaw, and it is believed the Soviets would not hesitate to jump over to our pact if somebody asked them.

OF COURSE, if you took in the Soviet Union as a partner in NATO, you would have to change the strategy of the alliance. NATO would have to have

a new military threat or it would disintegrate.

That new threat could be France, and NATO's new role could be to contain General de Gaulle.

It is believed that with the Soviet Union in NATO de Gaulle wouldn't dare try anything in Europe and he would be convinced that any adventure on his part could mean instant retaliation, not only from the West but also from the East.

De Gaulle is going to Russia soon, and one of the things he's expected to do is to try to persuade the Soviets not to join NATO. But the Soviets are expected to turn a deaf ear to de Gaulle's pleas. The only promise de Gaulle can hope to extract from the Russians is that, if the Soviets join NATO, France can take its place in the Warsaw Pact.

This column has not been cleared with the State Department.

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