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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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## THESIS

AN ESTIMATE OF SOME STRENGTHS AND  
WEAKNESSES OF THE SOVIET NAVAL  
OFFICER THAT COULD AFFECT  
HIS PERFORMANCE IN FUTURE COMBAT

by

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June 1982

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An Estimate of Some Strengths and Weaknesses of  
the Soviet Naval Officer that Could Affect  
His Performance in Future Combat

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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June 1982



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to provide information that will assist in estimating the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet naval officer in future combat. This will be accomplished by: (1) examining the observations of senior German military officers, who fought the Soviets in World War II, on the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet's fighting qualities during that conflict, and (2) examining the qualities that are considered by the Soviet Navy today as being necessary for victory in future combat.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

"Know your enemy"

Chinese Army Commander [500 B.C.]

Sun Tzu

"However technically perfect the Navy may be, man is always the basis of naval forces, the ruler of all the weapons of warfare."

Admiral of the Fleet of the  
Soviet Union

S.G. Gorshkov

When trying to prepare U.S. forces for possible military operations against the Soviet Navy, it would be very valuable to know how the Voyenno Morskoy Flot's (Soviet Navy or VMF) officer would act in combat. There are several reasons for this: (1) due to the increased speed and scope of modern war, there is a much greater need for the ability to accurately predict the actions of the enemy, (2) it would reduce the uncertainty for U.S. decision makers during the command, control, communications, and intelligence breakdowns that are expected during modern war, and (3) it would allow for the greater use of deception. In general, then, it could be said that knowing how VMF Officer would act would materially contribute to the United States ability to be victorious in combat with the Soviet Navy and basically provide for better U.S. national defense.



Unfortunately, it is neither possible to predict Soviet combat performance absolutely, nor is it reasonable to expect that it could be done with scientific precision. What can be done, however, is to compile, examine, and evaluate, the evidence that is available, which certainly is sufficient to make meaningful estimates of what the VMF's officers' actions in combat are most likely to be.

Making a prediction of this sort would be extremely difficult when evaluating any nation's military forces, but it is exceptionally difficult when evaluating the military forces of the Soviet Union. This is because of the closed nature of the U.S.S.R. What this means is that there are numerous impediments to the accumulation of accurate information about the Soviet Union, and that very little meaningful information about the U.S.S.R. is directly available. Perhaps the primary obstruction to the acquisition of this information is the Soviet preoccupation with secrecy. Due primarily to their historical experiences, the Soviets have developed a concern that their enemies would be able to use most any information about the country against the Soviet Union. In order to thwart this possibility, the Soviets engage in programs of partial information and misinformation to confuse those studying their country. Another problem is that the culture of the people in the Soviet Union is in many ways different from the culture of people who live in more Western nations. Because of this, there is sometimes a difference between the Soviet and Western



nations' perception of truth, which can frequently lead to confusion and misunderstanding.

This, however, is not to say that gaining information about the Soviets, and in particular about the Soviet Navy, is impossible, only that it is difficult and that every possible approach must be utilized. To a very large extent, most information about the VMF is circumstantial and gathered quite tediously in painfully small amounts. These pieces are then synthesized to form meaningful data. One method that is currently being used to provide intelligence about the VMF is inductive reasoning. By this method one can determine, for example, what tactics a Soviet Naval vessel is likely to employ from the capabilities of the weapons onboard. Another method used is deductive reasoning. By this method one can determine what Soviet strategy would be in a given area by studying Marxist-Leninist doctrine on the topic. It needs to be made quite clear, however, that the determinations made about the Soviets, based on the available information, must be made in the context of Soviet goals and life, and not Western ideologies. This is a very difficult task, but one which can be made somewhat easier by careful selection of the sources of information, and a concerted effort to utilize every possible piece of evidence when conducting the analysis.

The easiest way to determine how a VMF officer would act in combat would be to watch him in action. This of course is not possible since the last time the VMF was engaged in





actual combat was during World War II, and even the extent of that was relatively limited. This problem is further compounded by the fact that with the exception of one British work on the Russo-Japanese War,\* all the observations made about the VMF in combat, by those other than Soviets, are of the actions of the Soviet's "ships as a whole" and make few or no references to the actions or qualities of the individuals who made up the crew.\*\*

Other methods that could be utilized in making estimates about the Soviet naval officer's actions in future combat are: (1) to observe and analyze his education, (2) to observe and analyze the VMF's operations and exercises, (3) to observe and analyze what the VMF writes on the topic of professional performance and advancement, (4) to obtain and analyze what the VMF plans to do in its official publications, orders, manuals, plans, etc., (5) to analyze how the VMF designs and constructs its aircraft, ships, submarines and associated weapons systems, (6) to analyze composition and balance of forces that comprise the VMF, and (7) to examine and analyze

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\* The Historical Section of the Committee for Imperial Defence, The Official History of the Russo-Japanese War, (London: Harrison and Son, 1910).

\*\* For a clear and concise description of the Voyenno Morskoy Flot's actions in WWII against Germany see Vadm. Friedrich Ruge, Federal German Navy (Ret.), The Soviets as Naval Opponents, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979. For a complete history of the V.M.F. from 848 to 1948 see Mairin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1949.



what others wrote about the Soviet Union especially its history, ideology, goals, and military.

The research for this paper is going to be conducted by using two of these methods: (1) to examine what the Soviets write in their professional publications about what qualities are necessary for a Soviet naval officer to possess in order to be victorious in combat today, and (2) to examine the observations made of the qualities exhibited by the Soviets in combat during World War II. These two sources will provide information that will allow for an estimate of what war fighting qualities could be expected from the Soviet naval officer in future combat.

The two Soviet professional publications that have been chosen for examination are the (Soviet) Officer's Library series and Morskoy Sbornik (Soviet Naval Digest). While it is certainly true that Soviet literature is very frequently manipulated to accommodate the purpose of that writing, it has become clear that certain vehicles of Soviet communication are quite factual and can be accepted to mean exactly what they say. The keys to the determination of which are not are in the questions: (1) what is the purpose of the writing, and (2) whom is it written for. In matters such as the professional performance of their naval officers, there can be no value derived in deceiving their own officers. Publications that address topics such as this and carry direction to subordinates of how to execute their professional duties seem



to be quite direct and telling. This is substantiated by the fact that a comparison of the events taking place in the VMF and the articles in Morskoy Sbornik show that VMF performance reflects what is written in Morskoy Sbornik, and Morskoy Sbornik reflects what is occurring in the Soviet Navy.

There are a number of reasons why it has been determined valuable to examine the performance of the Soviet fighting man in combat in World War II. One is that World War II was the last conflict that the U.S.S.R. participated in and about which substantial information is available. A second is that the Soviets' are obsessed with the lessons of World War II combat and study Soviet combat in the war very carefully. Since the VMF considers World War II combat lessons to be important, they are valuable to study, at least as a starting point for estimating the warfighting qualities that could be expected from the VMF officer in future combat. Finally, by analyzing how the Soviets fought in World War II, great insight will be provided into how the Soviets conceptualize war.

There are basically only three countries that have had authors who addressed the history of Soviet combat action during the Second World War: Great Britain, Germany, and the U.S.S.R. itself. Of these three, the German works provide greatest information about the qualities of the Soviet fighting man in combat during the conflict and were consequently chosen for examination. This was primarily because there is a very large body of writings by quite senior German military officers



who fought against the Soviets during World War II which provides very detailed accounts of the German's combat actions with the Soviets. Aside from the quantitative standpoint, however, the quality of these German writings was also an important factor in their choice. To begin with, they were written in a timely manner, most within a year or two after the war ended. Second, they were written by trained professional military observers who had advanced to rather senior and substantial positions in the German hierarchy. Third, they are historically accurate with regard to information such as times, dates, numbers of troops, battles, etc. Fourth, there are multiple confirmations of the information in the German works. Fifth, most are written from the position of professional military officers who are debriefing a military operation.

There were also some weaknesses in the German writings, however, with the most salient one being that they were written from a German point of view. By this is meant that they were subject to whatever preconceptions or misconceptions the authors had about the Soviets and also that they were written by very senior military officers of a nation that the Soviet Union just defeated. Also, they do contain some amount of speculation.

Even when these shortcomings are taken into account through, the German writings were well suited for the purpose of this thesis. This is especially because with the authors coming from





a Western culture, they were probably sensitive to nuances of Soviet actions in combat that Westerners would find interesting even today, and also because they provide criticism of the actions of both the Soviet and German performance which allows for greater in-depth analysis than a strictly historical work.

Since the majority of the German writings address the combat actions of Soviet Army during the war, the question might be posed, "What is the value, of studying the Soviet Army during the Second World War, when it is information about the Soviet Navy that is being searched for?" The answer to this question is threefold: (1) the Soviet High Command sees great value in the lessons of Soviet combat in World War II regardless of the service involved, and promulgates them to all branches by way of vehicles such as the Officer's Library. This is because they all see strong military principles as being valuable to all services, (2) the role of the individual service in Soviet military seem less distinct than is often seen in Western nations simplifying thereby the transfer of lessons learned by one service to the other services, and (3) there is very little written about the combat actions of the crews of the VMF ships in World War II. Most writing is in the terms of the movements of ships. Hence the study of the combat qualities of Soviet Army personnel in World War II may be the closest one can come to gaining insight into the qualities of Soviet Naval personnel. The assumption is made in short, that to some extent, Soviets are Soviets or Russians are Russians, whatever the service.



By studying and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses observed in the performance of the Soviet fighting man in combat during World II, and comparing them with the combat-related qualities the senior VMF officers inculcate in their officers today, one can estimate some possible strengths and weaknesses of the VMF officer in future combat.

To accurately make such an estimate is the purpose of this thesis.



## II. GERMAN OBSERVATIONS OF SOVIET FIGHTING CHARACTERISTICS DURING WORLD WAR II

"...the reports by these German commanders of their operations are proving not only to be reliable, but the only information that we will have as to what occurred..."

Dwight D. Eisenhower  
U.S. Army Chief of Staff,  
30 August 1947

Experience shows that the Russian soldier has an almost incredible ability to stand up to the heaviest artillery fire and air-bombardment, while the Russian Command remains unmoved by the bloodiest losses caused by shelling and bombs, and ruthlessly adheres to its preconceived plans. Russian lack of reaction to even the heaviest shelling was proven repeatedly...it must be expected that the Russian soldier will execute the most senseless and silly orders...

Friedrich von Mellenthin  
Generalmajor, Wehrmacht  
Panzer Battles

When hostilities in Europe came to an end in 1945, the U.S. Army had no plans for any major historical projects involving enemy commanders or enemy senior staff officers. The German Military History Program began quite fortuitously in mid-July, 1945, when the American European Theater Historian, Colonel S. L. Marshall, sent a member of his Paris staff, Major K. W. Hechler, to the Luxemburg prison camp for top German leaders to talk to the P.O.W.'s and obtain whatever information he could. By the end of the month, Hechler had returned to Paris with reports on a wide range of questions answered by people such as Admirals Doenitz and Wagner, and Marshals Goering, Keitel, and Kesselring.



The value of these reports was immediately obvious, and soon the U.S. European Theater Historical Division was tasked with the mission of compiling as complete a record as possible of all German military operations against United States forces in the European Theater. During the seventeen years that this program was functioning (1945-1961), over twenty-five hundred manuscripts and pamphlets were assembled (over two hundred thousand pages) and are now primarily maintained in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

The majority of the manuscripts developed under the German Military History Program were the direct result of interviews with very senior German military officers shortly after the war ended. As a follow-on to these manuscripts, the Department of the Army compiled numerous pamphlets, combining and editing into a more academic form the information obtained during the original interviews with the German officers. This program eventually expanded so as to cover all theaters of the war in which Germany fought. This expansion allowed for the production of three hundred and forty-five manuscripts and pamphlets on the German experience in the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945.\*

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\* For a complete explanation of the German Military History Program and a listing and brief synopsis of all twenty-five hundred manuscripts and pamphlets produced by the program, see Donald S. Detwiler, ed., World War II German Military Studies, Vol. I, New York: Garland Publishing, 1979.





In 1979, a twenty-four volume series edited by Donald S. Detwiler, Charles B. Burdick, and Jurgen Rohwer and entitled World War II German Military Studies was published. This series contains copies of two hundred and thirteen original manuscripts and pamphlets alleged to be a quite representative selection of the total twenty-five hundred manuscripts and pamphlets developed through German Military History Program.\* Fifty-five of these are about German combat with the Soviets during the war.

Almost all of the original three hundred and forty-five works about the Eastern Front were taken into account in the series, either through direct inclusion, or through inclusion of Department of the Army pamphlets that combined the information recorded in many of the original manuscripts into more unified sources.

It is from the detailed accounts in both the German manuscripts and the Army pamphlets contained in the World War II Military Studies series that the information on the professional performance of the Soviet fighting man in combat with the Germans was drawn. The writer read sixty-one of these

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\* Editor Charles Burdick, who worked on some of the original manuscripts, stated in one interview that he had read all the manuscripts and pamphlets from the German Military History Program and that he was very confident that the works chosen for the World War II German Military Studies series did accurately represent the twenty-five hundred manuscripts and pamphlets from the German Military History Program. A review of the synopsis for all of the manuscripts and pamphlets from the German Military History Program by this author suggests Burdick is correct.



manuscripts and reviewed all twenty-five hundred, and noted each time a warfighting quality was indicated in the manuscript. In all there were twenty-seven specific adjectives or descriptors mentioned, and this writer combined most of the most frequently mentioned ones into five general or broad qualities: (1) his ability to learn and improve his combat performance, (2) his initiative, (3) the value he placed on human life, (4) his physical strengths and needs, and (5) his motivations to fight.\*

The effect on combat performance of these five general war fighting qualities of the Soviet fighting man will be the subject of the remainder of this chapter. German writings stated that these five qualities were innate in the Soviet fighting man and that they affected greatly the Soviet ability to withstand the German offensive during the first year of the war. [Ref. 73] It is interesting to note, especially in light

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\*The Qualities of the Soviet fighting man in World War II which were addressed in the German manuscripts are that he was: 1) able to survive situations the Germans could not; 2) afraid or unable to take independent action; 3) brave/courageous; 4) a coward; 5) cunning in some areas; 6) disciplined; 7) dull in some areas; 8) easily lead; 9) feared failure; 10) frugal; 11) little apparent regard for human life 12) loved "Mother Russia"; 13) motivated by fear, love, example and hate; 14) subject to herd instinct; 15) strong constitution; 16) self-sufficient; 17) predictable; 18) untrained; 19) unpredictable; 20) unprepared for the German invasion; 21) used every means to fight; 22) very obedient - did not ask questions; 23) senior officers were flexible; 24) senior officers were energetic; 25) senior officers had initiative; 26) senior officers had foresight; 27) senior officers could not motivate the troops in the beginning of the war.



of the emphasis the Soviets place on the lessons learned in combat during World War II, that some of these very same qualities are, among others, still being addressed by the VMF in their writings today. The relationship of these qualities to the VMF today and in the future will be addressed in the final chapter.

#### A. THE ABILITY TO LEARN AND IMPROVE

The ability of a combatant to learn and to improve his combat performance over the duration of a conflict is a valuable asset to his command. German writings provide numerous examples of positive change in the combat performance of the Soviet Army over the duration of the war that indicates improvement in that performance.\* It is difficult, however, to demonstrate unequivocally how much of the change in combat performance was due to the Soviet's ability to learn and improve. In part, this is because it is difficult to ascertain whether the Soviet victory was due to an improvement in the Soviet performance in combat, a worsening in the German performance in combat, or how much a combination of both.

Despite the regard the Wehrmacht gained for the Soviet Army during their pre-World War II exercises in the U.S.S.R., the German high command had no difficulty in recognizing the catastrophic effects of the Purges on the Soviet military.

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\* See References: [30: p. 93], [32: pp. 107,112], [62: p. 46], [72: pp. 22-29], [81: p. 27, 29].



[Ref. 10: p. 1] The realization that the old guard of the Red Army, whose view of war was not nearly as modern as their purged predecessors, were now in control, only added to the German high command's tendency to consider their Slavic opponents as the inferior contestant in their upcoming engagement. An indicator of this was the fact that the Wehrmacht invaded the Soviet Union (1941 population of about 180 million) with at best, twenty-five fewer divisions than the Soviets already had in their standing army. [Ref. 31: p. 1-15] German writings indicate that the Wehrmacht maintained this attitude of viewing the Soviets as inferior at least through the Summer of 1942, partly because of the unorthodox methods that the Soviets employed.\* This seemed to change, however, as the war progressed and the Germans began to gain a greater appreciation for the ways of the Russian in combat:

Fighting the Russian on his own ground necessitated orientation in a new type of combat. Fighting had to be primitive and unscrupulous, but rapid and flexible. The German could never afford to hesitate, even in the face of the most surprising occurrences and unexpected turns of events. Russian reaction to the tactical rules warfare, and to the tricks of the trade such as development, flanking threat, feint, surprise, etc., could never be determined beforehand. One time the Russian would act according to the rules and give up sooner than anticipated; on another occasion all efforts were to no avail, and neither encirclement for flanking attack fazed him. The struggle with the Russians was thereby placed on an entirely new basis; predictive calculation was useless, and every action was full of suspense and surprise. At times, positions which were tactically decisive according to normal concepts would be evacuated by the Russians without delay. At other times, individual terrain features

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\* See References: [147: p p . 34,44,57,63,66], [66: pp. 61, 75,103,105], [81: p. 22].





of no evident importance would be held even in the face of the most serious losses. In those instances the Russian often only relied only on his intuition, which he substituted for his practical schooling. It must be conceded that this tactical instinct often stood the Russians in better stead than the theories of many academies could have done...

Thus the Russian soldier avoided a number of tactical principles. Still, others were altered because of the nature of the country itself.... [Ref. 62: pp. 28-29]

The fact that the Germans did not understand these points at the outset of the war seems to have been a contributing factor in Germany losing the momentum they had in the Soviet Union during the first six months after the invasion.

Evidence shows that there were several reasons for the change in the Soviet combat performance, all of which played a part in their ultimate victory over Germany. Some of these are: (1) the Soviets learned from their own mistakes, (2) the Soviets learned from observing the actions of the Wehrmacht, (3) the Soviet Army was able to successfully reorganize itself to almost pre-1937 conditions by the summer of 1942, (4) the conscripted Soviet fighting man gained valuable combat experience; (5) the Germans overextended themselves, (6) the Germans were insufficiently prepared for both the Soviet way of fighting and the Russian winter, and (7) the Wehrmacht had to contend with political interference from Berlin. None of these reasons individually could be considered the singularly decisive factor in the Soviet's victory on the Eastern front, but together they provide some basis for why the Soviet's combat record went from one of primarily defeat in the



beginning of the war, to ultimately a sound victory over the invading Germans. Further, an understanding of the combat actions that reflect these reasons, and the difficulties the change in the Soviet's combat performance caused the Wehrmacht, also provide a good indication of why the Soviets find such great value in the lessons of their World War II combat for their armed forces today.

The remainder of this section will present expressed German views on the Soviet fighting man's ability to learn and to improve his combat performance. In order to do this it will be useful to divide the war into two basic sections: (1) pre-battle of Moscow (spring of '41 to fall of '41) and (2) post-battle of Moscow (spring of '42 to spring of '45) and describe the combat actions of the Soviets in both. This division has been chosen because the Germans have presented the Battle of Moscow as the turning point of the war where the Soviet Army went on the offensive. [Ref. 36: p. 228], [Ref. 62: p. 39]

#### 1. Pre-Battle of Moscow

At 0300 on 22 June, 1941, the German invasion of the Soviet Union began. Despite all indications of German intentions, the Russians seemed to have been unaware of the danger massing on their western border. In some places the Russians were caught sleeping and in many instances Russian commanders proved helpless before the onslaught. During the first eight days of the attack, the Soviets had some twenty divisions destroyed, and over 290,000 prisoners, 2,500 tanks,



and 1,400 guns captured. [Ref. 31: p. 3] By October, 1941 it is estimated that the Soviets had lost about three million men counting K.I.A.'s, M.I.A.'s, P.O.W.'s, and W.I.A.'s.\* [Ref. 144]

The inability of the Soviets to have avoided losses of this magnitude seems to have primarily stemmed from the disruption of Soviet military system that resulted from the Purges. This disorganization contributed to the Soviet's original inability to repel the Germans at the border, which then compounded into greater and greater losses, as the number of trained Soviet troops decreased through attrition.

Because of these reasons, the Soviets were forced to attempt to deter the rapid eastern advances of the Wehrmacht by any method, they could. Their predicament of having to combat highly trained German soldiers with newly conscripted Soviet soldiers further increased the Soviet High Command's problems. This lack of trained manpower to fight with seems to have at least in part contributed to the lack of flexibility the Germans observed in the Soviet combat performance especially during the first six months of the war. [Ref. 73: p. 3]

Two of the Soviet combat characteristics that the Germans commented on, which indicated rigidity in the Soviet's combat performance, were the Soviet's inflexibility and lack of adaptability in most offensive situations, and their

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\* Wounded in action.



stubbornness and tenacity in most defensive situations. [Ref. 62: p. 58] There were of course exceptions to these generalizations, and they most frequently coincided with: (1) a situation when the German action surprised the Soviets, and (2) an increase in the level of the Soviet combat experience.\* Although both of these generalized characteristics were observed throughout the war, German writings indicate that they were present to a lesser extent during the latter years of the hostilities. The following are examples of these characteristics and exceptions as described in the German manuscripts.

Example 1. In July and August of 1941 the 6th Panzer Division succeeded in effecting a surprise capture of two bridges crossing the Iuga River at Porechye [sixty miles southwest of Leningrad]. In support of the German observation of the Soviets being "inflexible and unadaptable in attack" the following account is presented:

[Because of Soviet inflexibility] the German force was able to stand its ground against an enemy six times as strong, despite the fact that it could no longer be reached or supported by aircraft. In unobserved fire, the Russians sent more than two thousand medium shells a day in the direction of the bridges without ever hitting them...As often as ten times a day the enemy attacked the road fork which was enclosed by the projecting arc of the bridgehead. Each attack was headed by as many tanks, echeloned in depth, as the narrow area would accommodate. Time and again the enemy attacks were repulsed, and time and again they were renewed. Wave after wave of Russian forces assembled,

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\* For examples of both the generalizations and the exceptions see References: 30,32,36,72,73,74,79,81.





concealed by many wrecked tanks and heaps of corpses, and stormed recklessly into the murderous defensive fire. The attacks did not subside until the enemy no longer had the necessary men and ammunition at his disposal. Soon however, replacements of proletarians and new ammunition supplies arrived from Leningrad. The assaults on the road fork were stubbornly and incessantly resumed until passage through the narrow attack corridors was no longer possible because they were completely clogged with disabled enemy tanks and decaying heaps of corpses. Later we counted more than two thousand dead Russians and seventy-eight knocked out enemy tanks in this narrow combat zone alone. [Ref. 62: p. 42]

Example 2. As mentioned earlier, the Wehrmacht officers interviewed during the U.S. Army study, agreed in general with the observation of the Soviets being "stubborn and tenacious in defense." The following description of the Russian's performance in a defensive situation is indicative of the majority of the German writings on this topic.

In mid-September Russian infantry supported by tanks seized Hill 726, some ten miles north of Olenino [one hundred and fifty miles west of Moscow]. Once the Russians had wrested it from the Germans, they withdrew their tanks and left an infantry company of about seventy-five men to defend the newly won position. This hill now constituted a dent in the German lines and afforded a sweeping view of the German rear area, thus hampering movements...

The Russian defense system on the hill was not organized in a continuous line, but rather in the form of strong points...

[German ] Company G made five or six attempts to retake Hill 726, but failed; in each case the attack was halted at the very beginning because of heavy casualties incurred from mines and massed mortar fire. The Russians defended the hill with extreme tenacity. The company commander, Captain Viehmann, observed that the Russians confined their activity to the hours of darkness. During the day their positions appeared deserted. Russian reconnaissance patrols were very active, but only between midnight and dawn.



The Russians defended the hill with extreme tenacity... [Several days later] while German troops diverted the enemy's attention by sudden shouting, the assault elements attacked and penetrated the Russian mine belt through two previously identified gaps...The defending Russians were taken completely by surprise...Nevertheless the Russians did not give way to panic or abandon their positions, but struggled to the bitter end. After about an hour of brutal hand-to-hand fighting the entire hill was in German hands, as were the surviving twenty Russians. [Ref. 26: pp. 40-44]

Example 3. There were also situations when the Germans observed the Soviets as not being tenacious on defense. In these cases, which primarily occurred during the beginning months of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Germans observed the Soviets as being easily confused and routed, as exhibited in the following combat actions:

The following observations were given of an incident at the city of Antelevo, [just south of Leningrad] in September of 1941, during the skirmish for Hill 312:

...However [during this battle] the Russians lost all enthusiasm for an attack after the German artillery lobbed a few well-aimed shells into their midst...The Russians had apparently considered these particular bunkers impregnable, for once they were destroyed, the enemy (Russian) infantry fled in wild disorder, abandoning most of its equipment. By nightfall, Antelevo was secure in German hands.

The flight of the Antelevo garrison was indicative of how easily the Russians became demoralized when they were confronted with an unexpected situation. When the German's blew up the bunkers, the Russians panicked and instinctively took to flight, as happened so often during the early months of the campaign. [Ref. 32: pp. 13-15]

These three examples provided an indication of some of the types of combat performance that the Germans observed



on the part of the uniformed Soviet Army, to the greatest extent during the first year of the war.

Before the Soviet fighting man gained his combat experience, German writings indicate that there were certain qualities that he exhibited, that helped carry him through the extremely difficult first six months of the war. These qualities will be discussed in the next four sections of this chapter, but before that is done, the post-Battle of Moscow period will be addressed here.

## 2. Post-Battle of Moscow

The Battle of Moscow was seen by the Wehrmacht as being the turning point of the war. It was Moscow that the Soviets were finally able to begin to reorganize their forces, and utilize trained Soviet troops from the eastern frontier in conjunction with the inhabitants of that city, to defeat the Germans for the first time in a major battle since the war began. [Ref. 142]

After Moscow, there were still almost another six months of poor combat performance on the part of the Soviets. This seems most probably due to the fact that the majority of the Soviets in combat during that period were conscripts with minimal combat experience and the organizational problems of the Soviet Army in general. German reports show, however, that after that time the Soviets began to employ tactics that the Germans viewed as more productive, sensible and flexible



than the ones the Soviets employed earlier on in the fighting, as seen in the following: [Ref. 81: p. 29]

The performance of the Russian unit leaders improved gradually. Whereas at the beginning of the campaign Russian commanders often demonstrated a lack of initiative and resoluteness, they executed many very daring maneuvers toward the end of the war. During the initial phase of the campaign they often failed to exploit an opening, but their conduct of operation gradually improved so much that eventually they were able to score major victories. [Ref. 81: p. 27]

The two examples that follow are taken from German manuscripts to show that some amount of the success in combat of the Soviet fighting man that could be observed as the war progressed was due to his ability to assimilate the lessons of his previous combat experiences and to apply them in a productive manner.

Example 1. Earlier in this section an example was given that typified the Soviet tactic of the continual use of mass force, and it showed how costly it was to the Soviets. In the following example, the Germans observed the Soviets using a different tactic, one which was not only fruitful, but also conserved Soviet lives and assets, in contrast to the blunt attack (as exemplified in the cite on page 25 where the Soviets engaged in wave attacks). Note that it took place during the summer of 1942 while the Germans were attempting to advance toward Glinnaya:

After elements of the 19th Panzer Division had pushed through Nikitzkoye they ran into trouble north of the town, where they were repeatedly attacked by groups of five to seven Russian tanks emerging from the large forrest adjacent to the division's left flank. After





allowing the German armored point to pass, the Russian tanks pounced on the wheeled vehicles that followed. Whenever the German tanks counter-attacked, the Russian tanks immediately withdrew into the forest, only to emerge at another point. The tanks used in this operation were of an older type, no match for their German counterparts in open terrain. Hence the Russians used them - and with telling effect - only for hit and run operations. These Russian tactics cost the Germans a large number of casualties and caused considerable delay. [Ref. 32: pp. 111-112]

Example 2. In the following example, the Germans note that even though the Soviets in this case were forced to retreat, it was accomplished in a "military" fashion of which they approved and one which was substantially different from Soviet actions observed early in the War. This engagement took place near Orel (two hundred miles southwest of Moscow) during the summer of 1943. These types of improvements on the part of the Soviets continued to take place until the end of the War.\*

It appears that the enemy officers and non-commissioned officers were briefed in detail on what the Russian operations were going to be in case of a German attack... This conclusion is supported by the fact that a sand table was found in the woods where the headquarters of a major Russian unit had its command post. Besides, one could easily tell that Russian operations had been prepared carefully from the fact that there were no signs of disorder and no indications of a hasty retreat on the part of the Russians. There were no radioed SOS-calls, so frequently intercepted in the past... [Ref. 30: pp. 92-93]

These two examples provide several tactical reasons why the Soviets realized greater success in combat as the War

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\* For other examples see References [32: pp. 107, 112], [30: p. 23], [62: p. 46], [72: pp. 22-29], [81: pp. 27, 29, 47, 73, 74, 79].



progressed: (1) greater utilization of tactics that conserved Soviet assets (particularly troops), (2) better utilization of assets to fit the tactical situation, and (3) better advanced planning that provided contingency orders. In their writings the Germans address several other tactical reasons that were considered to have contributed to the increased success of the Soviets in combat. Some of them were: (1) the Soviets began to realize the consequences of their misuse of the radio, and as they discontinued disclosing their plans on the air, it was much more difficult for the Germans to predict what the Soviet intentions were, [Ref. 30, p. 93], [Ref. 79, p. 17], (2) the Russians began to act in a much bolder manner, especially after the summer of 1944, thereby exploiting situations that would have been missed earlier in the war, [Ref. 73: p. 16], (3) the performance of the lower and middle echelon officers improved gradually over the duration of the War, allowing him to conduct operations that he would have previously been incapable of, [Ref. 81: p. 27], (4) the Soviet High Command became more flexible and began to adopt the German tactics which were more mobile than the earlier Soviet tactics. They also became less rigid in their planning, and more Soviet flexibility was observed by the Germans in the field, [Ref. 81: p. 29], (5) there was a substantial improvement in the coordination and cooperation between Soviet units, especially artillery and infantry, which allowed for far



greater successes than the units were able to accomplish individually. [Ref. 62: p. 47]\*

As for the Soviet fighting man's ability to learn from his combat experiences and thus improve his performance in combat, the results still seem to be unquantifiable. However, the fact that one is unable to define precisely how much the Soviet fighting man's combat performance improved over the duration of the war, does not detract from the fact that improvement was observed. Neither should the fact that the Wehrmacht was in a degraded condition when the Soviets began to win with the least effort.

That the Soviet's enemies observed and recorded numerous improvements in Soviet combat performance is salient. To conclude that a portion of that observed improved combat performance was due to the Soviet fighting man's ability to learn and improve from his combat experience is certainly reasonable.

German writings indicate that the improvement of the Soviet fighting man's combat performance seems to have made a significant contribution to the Soviet's ability to expel the German forces from the USSR. Evidence further suggests that during the postwar period the Soviets became quite aware

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\* Some German writers also made the point, most emphatically, that the increase in Soviet success was primarily due to the German's weakened condition. [Ref. 73, pp. 1-3] Although this is certainly true, it must be remembered that the Germans would not have been in that weakened condition had not the Soviets fought as strongly as they had early on in the conflict.



of just how costly their lack of preparation for combat at the time of the German invasion was [Ref. 73: pp. 22-29]. This then can be viewed as one of the substantial lessons the Soviets learned from World War II and provides a strong indication of why the Soviets are so intent on combat readiness and are now insuring that they accomplish their training before the next conflict starts.

## B. INITIATIVE

The ability of a fighting man to act independently and to have initiative is of great value to this command. The German manuscripts however, often focused on the lack of initiative of the Soviet fighting man in combat at all but the highest levels. About these officers the Germans wrote:

The higher echelons\* of Russian command proved capable from the very beginning of the war and learned a great deal more during its course. They were flexible, full of initiative, and energetic...The extraordinary industry with which these commanders went about their duties was characteristic. Every day and far into the night they sat together to discuss and to record in writing what they had seen and heard during the day. [Ref. 62: p. 8]

At all levels below this, however, the lack of initiative appeared to be painfully clear. It should be noted though that in their writings the Germans indicated that they believed the Soviet High Command saw this lack of initiative not only as a short-coming, but also as a quality to be capitalized on. [Ref. 32: p. 2] The following section will address the

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\* In their writings the Germans defined Soviet Higher Echelon Commands as Army, Army Group and above; Intermediate Echelon Commands as Division Level; and Lower Echelon Commands as those below Division Level. [Ref. 62: p. 12]





quality of initiative in combat observed in the Soviet fighting man by the Germans in World War II.

For the most part, the Soviet's observed lack of initiative and the way he allowed himself to be controlled was attributed to being a national characteristic by most of the German officers who addressed this topic. [Ref. 72: pp. 1-2] The following observation of Generaloberst (four star general) Erhard Raus is indicative of the opinion of many of his fellow Wehrmacht officers and seems to say three things: (1) that the common Soviet soldier lacked initiative, (2) that the Soviet Army's leadership was quite capable throughout the war and improved as the war progressed, and (3) the Soviet Army's leadership were unable to inspire the common soldier.

The Russian infantryman was a member of the herd, preferring to fight in concert with others rather than to be left to his own devices. In the attack this was evidenced in the massed lines, sometimes almost packs; in the defense it was shown by the stubbornly resisting bunker complements. Here there was no individual action... [However] the higher echelons of Russian command proved capable from the very beginning of the war and learned a great deal more during its course. They were flexible, full of initiative, and energetic. However, they were unable to inspire the mass of Russian soldiers. [Ref. 62:pp 8,17]

The German manuscripts also provide numerous examples of what the Wehrmacht considered an apparent lack of initiative on the part of the lower and mid to upper echelon Soviet combatant as seen in the following account. It should be noted however, that the frequency of such accounts seemed to decrease as the war progressed.

Rogachev is a medium size Soviet industrial center three hundred miles southwest of Moscow, on the Dnepr River. On



15 July, 1941 the German LIII Corps attacked this city, and the following account of the incident was given by Generaloberest, Dr., (four star general, Ph.D) Lothar Rendulic, who commanded the 52d Infantry Division of the German LIII Corp during the attack.

The 267th Infantry Division was approaching Rogachev from the west...Although the area north of the combat zone was completely unprotected, and the initiative entirely with the Russians (who outnumbered the Germans three to two), they attempted no encirclement or envelopment, but launched one frontal attack after another. A flanking maneuver with a small force, even a battalion, would have been very effective, but the frontal attack was the typically Russian manner of conducting the operation. The enemy failed to consider any other possibilities which would have required a certain amount of initiative. During the night from 15 to 16 July, the 52d Division... pivoted south and on the morning of 16 July (after having been on the march for twenty four hours) arrived 12km. north of the combat zone...The Russians had to expect that this division would participate in the fighting. It was important to prevent it (52d Division) from taking part in the operations west of Rogachev. This could only be accomplished by attacking and defeating the 52d Division. If the Russians temporarily suspended their current attack and held their gains with one division, they would still have two divisions available for this operation. However, a quick change in plans was not in line with their ability. The rapid assembly of forces and the organization of an attack against the enemy from the north would have required flexibility of thought and initiative. Such requirements exceeded the capabilities of the [local] Russian command and besides, a decision of this kind doubtlessly would have required the approval of various higher headquarters. The slowness of the Russian mind would have caused an endless delay. Instead of making the correct decision, the Russians continued their frontal attack...This to them was the most simple and most primitive solution, which required little imagination and initiative. They had come to the worst possible solution. As a result, my Division launched an attack at noon, overran and annihilated the Russian defenses of one division, and rolled-up the Russian front in a flanking attack to the south; even [Russian] units which had not participated in the Russian offensive were destroyed. This attack decided



the battle west of Rogechev...It was an especially great disadvantage for the Russians that their infantry, after achieving a penetration, did not immediately exploit its advantage by pushing forward, but rather waited the preparation of a new attack; this afforded the opponent time to take countermeasures...This methodical and unimaginative procedure cost the Russians many a victory... [Ref. 73: pp. 5-6, 27]

The German manuscripts are full of similar descriptions of Soviet performance in combat which clearly indicates a lack of ability on the part of the lower and mid to upper level Soviet soldier to take independent action that deviated from his specific orders, regardless of how obvious the value of the deviation.\* The manuscripts also very clearly indicate, however, that strict compliance with orders and reliance on direction from above were most highly desired qualities fostered by the Soviet High Command, prompted to some degree by the lack of combat experienced Soviet troops at the beginning of the war. [Ref. 144] In their writings, the Germans provided numerous examples of how the Soviets achieved and maintained this quality in their subordinates.

There seems to have been two primary ways the Soviet High Command accomplished this: (1) to drill the principle of strict compliance with orders into every Soviet soldier, and (2) to insure that every Soviet had it absolutely clear in his mind that the punishment for failure to obey was death. This "punishment" was usually meted out by the unit's

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\* For other examples see References: [15: pp. 233-234], [52: pp. 13-17,37,76,107,112], [62: pp. 8-12,16,41, Ch. 10], [73: pp. 5-9,27], [81: pp. 20,28].



commissar (political officer), and the frequency of this type of punishment seems to be indicated by the remark of General Petrov, the commander of the Fiftieth Army, to the Fiftieth Army Commissar: "Well, how many [Russian soldiers] have you shot today?" [Ref. 62: p. 13]

To clarify any confusion that might arise, this type of punishment was by no means intended solely for the enlisted man. In the manuscripts it can be, quite clearly be seen as applying to all but a very select few who had the power and influence to protect themselves.

The following is an observation made by Generallieutenant de Waffen-SS Max Simon:\*

...but in all my years of experience [with the Soviets] the repeat attacks did not depart a single time from the pattern of the first attack. The Russian officer's lack of flexibility, which has been mentioned previously, was aggravated by the fact that they were always held personally responsible for failures. [Ref. 79: p. 18]

The implication here seems to be that the lower grade Soviet officers would choose to follow their orders precisely, regardless of the results, rather than risk the chance of being blamed for their failure. If they were following orders and failed, there appears to have been a hope that they would not have been held responsible, since they were only following

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\* This observation should not be construed as to detract from the point made in the previous section about the Soviet's combat performance improving. Generallieutenant Simon left the Eastern Front for the last time in the fall of 1943, therefore having no first hand knowledge of the Soviet's fighting qualities during the last twenty months of the war.





orders. The German observation was that some portion of this situation was caused by the Soviet military system:

The flexibility demonstrated by the higher commands, (army and army group) was not evident at lower levels. The lower command echelons, (below division level) of the Russian Army, and for the most part also the intermediate echelons, (generally division level) remained for a long period inflexible and indecisive, avoiding all personal responsibility. The rigid pattern of training and a too strict discipline so narrowly confined the lower command within a framework of existing regulations that the result was lethargy. Spirited application to a task, born of the decision of an individual, was a rarity. Russian elements that had broken through German lines could remain for days behind the front without recognizing their favorable position and taking advantage of it. The Russian small unit commander's fear of doing something wrong and being called to account for it was greater than the urge to take advantage of a situation.

The commanders of Russian combined arms units were often well trained along tactical lines, but to some extent they had not grasped the essence of tactical doctrines and therefore often acted according to set patterns, not according to circumstances. Also there was the pronounced spirit of blind obedience which had perhaps carried over from their regimented civilian life into the military field. Thus, for example, toward the end of September of 1941, in the area southwest of Bryansk, the same sector was attacked by various Russian battalions every day for seven days running without any apparent reason and without success, but with severe losses. Finally, a captured battalion commander supplied the explanation. In looking through some old files a new regimental commander had found a top-level order to the effect that continuous attacks were to be made along the entire front in order to ease the pressure on Leningrad. Since he had received a negative reply to his inquiry as to whether these attacks had already been made, he had ordered this sector attacked every day. In the meantime, however, 2 months had passed [since the order had been issued], and the pressure on Leningrad had long since been relieved.

[Ref. 62: p. 12]

This type of performance in combat may seem to be somewhat incomprehensible, especially from a regimental commander, but



the following instance, related by Generaloberst Raus, emphasizing the cost of failing to obey his orders to a Soviet tank company commander, may serve to clarify the point:

In the fighting east of Roslavl [250 miles southwest of Moscow] in August, 1941, a Russian tank company that had been sent into action suddenly stopped on the battlefield. The leader of the tank company had received an order before going into action to refuel at a fuel depot somewhat to the rear of his bivouac area. He did not, however, want to take the trouble to go back as he thought that it would be possible to refuel further forward at the divisional command post nearer the front. But there was no opportunity to refuel at that point. The tank company just reached the battlefield and then ground to a halt because of lack of fuel. Thereupon the company commissar drew his pistol and shot the commanding officer on the spot. [Ref. 63: p. 15]

This type of treatment of officers implies a tremendous inducement for all to follow orders to the letter, and certainly seems to reinforce the point that an individual had everything to lose and nothing to gain by trying to think for himself.

There seems to also be another reason for lack of independent action on the part of the lower and middle echelon Soviet that may drawn from this example, that is insufficient information to act intelligently. The maintenance of strict security by a country during wartime is quite expected, and the policy of the Soviet's to maintain secrecy with regard to their plans and assets is not difficult to understand. However, when the policy is carried to such extremes so as to interfere with the nation's military's ability to function in a proper manner it can be assumed that there is a problem.



In the case of the Soviet Union in World War II, it was perhaps even an indication of a distrust for their own men. The extremes to which this policy of total secrecy was carried by the Soviets is indicated by, (1) the incredible penalties paid for simply losing an unmarked, non-tactical, Soviet map [Ref. 36: p. 266], and (2) the way that Soviet fighting men who were POWs were automatically assumed to have corroborated with the Germans and were treated as traitors upon their return to the Soviet Union. [Ref. 48: p. 7]

A point can be made that perhaps there were some reasons for the Soviets to maintain these policies, but the fact still remains that the Soviet policy of providing their subordinates with minimum information undoubtedly contributed to the Soviet fighting man's lack of initiative in combat during World War II.

In recapping what has already been discussed in this section it can be said that there are at least three possible reasons that can be given for the Soviet's observed lack of initiative: (1) because it is a natural tendency for the Soviet fighting man to be passive and to allow himself to be controlled, (2) because of insufficient training and combat experience of the Soviet fighting man, especially during the first year of war, the Soviet High Command determined that they did not want their subordinants to take any initiative, and enforced this position with the threat of death, and (3) because of not having knowledge of what the High Command's



plan was beyond his immediate mission, the lower level Soviet fighting man usually didn't have sufficient information to make intelligent independent judgements.

The fact that these three reasons complement each other somewhat complicates the ability to determine whether the Soviet fighting man in WWII truly lacked the ability to take initiative in combat or was simply following orders. However, the German observations did depict the Soviet combat performance as improving over the duration of the conflict, and attributing that improvement, in part, to the more flexible and productive actions of the lower and middle level Soviet officers. It is interesting to note that there also seems to be a correlation between the increase in the amount of combat experience of the lower level Soviet, his improved performance in combat, and the increased latitude he was allowed in his actions.\*

In the following section another quality of the Soviet fighting man in combat during World War II will be addressed. This one, however, will be one that the Germans presented as being more valuable in achieving victory or avoiding defeat to the Soviet High Command. It is the value the Soviet placed on human life.

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\* The change in the experience and attitude of the Soviet High Command also must have been a factor in this change in latitude allowed.





### C. THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

Of all the qualities that the Germans observed of the Soviet in combat, the one that was clearly presented as the most shocking and unbelievable to the Wehrmacht officers was the Soviet's apparent disregard for human life.\* The following quote from General Major F.W. von Mellenthin seems to eloquently and succinctly summarize the other German observations on this topic:

The stoicism of the majority of Russian soldiers and their mental sluggishness makes them quite insensitive to losses. The Russian soldier values his own life no more than those of his comrades. To step on walls of dead, composed of the bodies of his former friends makes not the slightest impression on him and does not upset his equanimity at all; without twinkling an eyelid he stolidly continues the attack or stays put in the position he has been told to defend. Life is not precious to him. He is immune to the most incredible hardships, and does not even appear to notice them; he seems equally indifferent to bombs and shells. Naturally, there are Russian soldiers of a more tender physical and psychological structure, but they have been trained to execute orders to the letter and without hesitation. [Ref. 15: p. 233]

As with the previously discussed quality of initiative, there is a belief among the German writers that the low value the Soviet fighting man places on life was an inherent trait. Generaloberst Dr. Rendulic in his manuscript, "The Fighting Qualities of the Russian Soldier", presents himself as a

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\* German manuscripts give no indication that the Soviet's apparent disregard for life was based on any fanaticism; religious, political, or otherwise. In fact one account specifically states that the Soviet fighting man was definitely not a Communist fanatic. [Ref. 15: p. 234] Instead they indicate that the normal life of the pre-war Soviet was so hard that in some instances death could have been seen by the Soviet as a relief. [Ref. 52: p. 9]



staunch believer that the key to the way the Soviet fought was firmly entrenched in his "historical experiences." [Ref. 72: p. 2] On the topic of the Soviet's seeming disregard for life he states:

We are here most interested in the following characteristics which we can now discern among the Russian people as a whole: the greatest patience and endurance of suffering, a certain inertness, and submissiveness to life and fate, little initiative, and in many of them -- which is true of all other people to a greater or lesser degree -- an easily aroused inclination toward cruelty and harshness which may be considered as part of the Mongol heritage in view of the basically good-natured disposition of the people. [Ref. 72: p. 3]

There certainly seems to be merit to this position, especially in light of the domination and hardship experienced by the Russian throughout the course of the country's two thousand year history.

German writings provide numerous examples of cases in which the Soviet demonstrated the lack of value he placed on human life. Some of them are: (1) the policy of fighting until the death, which was enforced by the threat of death by the commissar, [Ref. 72: p. 16] (2) the Soviet tactic of using Soviet civilians in front of Soviet armed troops to draw German fire and to deplete the German ammunition supply before the Soviet troops engaged them, [Ref. 62: p. 26] (3) the Soviet tactic of using penal battalions to clear mine fields in a hurry by marching them through the field, [Ref. 81: p. 28] (4) the way the Soviets used their troops to build bridges in icy rivers and roads through semi-frozen swamps,



[Ref. 28: p. 18] (5) the way Soviet partisans executed people only suspected of assisting the Germans, [Ref. 62: p. 52]

(6) the way in which the Soviet fighting man was continually placed in hardship situations such as not being provided with food or shelter, or being ordered to hide in snow, immobile, for hours, or being made to crawl through semi-frozen swamps in sub-zero temperatures,\* and (7) wave attacks where line after line of Soviets would proceed toward their objective in a seemingly never ending flow, sometimes with only the first few lines having weapons. In these cases, the only way for an individual in the following rows to obtain a weapon was to get one from a dead comrade who preceeded him. The manuscripts also pointed out that only the most seasoned German combat veterans could withstand this type of attack for any period of time. There were occasions when the Germans reported that even their own well-trained troops cracked under the strain of a wave attack and fled in panic. [Ref. 38: p. 64] From these examples it is difficult to conclude anything else but that the Soviets placed a low value on life.\*\*

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\* The ability of the Soviet combatant to endure this sort of hardship is the topic of the following section of this chapter.

\*\* The point can be raised that perhaps the Soviet fighting man performed the way he did in the enumerated situations out of fear of being killed by the commissar. It is difficult to come to the conclusion that such a limited number of commissars could send so many millions of Soviets to their death, in the manner in which they died, if the Soviet fighting man held life dear. [Ref. 62: p. 13]



As the Germans observed, this type of fighting quality was of great value to the Soviet High Command, especially with regard to the latitude it provided in the tactics that the Soviets could utilize. As the war progressed, however, the Soviets used some of these tactics [especially wave attacks] to a much less extent. This seems to have been for two reasons: (1) because the Soviets foresaw the possibility of running out of combatants before the war could be finished if they continued to expend them at the rapid rate they did at the beginning of the war,\* and (2) the improvement in the ability of the Soviet fighting man and the degraded condition of the German Army as the war progressed made these tactics less and less necessary. These facts notwithstanding, the knowledge of the Soviet High Command that they could count on their troops to perform in disregard for their own lives surely provided them with some comfort in the catastrophic situation they found themselves.

Another quality of the Soviet fighting man that is somewhat akin to his disregard for human life, is his minimal needs and strong constitution. These qualities will be addressed in the following section of this chapter.

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\* There is nothing in the German writing that indicate that this change should be construed to mean that the Soviet changed his opinion of the value of life. The use of mass force remained a Soviet tactic through the conflict. They just did not have the manpower to use wave attacks as before.





#### D. PHYSICAL STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

German writings indicate that with regard to some of the physical feats that the Soviets accomplished, the Soviets were viewed as being almost superhuman. This observation is not without sound basis. German writings are full of examples that support the Soviets' ability to routinely accomplish the following: (1) to cross seemingly impassible terrain, [Ref. 62: p. 83] (2) to survive and be a viable fighting force in sub-zero temperatures with virtually no formal support, [Ref. 32: p. 3] (3) to be able to survive and recover from injury that a Westerner would not be able to survive, [Ref. 62: p. 26] and (4) to be able to exploit his surroundings for cover and camouflage. [Ref. 81: p. 24]

One does not have to be a military tactician to be able to understand that fighting in one's own country has advantages and that knowledge of the land and familiarity with one's surroundings is a plus. This, however, is only a portion of what the German manuscripts said about the physical abilities of the Soviets. Rather, when the Germans addressed why the Soviets were able to accomplish feats such as the ones just enumerated, the consensus of opinion seemed to rest in the position that the Soviets were just basically exceptionally hardy people whose constitutions and life experiences



conditioned them to endure greater physical hardship than most any of the German soldiers could have endured.\*

The German soldiers contended that the Soviet's constitution, which enabled him to survive on far fewer "comforts" (food, shelter, protective clothing) than the German soldier required, when combined with his familiarity with his surroundings made the Soviet fighting man a very mobile and viable force to contend with as seen in the following:

The frugality of the Russian soldier was beyond German comprehension. The average rifleman was able to hold out for days without hot food, prepared rations, bread, or tobacco. At such times he subsisted on wild berries or the bark of trees. His personal equipment consisted of a small field bag, an overcoat, and occasionally one blanket which had to suffice even in severe winter weather. Since he traveled so light, he was extremely mobile and did not depend on the arrival of rations and personal equipment during the course of operations.  
[Ref. 32: p. 3]

The following two quotes from the German manuscripts show the feelings of the Wehrmacht in general with regard to the physical abilities of the Soviet fighting man that allowed the Soviets to perform the feats in combat he did:

In order to complete the description of the fighting qualities, mention should be made that the Russian soldier ordinarily possesses a robust constitution, can endure unusual fatigue and privations, and is very frugal...[This is because] an overwhelming portion of the population is engaged in agricultural pursuits..."  
[Ref. 72: p. 17]

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\* An argument could be made here that the Soviet did not have any special ability in this area, but that he only acted out of fear of the repercussions of failing to obey his orders. However, despite the fact that fear must have played a part in the Soviet's actions, it is difficult to conclude that fear made the Soviet a survivor. It could have made him take a particular action, but it could not have made him survive it.



and

In World War II, as in preceding wars, the Russian soldier demonstrated that he was closer [to the land] than his west European counterpart. This was hardly surprising since most of the Russian soldiers were born and raised far from big cities. The civilian occupation of the typical Russian soldier was that of a farmer, lumberjack, or huntsman. From early childhood he had been used to covering long distances across the difficult terrain, orienting himself by conspicuous features on the ground, by the stars, and often by following his natural instincts. The manifold dangers that were present in the wide-open Russian countryside were bound to sharpen his senses...particularly his sight and hearing. Even the city dwellers, most of whom had only recently been transplanted to the densely populated cities...remained relatively close to nature. Being attuned to the vast open spaces and desolate steppes with which a large part of his country is covered, the Russian did not know the depressing loneliness and forlornness that often overwhelmed the German soldier. The Russian was accustomed to getting along with a minimum of comfort and equipment under climatic conditions that imposed severe hardship on the invader.\* [Ref. 81: p. 19]

In the practical senses, the Soviet's quality of being strong, and able to exploit his surroundings for sufficient food, shelter, and cover to meet his minimal needs, was a valuable asset to the Soviet High Command. The fact that the High Command could be relatively assured of having men capable of performing their assigned missions, even though the Soviet Army was able to provide them with only minimal support must have been a positive factor in the eyes of the Soviet High Command. Further, the high mobility of a unit that results when its rear area support can be dispensed with, is further

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\* For General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the German Army's observation on this topic, see the forward to Reference 37.



enhanced by the fact that once there is no greater amount of comfort available to the fighting man's rear, he might just as well fight ahead, since there is nothing to retreat to anyway. In this regard the Germans made the following observation:

The psychological aspect is also interesting. Every Western soldier is linked somehow or other with his rearward services; they bring the sustenance and comforts that make his hard life bearable. When a unit is rubbed out in battle the survivors usually cluster around the field kitchen or the baggage train to seek refuge and solace. Even the shirker or the shellshocked reappears at this focus on one pretext or another. There is nothing like that for a Russian. He has only his weapons, and there are no attractions for him in the rear. There is no field kitchen and no baggage train; his refuge is his gun, his tank, his machine gun. If he loses them he has lost his home. If he wanders into the rear he will be rounded up sooner by the patrols of the M.V.D. (Ministry of Home Affairs). Their High Command has a deep understanding of the Russian soldier and his contriver to turn his weaknesses into strength.  
[Ref. 62: p. 304]

One observation of the Soviet's mobility that resulted from his ability to survive and fight without the rear area support that the Germans associated with traditional armies can be seen in the following:

The Russian accomplished the move of strategic concentrations or shifts of large units, one or more armies, in an unbelievably short time with the help of the railroad...The number of trains necessary per unit was less than for any other army. The Russian neither had not needed baggage or accessories, clerk's bulky lockers, surplus vehicles, or large food supplies. He could be packed in railroad cars like sardines in a can...In any event...the Russians succeeded in surprising the German command, since such rapidity in large scale troop movements...contradicted all experiences.  
[Ref. 63: p. 28]





These observations, however, should not be interpreted to mean that the Soviet fighting man was totally without needs or feelings, only that because of many reasons he was able to endure more than the Germans could themselves, or thought to be reasonably within the ability of the average fighting man.

German writings show that by November of 1942, the Wehrmacht had demonstrated some measure of understanding of the Soviet's quality of strength and self-sufficiency. [Ref. 32: p. 48] However, the manuscripts also imply that it was certainly to the detriment of Germany that the Wehrmacht had failed to recognize the strength of the Soviet fighting man in this area from the first day of the war. At first, the Germans not only underestimated the physical condition, but also the ability of the Russian to exploit his surroundings for food, shelter, and camouflage. This led the Germans to make some calculated tactical errors that were very costly. Expecting that the Russian would be as susceptible to the same hardships and restrictions of terrain and weather as German soldiers were, the Wehrmacht planned accordingly, and frequently found itself quite surprised by the Soviet counter, as seen in the following account:

When in February, 1944 [average temperature about 15 degrees F.], a yawning gap opened on the Pripyat River [350 miles southwest of Moscow] at the boundary between Army Group North Ukraine and Army Group center, the Russians crossed this extensively marshy region during the muddy period, with 14 divisions, and pushed toward Kowel. Several of these divisions turned south toward Rowne to attack Lwow. Stopped near Dubno on the Ikwa



River by the German Fourth Panzer Army, they vainly tried to take the few strongly manned crossings over the extensive swamps on both sides of the river. Nevertheless, one morning a Russian battalion appeared in the rear of Dubno...Interrogation of captured Soviets revealed that during the night they had crawled on their bellies across the slightly frozen marsh, which was up to 600 yards wide and could not be crossed on foot. [Ref. 62: p. 83]

Even once the Germans began to better comprehend the capabilities of the Soviets in this area, there was still some things the Wehrmacht had little power to stop. One of these was the night operations the Russians conducted with such great success. This success was primarily attributed by the Germans to the Russian's knowledge of the land and not any tactical prowess.

In March of 1942, the 269th German Infantry Division was about fifty miles south of Leningrad and was being subjected to heavy Russian infiltration:

One morning at daybreak Markayevskaya, a village located about two miles behind the front along the only communications route, was suddenly attacked by approximately 600 Russians coming from the rear...

The presence of the Russian force had not been observed by any component of the German division, but it was assumed that the enemy battalion had effected a night crossing of the Markayevskaya swamp, considered impassable at the time. Thus, there was a combination of elements, such as the cover of darkness, infiltration tactics, and difficult terrain, which the Russians exploited time and time again. [Ref. 81: p. 24]

There were also accounts of Russian soldiers laying in deep snow for hours (up to ten), without being able to raise their heads or move their bodies, lest they give away their hiding places. They would do this to either be able to



surprise and kill an unsuspecting German passing by their position or to be in position for an attack. [Ref. 32: p. 31]

Examples such as these, and the hardships endured by the Soviet fighting man involved in missions such as the construction of "corduroy roads"\* and wooden bridges in icy rivers\*\* seem to leave little doubt about his ability to fight under extremely adverse conditions and endure hardship beyond what the Germans determined to be reasonable.

The results of this quality of the Soviet fighting man can be seen as twofold: (1) As a positive asset for the Soviet High Command which allowed them latitude in their tactics which they would not have otherwise had, and (2) a negative factor that detracted from the success of the usually well conceived plans of the Wehrmacht.

It does not seem difficult to conclude that this quality of a strong constitution, minimal needs and his ability to exploit his surroundings of the Soviet fighting man was a valuable asset to the Soviet Union and that it probably played a key role in the country's survival of the first year of the war.

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\* Roads constructed to allow semi-frozen swamps to be crossed, by falling trees in the swamp and then dragging them into place manually.

\*\* The bridges were constructed about two feet under water so as to avoid their being observed and destroyed from the air by the Germans.



Up to this point in this chapter the qualities of the Soviet fighting man that have been addressed (ability to learn, initiative, value of life, and physical strengths) all answer the question of how did the Soviet accomplish what he did. The following section, however, will address the why of the Soviet's actions, specifically, what were the Soviet's motivations that enabled him to accomplish those combat actions that seem beyond the norm.

#### E. MOTIVATIONS TO FIGHT

From the examples provided in the first four sections of this chapter, it is not difficult to deduce that there must have been one or more very compelling factors that acted in consonance with the previously addressed qualities of the Soviet fighting man, that spurred him to perform in combat the way he did. Although it is clear that the Soviet in World War II combat displayed several qualities that the Germans observed as being out of the ordinary and which very positively contributed to the accomplishment of the goals of the Soviet High Command, the zeal with which these qualities were applied indicates that the success of their operations rested in something beyond the quality itself. Although the qualities of the Soviet fighting man that have been previously addressed have for the most part been described as "innate" in the Soviet by the Germans, it should be made clear that these are generalizations which carry





with them all the plusses and minuses associated with any generalization, and that these tendencies are not present in every Soviet in exactly the same amount. None-the-less the performance of the Soviet fighting man in combat showed far more consistency with regard to these qualities than might reasonably be expected. What was it, then, that stimulated the Soviet combatant to partake in feats of such extraordinary caliber as the one previously enumerated? Ones that continually surprised and impressed the Wehrmacht. The answer from the German manuscripts clearly seems to be that he was highly motivated.

There were many things that the Germans saw as the motivating factors behind the actions of the Soviet fighting man. There was his: (1) love for "Mother Russia", which was presented as perhaps the most basic underlying motivation by the Germans, [Ref. 47: p. 64] (2) hate for the Germans, which was fanned by both German atrocities, and Soviet propaganda, [Ref. 62: pp. 90,91] (3) fear of being captured by the Germans, which was based not only in the fear of what the Germans would do to him as a P.O.W., but also that he would be regarded as a traitor by Soviet officials if he was ever able to return to the U.S.S.R., [Ref. 6: p. 14] and finally (4) fear of the punishment for failure to obey his orders or for retreating. [Ref. 72: p. 16]

Although the manuscripts present these four reasons as being mutually supportive, the two motivators to which the



Germans devoted the greatest amount of attention and attribute the greatest effect, was the Soviet fighting man's love of country and his fear of the consequences of his failure to obey or retreat. The observations of the Germans on the topic of the Soviet's fighting for his homeland can be seen in the following:

He is not an active Communist, not a political zealot. But he is - and here we already note a decisive change (from World War I) - a conscious Russian...who fights only in rare cases for any political ideals, but always for his fatherland. [Ref. 26: p. 9]

Also:

The motive of fear may have been the final resort in difficult situations, but basically the Russian had no less national - as distinguished from political - patriotism than the soldiers of western armies, and with it comes the same source of strength. Unceasing propaganda has burned nationalism into his soul. And however impervious he may be to foreign propaganda, he nevertheless has been unable to escape the engulfing waves of his own. [Ref. 62: p. 13]

In Section B of this chapter the role of the "Company Commissar" as the administrator of punishment was addressed. By the end of 1942, however, under the direct orders of Marshal Timoshenko, the system was discontinued, at least in its formal sense.\* Since most all of the commissars had considerable practical combat experience, they were commissioned as officers in the Soviet Army and continued

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\* Marshal Timoshenko's reasoning for the discontinuance of the commissar system lay in the fact that he felt the commissars were overstepping their bounds by demanding to counter-sign all tactical orders. It had nothing to do with their treatment of the troops.



their role, but now as officers. The importance attributed to the motivational role of the commissar by the Germans can be seen in the following quote:

I feel convinced that it was the commissar who held together and rescued the Russian Army after its numerous defeats and reverses in 1941, or that he at least played a decisive role.

The commissar exerted an extremely powerful influence on the behavior of the soldiers in combat. In defensive operations the commissar was right back of the lines, and shot everyone who turned back. Even commanders who gave orders to retreat were shot down. He also saw to it that the soldiers in the trenches were always ready for action. Whenever we were able to take the Russian positions with less than the usual effort and made an unusual number of prisoners, we could generally take for granted that the commissar had been either killed or evacuated after being wounded. [Ref. 72: p. 16]

For the most part, the commissar was viewed as a political fanatic, who held the Soviet Army machine in his tight grip, and was a cause for concern for any who did not mirror, at least in a token sense, his zeal.

The Germans have reported numerous examples of battles, such as Posyolok Taytsy, Brest-Ltvosk, Stalingrad, Moscow, and Luga, where in their opinion it was the direct influence of the commissar that provided the impetus for the Russian soldiers to act as bravely as they did, as in the following:

In September, 1941, long after the castle of Posyolok Taytsy [south of Leningrad] had been taken, and strong German troops units had been drawn up in the castle park, German tanks passing near the park wall with open hatches drew single rounds rifle fire from close range. The shots were aimed at the unprotected tank commanders who were looking out of the turrets. Not until three Germans had been killed by bullets through the head did the passing tank unit realize that the shots were coming from a narrow trench close under the park wall 10 yards



away. The tanks then returned the fire, whereupon all 13 occupants of the trench met death. They were the officers of a Russian regimental headquarters, grouped about their commissar who fell with his rifle cocked and aimed. [Ref. 62: p. 15]

While it is true that the vast majority of the observations made by the Germans about the Russian commissar address incidents involving fear and death, such as the example of the commissar shooting the tank company commander noted in section B of this chapter, it is important to note that fear was not the only motivational tool the commissar made use of. The manuscripts indicate that he had a sound understanding of what made up the "soul" of the Soviet fighting man. He understood their strengths and weaknesses, and knew to use those strengths and weaknesses to their best advantage. The previous section discussed the lack of formal support provided the Soviet combatant. The following quote demonstrates how the commissar attempted to gain the confidence of his troops by his care for their well being and his own personal example:

The attitude of the common man toward the commissar was conditioned not only by fear of his power, but also by his personal exemplification of the soldier and fighter. His concern for the welfare of the troops also determined to a large extent his relationship with the men... [Ref. 23: p. 14]

As the war progressed, more and more of the Soviet officers became aware of the methods of the commissar to motivate the troops (fear or otherwise) and applied them with considerable success. [Ref. 72: p. 14] German manuscripts





noted that as the officers gained combat experience, developed proficiency as leaders, and discarded the equalizing attitude of the Bolshevist ideology which was undermining discipline, he was better able to assume the role previously occupied by the commissar. [Ref. 70: p. 14] This also meant that, he was then better able to motivate the Soviet fighting man, to obtain from him in combat the optimal application of his skills and abilities.

Motivation then might be seen as the quality of the Soviet fighting man in World War II that brought together all his other qualities and that made him as valuable fighting force to the Soviet High Command as he was. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that the Soviet High Command was aware of the fact that their troops could be controlled and directed so as to make the best use of the skills and abilities that resulted from the qualities already discussed in this chapter. Further, it is apparent that they were most interested in the expulsion of the Germans from the Soviet Union, and were only interested that the Soviet Army could accomplish this mission, not the means by which they were motivated to do this. If fear of death at the hands of another Soviet was necessary to spur the Soviet fighting man on, especially into the face of certain death from the Germans, when love of country or the protection of loved ones was



insufficient, then that was what was to be done.\* As mentioned before, the High Command's knowledge of the ability to compel their men to accomplish the feats that so frequently surprised the Wehrmacht, certainly must have provided the High Command with some latitude of tactical choice that they otherwise would not have had. Early on in the war, this may very well have been one of the very few assets that they had to fall back on.

#### F. CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages of this chapter numerous examples of the performance of the Soviet fighting man in combat in World War II have been presented. In their manuscripts, the Germans addressed at least five general qualities of the Soviet that they observed during the war, with the most significant of those qualities being the topic of this chapter. The relation between the combat performance of the Soviet and his qualities which were examined in this chapter seems clear, although admittedly difficult to quantify. There seems to be little doubt that these qualities had a definite effect on his performance in combat, but due to the extreme complexities that emanate from the very nature of war it is not possible to evaluate precisely how much these

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\* Motivation of this type may perhaps not appear quite so harsh to the modern reader if one recalls the methods utilized to maintain discipline and motivation in the British Military, particularly the Royal Navy, before World War I.



qualities effected his performance. This, however, should not be seen as detracting from the value of this information, especially since even the Soviets view war as not just a science, but also an art. There are some segments of a war or combat situation that just are not quantifiable, such as the motivations or resolve of the combatants, which time after time throughout history have been viewed by many as key factors in the victory of "underdog." Nonetheless, these segments should not be ignored by a military commander because they are too difficult or nebulous to deal with.

In the specific case of the Soviet fighting man in World War II, there seems to have been five most significant qualities that the German writers focused upon, with all five being somewhat mutually supportive. German manuscripts indicate that these qualities made a meaningful contribution to the Soviets' ability to delay Germany's eastern advance. Had the Soviet fighting man not had the constitution to endure extreme hardship and still be a viable force, or the ability to support himself and exploit the land or his attitude toward the value of life, it could be questioned whether or not the Soviet Union would ever have been able to deter the Wehrmacht long enough for the momentum of the war to shift in favor of the U.S.S.R. These basic qualities of the Soviet fighting man accomplished this by assisting in providing the Soviets with time to organize their offensive against the Wehrmacht, for the Soviet Army to proceed with



the reorganization it started in 1939 and for the Soviet conscript and High Command to gain combat experience and improve their combat performance.

The motivations of the Soviet fighting man also contributed to the Soviet Union's ability to stop the Germans. Whether it was his love of country, or of family, or hate for the Germans, or his fear of punishment for failure, the German writings certainly portrayed the Soviet as being "inspired" to accomplish his assigned mission. To the extent that these qualities were "innate", it might then be determined that these qualities, or some more modern version of them may still apply to the Soviet combatant, at least as the untrained recruit. While it is true that over forty years have passed since the beginning of World War II and that there have certainly been societal changes in the U.S.S.R., it might also be noted that because of the closed nature of the society and the lack of mobility of the general population of the country, there may have been fewer societal changes in the Soviet Union than many other nations have experienced during the same time frame.

The point of this is simply that there seems to be no reason to believe that the Soviet has completely changed and that these qualities can no longer be seen in the Soviet military man or the traditions which he emulates. Further, even if these qualities were suspected to no longer be present in the Soviet fighting man today, knowledge of them





would still be of value since they were the qualities the Soviet displayed the last time he fought in major combat. It would stand to reason, especially in light of the emphasis the Soviet military puts on the value of the combat lessons of World War II, that the Soviets [perhaps even with the help of some Wehrmacht Officers] would have been able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses that they displayed during the war, and attempt to capitalize on the former and minimize the latter. [Ref. 73: p. 29]

The following chapter will address the qualities that the Soviet Officers Library series and the Voyenno Morskoy Flot senior officers say in Morskoy Sbornik (the Soviet Naval Digest) are important for the Soviet Naval Officer of today to have to be victorious in combat. These qualities then can be combined with the qualities enumerated in this chapter to provide a better perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Navy so as to allow for a better intelligence estimate of their capabilities in combat.



III. THE QUALITIES DESIRED IN THE SOVIET  
NAVAL OFFICER TODAY

Victory in contemporary warfare will be won only by an Armed Forces consisting of physically fit and hardy personnel who are utterly devoted to the Party and the Soviet people, who are disciplined, and who possess a high degree of general and specialized training.

S.G. Gorshkov  
CinC Navy  
Sea Power of the State

The main task of [Soviet] naval educational institutions is to train ideologically convinced, highly qualified officer cadres who are imbued in a spirit of Communist awareness, who have deep theoretical knowledge and practical skills in their speciality, who are capable of training their subordinates skillfully, and who can operate equipment with technical competence, organize combat actions properly, exercise firm direction of subordinates in a difficult situation, and successfully employ modern ordnance and combat equipment.

V. Mikhaylin  
Deputy CinC Navy  
Morskoy Sbornik

These quotes from two of the most influential officers in the Soviet Navy very clearly and succinctly articulate the most important qualities that the leaders of the Voyenno Morskoy Flot expect from their officers.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a marked increase in the emphasis Soviet military writing has placed on the role of the Soviet Naval Officer in future combat and the qualities that officers would need to possess in order to be victorious in combat. It is the purpose of this



chapter to enumerate and examine the qualities that two sources in Soviet military literature, the Soviet Officer's Library series and Morskoy Sbornik, address as those qualities most necessary for that combat victory in the future. In the concluding chapter of this paper, these qualities will be combined with the Soviet combat qualities that were observed in World War II by the German military, in order to provide a compilation of Soviet combat qualities, both observed and desired, that will assist in providing of an estimate of what the Soviet Naval officer's strengths and weaknesses in future combat might be.

In December of 1964, Voyenizdat, the publishing house for the Soviet Ministry of Defense, announced that a series of books entitled the Officer's Library was forthcoming. A total of seventeen books were issued in this series, with the first appearing in 1965 and the last in 1980. This series, which was first published in Moscow, was translated into English and republished in the United States under the auspices of the U.S. Air Force. All seventeen of these volumes either directly enumerate the qualities the Soviet military leaders desire in their officers or their antithesis. They also discuss in depth, topics considered to be essential to the performance of Soviet military officers. Since the books in the Officer's Library are designed to provide information for all Soviet military officers, for the purposes of this thesis, they will be used to provide information on those general



qualities that the Soviets see as being necessary for all their officers.

Various Soviet journals also regularly deal with the qualities necessary for the Soviet officer today. The one that specifically addresses the qualities most necessary for the Soviet naval officer is Morskoy Sbornik, the Soviet Naval Digest. Also published in Moscow by the Soviet Ministry of Defense and translated by the U.S. Naval Intelligence Command, Morskoy Sbornik is the modern continuation of a professional improvement of Soviet naval officers. The works included in this digest are chosen by an editorial staff from the articles submitted by Soviet naval officers. Although being written by a senior officer is not a formal prerequisite for an article's inclusion, the author of the greatest number of articles between 1979 and 1980 was Admiral of the Fleet Gorshkov, and over eighty percent of the fifty two articles written explicitly on the qualities desired in the Soviet naval officer in Morskoy Sbornik between 1976 and 1980 were written by Soviet Navy captains (first Rank) or flag officers.

The specific qualities addressed in the Officer's Library or Morskoy Sbornik as being the ones necessary for the Soviet naval officer today are the ones that Soviet military leaders and VMF senior officers view as the ones that will allow him to perform (ultimately in combat) in a way that will satisfy the requirements of the Soviet Government and the VMF.

Although neither the Officer's Library nor Morskoy Sbornik





ever make a statement in precisely these terms, evidence indicates that the senior VMF officers are desirous of having officers that are well trained professionals who are capable of performance that the VMF and the Soviet government can have confidence in, especially in situations when guidance from their seniors is not available.

There are three basic reasons that contribute to this desire: (1) the VMF's changing role in the Soviet military and Soviet foreign policy, (2) the problems that have in the past been associated with the decreased ability of the VMF to control their ships at sea as closely as they would like to, and (3) the high expense of the modern Soviet Navy.

Because of the increased emphasis the Soviets have placed on the role of ballistic missile submarines, the need to be able to quickly deploy troops and equipment to remote areas of the globe, and the desire to have a vehicle of non-hostile power projection, the Soviet Navy has found itself in a situation where their ships are spending a greater amount of time away from home port than almost ever before. In recognizing that the very nature of war has changed and that one should be prepared to fight the conflict only with the assets that are already in place, the Soviets have also recognized the fact that their commanders must be ready to act independently if a conflict starts unexpectedly. Further, as the role of the Soviet Navy expands into the quazi-diplomatic realm which is encountered more frequently with the increased



number of foreign port visits, the VMF sees a need for their officers to always be ready to act in the best interest of the Soviet Union and project a positive image. [Ref. 101: p. 2] Whether in wartime or peacetime, however, the vulnerability to failure or disruption of any communication system, which links the ship's commanding officer to the guidance of his senior, seems to be a prime factor in the VMF's desire for a professional naval officer who can act independently. As the pace of naval action increases, the Soviet naval officer is also no longer guaranteed the ability to consult with his seniors about his desired course of action, and therefore has a greater share of the burden for timely and accurate decision making placed upon him. [Ref. 102: p. 1]

Another factor that contributes to the VMF's desire for well trained professional naval officers is the fact that in the past the performance of some of their officers, who have been left to make their own decisions, has not always been completely satisfactory. [Ref. 120: p. 56] While Morskoy Sbornik by no means indicates that the VMF is totally dissatisfied with their officer's performance, the tone of the articles seems to strongly point to their desire to see improved performance.

The final factor that contributes to the VMF's desire for a trained professional naval officer, capable of independent action in the best interest of the service, is the increased cost of a modern navy. With the primary goal of



the VMF being combat readiness, and training being the primary method of accomplishing readiness, the senior officers of the VMF make it perfectly clear in their writing that it is an absolute must to get the greatest amount of training possible from every minute of underway time. [Ref. 105: p. 15] They continue by saying that the only way this can be accomplished is through careful prior planning. These three reasons then are the basis for why the VMF senior officers see a need for their officers to be well trained professionals, and training as the method that will be used for their officers to become professionals who have attained a level of readiness that will provide for victory in combat. What then are the precise qualities that the VMF senior officers say will provide them with the officer that they desire? There were twenty-nine discussed in Morskoy Sbornik.\*

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\* The qualities that are addressed in Morskoy Sbornik as being the ones that senior VMF officers desire in their officers are: (1) commands respect, (2) good C.P.S.U. member, (3) constant, (4) sound decision-maker, (5) self-disciplined, (6) supreme exacting, (7) good example, (8) honest, (10) initiative (within bounds), (11) modest, (12) maintains good order and discipline, (13) historian, (14) motivates through Marxist-Leninist military psychological principles, (15) motivated by the C.P.S.U. and Marxist-Leninist Doctrine, (16) adheres to Navy Regulations, (17) polite, (18) good physical condition, (19) ready for combat, (20) self-reliant, (21) good shiphandler, (22) technically specialized, (23) good tactician, (24) technically proficient, (25) well trained, (26) sincere, (27) strong willed, (28) willing to do whatever is necessary to be victorious in combat, and (29) a good instructor.



Essentially, they can all be grouped into two categories: (1) technical qualities, and (2) personal qualities. The first group, technical qualities, deals with the need for the Soviet naval officer to have a high degree of proficiency in areas such as seamanship, engineering, weapons, computer operational and repair, damage control, etc. The second group, personal qualities, deals with the need for the Soviet Naval Officer to possess qualities such as being a good C.P.S.U. member, a sound decision maker, well disciplined, able to maintain order, able to take independent action, etc. While, both groups are shown as being absolutely necessary, the second group is viewed by the senior VMF officers as the qualities that will allow for prudent and appropriate application of the officer's technical knowledge, readiness and ultimately, victory in combat. [Ref. 101: p. 4]

The remainder of this paper will address the primary qualities that are viewed by the senior VMF officers as the ones necessary for their officers today that will allow them to perform (ultimately in combat) in a manner that satisfies both the VMF and the Soviet government. These qualities can then be combined with the qualities observed of the Soviet in combat in World War II so as to assist in providing an estimate of what the Soviet naval officer's strengths and weaknesses in future combat might be.





## A. TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY

The emphasis placed on the need for excellence in technical areas by the VMF cannot be over stressed. In his Morskoy Sbornik article, "Ocean Watches", the Soviet CinC Navy, Adm. Gorshkov writes:

...the potential contained in our equipment can be realized fully only with a high degree of special preparedness by the entire ship's company. It is impossible to be satisfied now by a mediocre level of training... Each [navyman] must have a detailed firm, knowledge... at the outstanding or good level...This means an absolute and even pedantic observance of all demands of instructors and manuals. [Ref. 101: p. 5]

This degree of accentuation on the need for technical excellence seems to permeate the Soviet writing on this topic and is frequently mentioned as being absolutely necessary if the level of combat readiness that the VMF has for its goal is to be attained. [Ref. 8: p. 21]

Morskoy Sbornik and the Officer's Library address technical excellence in basically two ways: (1) by providing specific examples of how to be technically proficient, and (2) as a quality that is generally necessary for the professional Soviet naval officer.

With regard to articles providing information on specific technical areas, Morskoy Sbornik far more than the Officer's Library addresses areas such as seamanship, engineering weapons, computer operation and repair, damage, etc. There are frequent, brief rules of the road quizzes and essays addressing the need for the Soviet naval officer to be a



proficient shiphandler. In this area, Adm. Gorshkov has been fairly critical of some number of his C.O.'s, saying that they are careless in the way they allow watches to be stood and the ship to be maneuvered, and that more attention should be paid to improvement in the area of seamanship. [Ref. 102: p. 4]

Also in this vein and directly coupled with readiness, for combat the CinC Navy declares in several of his writings that it is absolutely essential to maintain the VMF's equipment and weapons in good working order. He emphasizes that a good deal of their equipment is old and should be cared for as such. [Ref. 106: p. 6] To this, Captain 2nd Rank-Engineer Y. Andrusenko adds:

Experience shows that breakage and malfunction are not necessarily the consequences of clear-cut, gross, violations of the rules for operating technology and ordnance. Even minor departures from the requirements of operating manuals or inattention, or carelessness, in the discharge of duty responsibilities can become the cause of malfunctions.

For instance, aboard one of our submarines, some young ratings preparing to start a diesel to scavenge balast after surfacing, failed to pay attention to some fine droplets of sea water which appeared out of the indicator valve of one of the diesel's cylinders. Their failure to follow operating instructions punctually and their unwarranted haste became the cause of a water hammer in that cylinder, and the engine had to be repaired.

Statistics show that malfunctions are less often due to material defects than to lack of preparedness on the part of some specialist. [Ref. 88: p. 56]

The remainder of Captain Andrusenko's article showed his solutions for these problems to be simple and straight forward.



Officers should know their equipment, ensure instructions are followed, and make sure that the required periodic maintenance is accomplished. In this area, as in all others, if one follows the guidance and the regulations of the VMF, he will be well on his way to acquiring the level of proficiency in these technical areas that the VMF requires.

One area that both Morskoy Sbornik and the Officer's Library describes as being very important for the Soviet naval officer to be technically expert in is computer operation. [Ref. 21: p. 6, Ref. 4] The reason for the emphasis in this area is due to their view of man's inability to mentally keep up with the innumerable factors and the increased pace of modern war without the assistance of some sort of a computerized decision-making aid. This topic of man-machine interface will be discussed later in this chapter, but let it suffice for now to say that the VMF's position is that it is absolutely necessary for the officers of the VMF to be proficient in computer operation. [Ref. 103: p. 7] This seems to be primarily due to the fact that without this ability the computer is of no value to the officer. This, in fact, might be said to be the basis for the VMF's desire for their officer's to be proficient in all technical areas. Without the technical ability to operate their weapons, the weapons become virtually useless.

The reasons why the VMF has such great concern for their officers becoming technically accomplished is the topic of



the second type of article in Morskoy Sbornik on technical proficiency, which deals with its general importance. It is interesting to note that the most direct and succinct explanation of this importance is provided by Adm. Gorshkov in one phrase, "...man is...the ruler of all the weapons of warfare." From these ten words it seems quite clear that the Soviet CinC's position is, no matter how sophisticated modern weapons become, it is man and man alone who decides when and how to use them. Without precise and operable knowledge of how to utilize the weapons of war, they cannot be employed in the most effective manner possible, thereby degrading the readiness of the Voyenno Morskoy Flot.

Another area that the CinC Navy addresses as an important reason for technical excellence is simply the ability to survive at sea:

The long deployments of many months have become a daily and very responsible matter for Soviet navymen. There the personnel undergo the severest test of their expertise and of their readiness and capability to win victory over a strong well-trained enemy in modern warfare. The ocean is the most demanding and objective examiner in this respect. It is unforgiving of the slightest defect in both the personnel's state of training and the preparation of the ship, ordnance and equipment for deployment. [Ref. 101: p. 3]

However, Soviet writings indicate that becoming technically expert in the employment of Soviet weaponry is only one of the qualities that are necessary for the Soviet naval officer to be victorious in combat. The ability to determine correctly when and how to employ his weapons is equally important.





Without being accomplished in the two complimentary areas of weapons technical expertise and the personal qualities necessary to be able to utilize those weapons in the best interest of the U.S.S.R., Soviet writings say that the Soviet naval officer will not be able to meet the needs of the VMF and the Soviet Union in future combat. [Ref. 100: p. 2]

With respect to his technical knowledge and ability and his performance in future combat, the following may be concluded: If the VMF is successful in the accomplishment of their goal of its officers being technically expert in areas such as weapons, engineering, damage control, seamanship, computers, etc., then the ability of the VMF officer in these areas is not to be taken lightly. The educational and training programs of the VMF are certainly fully directed toward this end. However, the fact that the VMF's equipment is becoming more sophisticated at a rate which exceeds the required adjustments in the VMF's educational programs, [Ref. 143] suggests that the goal of technical expertise may not be met at present in all areas. Unfortunately there is insufficient evidence to project whether this trend will continue into the future.

The remainder of this chapter will enumerate and explain the five major personal qualities (a good C.P.S.U. member, a sound decision maker, well disciplined, able to maintain order, and able to take independent action) that the senior VMF officers most frequently espouse as the ones they want their



officers to have, and that will give the Soviet Navy the ability to overcome the threat from the western combat.

B. A GOOD C.P.S.U. MEMBER

When conducting a review and enumeration of all the qualities that the VMF desires in their officers, it is not surprising to observe that being a good Communist party\* member and belief in Marxist-Leninist doctrine are stated to be not only the most important qualities for the Soviet naval officer to have, but also the basis for all his other desired qualities. In July of 1980, Rear Admiral E. Zimin wrote in his Morskoj Sbornik article, "The Commander's Lofty Duty":

Ideological conviction and party principle can be said to bind together all of the qualities of a good officer into a single whole unit. They serve as their foundation, as the compass by which deeds and actions are measured, against which each practical step is tested.

An officer's party conviction is based on a knowledge of the policies of our party, the objective laws of social development, and Marxist-Leninist science. This science makes it possible to orient one's self correctly in events, to learn the laws and patterns of the occurrence and development of wars and all the changes that are taking place in military affairs, to make sober judgments about the progress of work in the unit or on ship, and to seek constantly for ways to improve them further.

It is perfectly obvious that one of the basic indicators of general officer development is their knowledge of the classic works of Marxism-Leninism and the most important documents of the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet Government. All necessary conditions have been

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\* Over ninety percent of all the officers in the Soviet Navy are either, members or candidate members of the C.P.S.U. [Ref. 10, p. 343] This is compared with about ten percent of the general population. [Ref. 16. p. 51]



established today for the theoretical training and ideological conditioning of command cadres. No matter where a ship may be, at base or at sea, the officers are constantly improving their knowledge within the system of Marxist-Leninist training. Many of them have graduated from or are studying in universities of Marxism-Leninism. Cycles of lectures are given regularly, especially for commanders. Seminars are held for them, and speeches by progressive leaders are frequently organized for exchange of know-how...

But these large scale, so to speak, measures cannot in any way substitute for individual work, which only produces the desired results if it is carried on systematically and consistently. [Ref. 141: p. 21]

This then appears to be at the heart of the matter.

Without a firm belief in Marxism-Leninism, and the objective laws of social development which it purports, all progress with respect to the development of the other desired qualities of the Soviet naval officer will be retarded. The [Soviet] Officer's Handbook\* goes into this topic in great length and detail. By use of extensive quotes from Lenin and the writings of the C.P.S.U., the authors substantiate the Party's contention that by virtue of the principles of Communism, the Party should have complete control of all Soviet military, and be the guiding force in their training and operation as seen in the following: [Ref. 11: ch. 2]

The Party proceeds on the basis that while imperialism continues to exist, the dangers of wars of aggression will remain. The C.P.S.U. considers the defence of the socialist Fatherland...and the might of the Soviet Armed Forces as the sacred duty of the Party and the entire Soviet People and the most important function of the socialist state. [Ref. 11: p. 16]

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\* Volume #13 of the Officer's Library Series, Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1971.



The leading role of the Communist Party in a socialist society also presupposes the necessity of leadership of the Armed Forces. They are the same flesh as our people and state, it's armed bulwark. V.I. Lenin demanded the indivisible Party leadership of the entire life and activities of the Armed Forces. [Ref. 11: p. 14]

The basic principle of military development - undivided Communist Party leadership of the entire life and activities of the Armed Forces - was established on the basis of congress resolutions on the military question. In this connection the congress outlined for the strengthening of Party leadership of the military, the improvement of Party-political work in the forces, the training of the officer cadres of proletarian origin, and the strict application of the class principle in the development of the army. [Ref. 11: p. 17]

All educational work with Armed Forces personnel is based on a profound study of Lenin's theoretical legacy, the resolutions of Party congresses, and plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U...[Ref. 11: p. 31]

After establishing the all encompassing role of the C.P.S.U. in Soviet Military affairs, the Officer's Handbook goes on to specifically enumerate how Marxist-Leninist principles are the basis for the Soviet theory of war and the Soviet military's training and education system. [Ref. 11: chs. 3,4] These principles are addressed in great detail in several of the volumes of the Officer's Library series, but most particularly in Marxism-Leninism on War and Army, Military Pedagogy and Military Psychology.

The emphasis the VMF places on the value of Marxist-Leninist doctrine in the attainment of their combat readiness goals can be seen in the unique position that the Political Affairs Officer maintains in his unit. While it is certainly true that the commanding officer of a Soviet naval vessel is





in total command of his ship, the fact that the P.A.O. is not subordinate to the ship's C.O. by virtue of a separate chain of command indicates the freedom of action to perform his duties that the VMF wishes the P.A.O. to have. While he has a minimal role in the formation of operational decisions, he does play an integral part in the Soviet navy's combat readiness by being responsible for the conduct of the Marxist-Leninist intra and intra-ship competition that permeates VMF training.

From the evidence in both the Officer's Library series and Morskoy Sbornik it is quite clear that it is the Soviet intention for Marxist-Leninist doctrine and the C.P.S.U. to permeate all phases of VMF activity, and that without this reliance on Marxist-Leninist doctrine the Soviet Navy will be unable to accomplish its goal of combat readiness. This then would lead to the conclusion that the philosophy of Marx and Lenin, and the interpretation of their philosophy by the C.P.S.U. would certainly have an effect on the actions of the VMF officer in future combat. Even if it was assumed that some degree of "lip service" was being paid to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the fact that the Soviet naval officer is constantly surrounded by references to that doctrine it would almost have to have at least shaped his views on war fighting and the nature of war. This then would lead one to the need to understand Marx-Leninist ideology and the need to analyze the VMF officers's actions in terms of that ideology if we are to understand his actions.



C. A SOUND DECISION MAKER AND ABLE TO TAKE INITIATIVE

With the advent of the age of the Soviet Fleet making more frequent deployments of increased duration, the need for the Soviet naval officer to be able to take sound independent action becomes perhaps more important than ever before to the VMF. In his Morskoy Sbornik article, "Problems with Respect to Control of Naval Forces," Admiral Gorshkov writes:

The fighting qualities of a navy depend to a large extent on the development and the inculcation of new strategic, operational, tactical, and organizational methods for conducting naval operations. This is one of the chief tasks of naval art. Paramount among them is improving the methods for directing the navy. Modern-day operations will be distinguished by the large spatial scope, accelerated tempo, and sharp variations in the situation during combat operations on the seas and oceans. As a result this will lead to the shortening of the time for decision-making by C.O.'s and officers-in-charge at all levels and to the increasing the demand for teamwork...[Ref. 102: p. 1]

Further in this article he indicates that the VMF sees the most effective decisions in combat being made by well trained, confident officers who are supported by computerized decision-making aids:

Essentially new quality in decision-making today can be achieved only by the use of automated control systems. The revolutionary impact of introducing automated control systems which have the indispensable S.C.S. [special control software/spetsial'noye matematicheskoye obespecheniye upravleniya] is manifested not only in increased efficiency but chiefly in creating the possibility of reinforcing the intellect of C.O.'s at all levels while commanding under every day conditions and especially during combat operations...An analysis of the evolution reveals that under present day conditions the importance of the control system is sharply increased.



The primary purpose of the automated control system is ultimately to assist the C.O. in making the most expedient decision to assure the maximum utilization of the potential resources of the forces, and the implementation of that decision. [Ref. 102: pp. 7,9]

This leads to the conclusion, which is well supported by numerous other articles in Morskoy Sbornik and volume number six of the Officer's Library, Concept, Algorithm, and Decision, that there is a dual nature to the VMF officer's decision-making in combat. He must possess not only the qualities that are traditionally associated with sound decision-making, but also the ability to utilize automated decision-making aids.

Concept, Algorithm, and Decision is over three hundred pages of the Soviet view of decision-making with particular emphasis on man-machine interface. It asserts that the "revolution in military affairs" is currently in its third phase and that having acquired nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them, the current phase is concerned with "military cybernetics", the science of effectively controlling the armed forces. [Ref. 5: p. v]

The motivating thesis of this book is the dramatic increases in the speed, complexity, and data base of military decisions, plus the multiplication of the variety and flexibility of available options, which called for urgent improvements in the decision-making tools for the control of men and weapons. Its stated goal is to "contribute...to the development of the theory and technique of decision-making,"



with a particular reference to the problems of automating the control and management of military operations. It attempts to integrate ideas from Soviet philosophy, psychology, social science, mathematics, and linguistics into the technical and theoretical armory of the military commander and his staff. While doing this, however, it is most important about the position that the officer will always make the final decision and that the machine is only a tool to help him assess all the variables and options in the decision making process.

[Ref. 5: p. v]

Emphasizing the VMF's interest in the topic of man-machine interface Admiral Gorshkov wrote a second part to his article, "Problems with Respect to Control of Naval Forces," which was printed in the June 1980 Morskoy Sbornik. In that article he wrote:

Control effectiveness depends essentially on the completeness and the accuracy of the analysis, on the one hand, and on the maximum correctness (exactitude) of the synthesis of information on the other.

In working up decisions the officer needs to reveal possible alternatives, that is to say different ways to achieve objectives...and must be ready to use new methodology: computer technology, operations specialists, algorithmization, and programming.

The officer must make the decision personally, but must make good use of his staff.

The C.O.'s decision, as is well-known, forms the basis for control of forces. [Ref. 103: p. 6,7]

From these cites it can be noted how clearly the point is made that it will be the officer who makes the final





decision in any given situation, not the automated decision-making aid. This seems to be a fairly strong endorsement on the part of the VMF of its confidence in the ability and experience of the majority of its officers. This, however, should not be misconstrued to mean that the VMF is satisfied with the present level of performance of its officers, because through Morskoy Sbornik it continually presents what it expects from its officers with respect to the qualities needed to make sound decisions, particularly in combat. For example, Morskoy Sbornik addresses the VMF officer's need to have the ability to make a decision without all the information necessary [Ref. 141: p. 20], the ability to make quick decisions when necessary [Ref. 121: p. 30], the ability to realize that there is always some element of chance in any decision, and to plan and try to minimize the chance [Ref. 115, p. 11], and the ability to remember that there may come a time when he will be the sole representative of the U.S.S.R. in a given situation and that he must be prepared to do so intelligently [Ref. 141, p. 19].

Morskoy Sbornik also presents numerous articles by senior VMF officers making observations on what they think are qualities necessary for Soviet naval officers to have in order to make sound combat decisions, as in the following examples. Admiral Gorshkov noted that the VMF officer must "possess a high degree of general and specialized training" [Ref. 7], "plan ahead and know his men," "be a superior tactician," and



know "not only his own ship, weapons, equipment, and tactics, but also those of his enemies." [Ref. 100, pp. 3,5] Admiral V. Chenervin, CinC of the Northern Fleet, states that the VMF officer must be "learning what is essential in war," [Ref. 93, p. 1] while Admiral N. Khovrin, CinC of the Black Sea Fleet observes that he must always "be precise and realistic," "know his assets and his limits," "not cover up his mistakes," and "bold and original in his planning." [Ref. 108: p. 62] Finally, Deputy CinC of the Soviet Navy, Admiral V. Mikhaylin considers it important for VMF officers to be good historians to be able to make sound combat decisions:

It is very important to study military history more specifically, placing basic stress on an analysis of battles and operations, and conclusions drawn from them which allow for finding analogs for the present day. One must study the experience of combat operations in a precise, logical sequence: how the situation required one to act; what combinations were advantageous; which techniques for employing forces and ordnance were most effective; what mistakes were made and why, and how they influenced success; what role was played by the C.O.'s personal qualities in combat, and others. [Ref. 117: p. 37]

These observations seem to provide, especially in light of the positions their authors hold in the VMF, a reasonable indication of what it is that the Soviet Navy expects from its officers with regard to decision making. There appears to be, however, another quality that acts in concert with sound decision-making, that the VMF also addresses through Morskoy Sbornik with some amount of vigor. That is the



quality of initiative. In July 1979 Admiral Gorshkov's article, "The Navy's Ocean Watches," appeared in Morskoy Sbornik. In it he said the following about the C.O.'s of Soviet Naval vessels and initiative:

The extensive scope of deployments is the most typical feature of today's Navy. The long deployments of many months have become a daily and very responsible matter for Soviet navymen...The lengthy, distant ocean deployments predetermined the need to resolve a large number of problems in a completely different manner; problems which were not acute previously, when deployments were of short duration, and limited to coastal regions... It includes an increase in the role of naval... commanders...It includes the ability of the ship's commanding officer to make an independent decision when the situation changes suddenly in conformity of the goal of the deployment and of observing the honor and dignity of the state.

He has to resolve a large number of serious problems on his own during a deployment and make independent decisions on complex matters in the most varied and at times very difficult situations.

There has also been a significant increase in the commander's responsibility in connection with the need to make an independent assessment of the crew's level of training and the state of affairs aboard ship.  
[Ref. 101: p. 8]

Rear Admiral E. Zimin makes a similar observation in his Morskoy Sbornik article, "The Commanders Lofty Duty":

The ship commander when far from his native shores, frequently for extended times, receives complete responsibility as a full-fledged representative of the Soviet Union. Life often forces him in such situations to act without the advice and authorization of his seniors. But he must act intelligently, skillfully, with an eye to the state. [Ref. 141: p. 19]

Finally, a third quote that completes this sample of what the VMF says on the topic of initiative is by Rear Admiral G. Bardaschuk:



The characteristics of the Lenin working style are various. Very important among them are initiative and self-reliance on the part of executives: their capacity, when they know the total situation as well as the ultimate and intermediate objectives, to make well-founded decisions within the limits of their functional responsibilities, without waiting for suggestions or instructions from above. Initiative and self-reliance are important criteria in the selection of cadres for staff billets. Inertia is a poor helper on any job, and unquestionably one cannot expect self-reliance from an officer who will work only on orders from above. After all, when people want to say something laudatory about someone, they usually say: "He stands on his own two feet." The very expression conveys that person's independence. This trait, as a rule, is inherent in mature individuals with the wisdom of experience. Initiative denotes a person's inner drive to find new, more effective modes and methods of performing tasks in any given situation, his readiness to take upon himself the responsibility for a decision made. Temporizing and passivity, as a rule, lead to grave consequences and cannot be tolerated. Shipboard Regulations state very clearly the commanding officer's obligation to con his ship boldly, energetically and decisively, without being afraid of the responsibility for a risky maneuver which is dictated by the situation. This in my view, should be applicable to every officer... [Ref. 91: p. 49]

These quotes from three very senior Soviet naval officers provides a very clear picture showing that the quality of initiative is viewed as not only being necessary, but critically necessary for the VMF in 1982. While it is true that they focused primarily on the present day missions the VMF must meet, the inference that this quality would also be necessary under the circumstances of modern combat seems quite obvious.

One observation of how to attain the quality of initiative is made by Captain Third Rank I. Vorob'yev. This Captain purports that watch officer training is the place that will





make or break the initiative of a junior officer and that if while on watch he is not allowed safe and hopefully increasing amounts of command latitude, the officer will develop a reluctance to act independently or display initiative that will flaw his entire career. [Ref. 136: p. 70-75]

As with the other qualities the VMF desires in its officers; it is much easier to determine that the VMF recognizes a great need for their officers to be able to make sound, sometimes independent, decisions, than it is to determine how well the officers actually acquired this ability. Evidence in Soviet literature makes it very clear that the Soviet Navy is quite aware of what it wants with regard to initiative from their officers. It is also clear, however, that the VMF does not know to what extent the goal can be reached, or what the quality of its officer's decisions in combat is going to be. Because of this, and the speed and scope of modern war, the VMF has decided to provide its officers with decision-making assistance in the form of an A.C.S. While it is true that this A.C.S. has two potential benefits for the Soviet Navy, aid and control, it is quite important to note that the extent to which the A.C.S. accomplished these two objectives is a direct function of how good the system is, and there is insufficient data to make a determination on the quality of the system at this time.

As for the traditional or conventional attributes the VMF wants its officers to have with regard to sound



decision-making, they seem to be quite in concert with what could be expected in a Western navy, but with greater emphasis on the utilization of automated decision-making aids. Because of the numerous determinants affecting the ability to make independent decisions without the aid of an A.C.S. the following observations cannot reasonably be termed anything more than estimations with regard to the VMF officer's ability to make unassisted decisions in combat: (1) the larger the Soviet vessel, the more likely under normal circumstances it will be commanded by an experienced officer who will have a lesser need for an A.C.S., (2) the converse will probably, but not necessarily be true of smaller Soviet vessels, due to the relatively long tour an officer can have on the same ship, (3) the quality of a junior officer's unaided decision-making ability will be decreased if he has become overly dependent on the aid or if it is teaching him the wrong procedures, and (4) the quality of the junior officer's decisions will improve if the aid is teaching him to make better decisions than he would have learned to make without the aid.

On the assumption, however, that the VMF possesses both the knowledge and the technical expertise to make the A.C.S. function reasonably well prior to the next conflict they are a part of, it seems plausible to conclude that the aided and unaided decision-making ability of the VMF officer will be sufficient to make him capable of independently and effectively utilizing the weapons systems of his vessel.



D. MAINTAINS DISCIPLINE AND ORDER AND IS PERSONALLY DISCIPLINED

The VMF addresses the topic of discipline through articles in Morskoy Sbornik in two ways: first, there is an emphasis on the need for good order and discipline to be able to be victorious in combat, and second, there is a complementary emphasis on the need for each officer to be self-disciplined so that he can command the respect of his men, be a good example, and make the proper choices so as to be victorious in combat. Even though the Officer's Library series only briefly touches on the topic of discipline directly in volume thirteen, the Officer's Handbook, it mentions it quite frequently throughout the totality of the series in various contexts and amounts. Morskoy Sbornik directly addresses the topic discipline frequently, and in the article, "The Commanding Officer and Military Discipline, Naval Aviation Colonel Y. Nelayev seems to summarize the VMF's position on the need for good order and discipline in the Soviet Navy. He writes:

The essentiality of good discipline is dictated by the very nature of the military organization. An army, as all well know, is formed for the purpose of waging armed conflict and it is unthinkable without discipline. Discipline cements the ranks of fighting men, welds them into an integrated entity, and helps them to carry out successfully the missions assigned to them. Without it there can be no Armed Forces ready to combat an aggressor...Strict compliance with rules and regulations and daily routine, faultless execution by seamen of their watch-standing duties and responsibilities, observance of rules for stowage of materials, etc--all this directly affects combat-readiness and helps to create a highly developed feeling of collectivism and comradeship...The degree of combat-readiness is



conditioned by the level of discipline and efficiency of our fighting men. [Ref. 121: pp. 30,31,36]

Also in this article, Colonel Nelayev points out that the motive for the maintenance of discipline must be sincere and not just for show. It must be administered fairly and equally to all, and never in a capricious or frivolous manner, and the absolute necessity for Soviet Naval Regulations to be complied with. He concludes his article with the observation that without discipline one cannot expect full utilization of the abilities of Soviet navymen and that only individuals of "high moral position" themselves will be able to maintain the discipline necessary for victory in combat.\* [Ref. 121: pp. 34-37]

Another Morskoy Sbornik article which addresses the value of strong discipline to the VMF is "Firm Military Discipline is a Guarantee of Improving Combat Readiness," by Vice Admiral V. Sidorov. In it he says:

The fundamental transformation in military affairs has caused the role of discipline in maintaining combat readiness of troops to grow immeasurably...V.I. Lenin pointed out the inseparable link between combat readiness and military discipline more than once. He considered discipline as the main link in the overall chain of missions. If one grasped this link it would be possible to drag the entire chain along and successfully solve the vital problems of combat readiness for the army and navy. In order to win, thought our leader, iron war discipline is needed. He urged "not from fear, but from conscience, carry out all laws of

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\* For other Morskoy Sbornik articles on good order and discipline see References: 89, 92, 94, 109, 110, 119, 128, 131, 132, 138.





of the Red Army, all orders, maintain discipline in it in any way possible...Military discipline is the foundation of combat readiness and a guarantee of success in...carrying out the duties which face the fleet. And the more we do for the further strengthening of discipline, the more powerful and combat capable our fleet's ranks will be. [Ref. 128: pp. 14,22]

From this quote and the previous one from Colonel Nelayev, the importance of strong military discipline to the VMF is made quite clear. One opinion of how to reinforce discipline is provided by Rear Admiral Butuzov in his article, "Drill Educates the Fighting Man," in which he writes:

In the overall system of comprehensive education of the fighting man, an important place is occupied by drill training. It is an organic part of all subjects of military training and inculcates personnel with self-control, smartness, precision of actions, sharpness of appearance, and a keen feeling of collectivism, and also promotes instilling such traits as obedience to superiors, precision in carrying out an order, and self-discipline...Drill training is not a goal in itself...it forms habits...In combination with other elements of training and education drills, drill training makes a significant contribution in raising combat readiness. It is not without reason that people say: smart in formation, strong in battle. [Ref. 92: p. 36]

According to Morskoy Sbornik and the Officer's Library series, a contributant to the maintaining of discipline is the Soviet naval officer's ability to exercise psychological influence over his subordinates. In volume number seven of the Officer's Library, Military Pedagogy explains how the Soviet military should go about training its men in accordance with Marxist-Leninist Ideology. In volume eight, Military Psychology, in an almost Machiavellian fashion, purports to provide the Soviet officer with all the information he needs



to psychologically control his subordinates and to bring them to a state of readiness required to fight both nuclear and conventional wars. [Ref. 20: p. viii]

As one would expect, the authors of articles on this topic in Morskoy Sbornik take a somewhat different approach. In general, this approach seems to be one that, while certainly addressing most all of the areas written about in Military Psychology, covers them in a much more "personal manner, and in a way that is directly applicable to the Voyenno Morskoy Flot. These Morskoy Sbornik articles still provide the naval officer with the information needed to control and direct his men and even how to control himself. However, they are presented in a positive and productive "leadership" context, rather than a manipulative context. This is perhaps because these articles are written by fellow, although usually very senior, naval officers who are interested in telling other officers about the "Art", not just the "Science", of being a naval officer. While the authors are certainly not shy about pointing out the shortcomings of some of the VMF's officers (usually by name) [Ref. 129: p. 55] most of the time is spent on the positive results that can be accomplished by using good military psychology. They discuss topics such as the psychological value of a strong wardroom, how to encourage J.O.'s to learn how to be good O.O.D.'s, why is it important to be demanding and helpful to your subordinates, the importance of recreation, and so on. [Ref. 101: p. 7]



It is through the application of military psychology as derived from Marxist-Leninist philosophy that the Soviet naval officer, according to the VMF will be better able to train and lead his men to victory in combat. [Ref. 20: p. 1] One individual who could be considered by the VMF to be well-equipped to accomplish this at the present is the Soviet Navy's Political Affairs Officer (P.A.O.). It is his responsibility to be highly informed about the C.P.S.U. and Marxist-Leninist Doctrine, and to conduct the units political indoctrination, insure political motivation, enthusiasm, and inspiration of the men, and to be attuned to the welfare and morale of the crew. Further, he is to serve as a reminder of the value of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and by keying on the individual's love for his country and by providing frequent reminders of the Soviet's heroic acts during the Great Patriotic War (WW II), he is to embolden the Soviet sailor to endure the hardships of life at sea.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, there are two ways that the VMF addresses the topic of discipline, with the second being the need for self-discipline. Although alluded to and mentioned several times in the quotes already presented in this section, the following observations and examples by First Deputy of the Main Staff, Admiral P. Navoytsev, directly states the value and need for self-discipline and the consequences of not being disciplined:



A thorough, detailed study of mistakes and blunders (on the part of officers) permits a very specific conclusion to be drawn. They occur chiefly not only because of insufficient training of some commanding officers, as it appears at first glance, but also because of their personal lack of discipline and a dulling of their sense of responsibility. It is not just the young commanders just recently appointed to the position who take false steps, but also those who already have a certain amount of experience in control of a ship. [Ref. 120: p. 55]

He then presents an example of the cost to the VMF of officers who knew better, but were too lazy to take proper action:

The commander of a Baltic Fleet hydrographic vessel had a rather good knowledge of the navigation safety control measures. But relying on his own experience, he scorned the accomplishment of all prescribed measures and the ship went aground on a rock shelf. This is to say, this occurred not because the commander omitted something or did not have time to foresee something, but because he crudely violated the requirements of the Navy Shipboard Regulations, where the duties of the ships commanding officer are defined very precisely, including those of ensuring navigation safety. Such an attitude toward the matter is especially intolerable since it will definitely lead to the most undesirable consequences...

Everyone understands that our omissions do not occur out of malicious intent...The fact is, however, this does not make it easier from an objective standpoint. A deficiency will remain a deficiency and we will have to pay the full account for it in battle, without any allowances for our good intentions. This is why we so vitally need supreme exactingness.  
[Ref. 120: p. 56-61]

Another area in which self-discipline is discussed in Morskoy Sbornik is the need for the Soviet naval officer to be able to maintain emotional and psychological self-control. This is presented as becoming increasingly important as the duration of VMF cruises increase, and with the increased pressure that results from making combat decisions under the





conditions of modern war. In "The Navy's Ocean Watches,"

Admiral Gorshkov wrote:

The lengthy, distant ocean deployments predetermined the need to resolve a large number of problems...[including] the inevitable abrupt increase in psychological and physical stress on personnel and a requirement to explore scientifically substantiated standards for intelligent proportioning of training and rest and for methods of alleviating tension and instilling the habit of overcoming the hardships of lengthy deployment life steadfastly with the consideration for continuous assurance of requisite readiness. [Ref. 101: p. 5]

In "The Commander's Lofty Duty," Rear Admiral E. Zimin provides an example from the Great Patriotic War that demonstrates the dangers involved when an officer no longer has the ability to control his emotions in combat. He said:

The story of submarine M-172...is deeply imprinted in my memory. During one of its combat cruises, the commander of the "little fellow" demonstrated his weakness. He thought he saw danger everywhere. Now and again he would take evasive actions although there was no enemy in the region. On the return to base, mistaking friendly aircraft for enemy, he ordered an emergency submersion near shore. The commander lost control of himself and panicked. It was only thanks to the great skill and self-control of the commander of battle station number five (engineering department) and other crew members that the ship was able to surface and return to base.

Contemporary naval battle is sometimes called, and not without reason, a duel of intellects. And the commander who can achieve victory in such battle [must be] courageous and self-controlled. [Ref. 36: p. 20]

The value and need for discipline, both order and self-discipline, for the VMF is quite clear in Morskoy Sbornik, and it would seem that the Soviet navy has the ability to achieve its goals in this area. The maintenance of order in the VMF seems reasonable, particularly in light of the



authoritarian nature of life in the Soviet Union, however, the affect of increased travel and the opportunity to visit countries with high standards of living should also be considered. As there are more opportunities for the Soviet navyman to observe other ways of life, there would seem to be an increase in the chance for dissatisfaction with the Soviet system to arise. If this occurs, it could become increasingly more difficult to maintain the standard of order and discipline the VMF desires. In the realm of self-discipline and self-control, it would seem that as the utilization of automated decision-making aids increase in the Soviet navy, the ability of a VMF officer to maintain self-discipline and self-control could also increase. This would be due to the fact that the automated decision-making aid could increase the officer's ability to maintain self-control in high stress situations, since he would be able to receive immediate guidance and assistance from the automated control system that is alleged to be the guidance he would receive from his seniors for that situation. Clearly the extent to which this quality can be attained by each VMF officer will affect his actions in combat. If he is able, through whatever means, to remain calm and think clearly during battle, and to maintain control of the situation and his men, he will be a formidable adversary, worthy of considerable respect.



## E. CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages of this chapter numerous examples have been presented of the qualities that the Soviet Navy, through Morskoy Sbornik, has promulgated as the ones it desires its officers to have so that they will be victorious in combat. In their writings, the senior VFM officers address at least twenty-nine qualities which in their opinion are necessary for their officers. While it is certainly true that all twenty-nine are not of direct interest to the analyst making an estimate of the VMF officer's strengths and weaknesses in future combat, they are still of value since they are the qualities that the VMF purports as the ones that will bring or maintain the Soviet Fleet's readiness to an acceptable level.

It should also be kept in mind, however, that these qualities are ones that are desired, and that all VMF officers will not be able to display equal ability in these areas. Little evidence is available to assist in the determination of the extent to which each VMF officer has acquired these qualities.

However, when trying to make this determination, the following points may be considered of value: (1) the typical VMF junior officer comes from a family background where being a Soviet navyman is a tradition, [Ref. 106: pp. 3-12] (2) the typical VMF junior officer has completed a Soviet higher naval school, [Ref. 139: pp. 1-4] (3) the educational level



of the VMF junior officer prior to entering the Soviet Navy seems to be higher than his counterparts in most other Soviet military services, [Ref. 126: p. 22, Ref. 137: p. 26] and (4) the course of the VMF is directed completely toward the attainment of an acceptable level of combat readiness. [Ref. 100: p. 2] From these four points could be concluded that the circumstances of the officer's disposition to succeed, his educational ability and potential to learn, and the emphasis of the VMF on readiness, are all in favor of the VMF officer eventually being successful in the acquisition of the desired qualities.

The key word here is eventually. From their writing, VMF officers clearly indicate that they are most desirous of combat readiness now. They also indicate that they are aware of the fact that there are some impediments to this, such as the experience level of junior officers, that will only improve with time. This is not to say that they are not intent on making junior officer training as comprehensive as possible, only that they seem to understand that there are certain limits to what it is going to accomplish.

One indication of their concern in this area (perhaps because of the large number small vessels in the VMF commanded by junior officers) could be the VMF extensive interest in automated control system (A.C.S.). These computerized decision-making aids could certainly be of great value in guiding the junior officer until he fully gains the desired qualities.





A.C.S. would also be helpful in insuring that the lessor experienced junior officer was teaching his juniors correctly in accordance with VMF desires.

Once the VMF officer reaches a competent level of experience, the A.C.S. would also be of great value by providing the commander with information that would assist him in making combat decisions. It should be noted, however, that there is no reason to consider that an A.C.S. would necessarily be utilized by the VMF only to control or only to assist the decision-making of its officers. During normal utilization, it would seem that an A.C.S. would provide both.

With regard to the specific qualities desired by the senior VMF that have been addressed in this chapter the following observations are made: (1) because of the emphasis placed on technical training in the VMF, special consideration should be given to the VMF officer's knowledge of his weapons and their capabilities, his aircraft, ship, or submarine, and its capability, and the capabilities of his enemy's weapons, aircraft, ships, or submarines, (2) because of his orientation toward a way of thinking that is influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology, it is valuable to be familiar with that ideology since it will assist in the interpretation and understanding of the rationale behind the VMF officer's actions, (3) because of the advent of automated control systems, the decision-making ability of the VMF officer will most likely be improved, though evidence indicates that it will probably



be more standardized, and finally (4) because of the stress placed on the importance of discipline and self-control in the VMF, it could be anticipated that the VMF officer would be inclined to follow his orders to the letter in combat, despite the consequences.

While it is certainly unreasonable to expect that all the qualities desired by the VMF in its officers will be exhibited to the same extent by all officers, so is it unreasonable to expect that these observations will equally apply to all VMF officers. However, to the extent that an estimate of how these qualities will affect his performance in combat can be made, these observations are valuable.

In the following chapter, the qualities observed of the Soviets in combat in World War II, will be analyzed in combination with the qualities desired by the VMF today. The result of this analysis will be an estimate of some strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet naval officer that could affect his performance in future combat.



#### IV. CONCLUSION

After the war the Russians were without a doubt most anxious to learn from the experiences of the long war and utilize these lessons for the establishment of basic principles of command, the training of officers and men, and in the organization of their units. It is certain that numerous German officers cooperated in this matter and helped to uncover certain Russian weaknesses which had become apparent during the war.

Generaloberest Dr.  
Lothar Rendulic  
MS# P-079, 1951

In the course of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Armed Forces...acquired a wealth of combat experience... This experience has not lost its significance even under today's [altered] conditions. Careful study and application thereof...helps admirals, generals, and other officers to perform effectively their tasks which have to do with increasing combat-readiness and perfecting the expertise of units and forces.

Admiral of the Fleet of  
the Soviet Union  
N. Smirnov  
First Deputy CinC Navy  
Morskoy Sbornik, May 1979

It is the purpose of this thesis to identify some fighting qualities that could be expected from the Soviet naval officer in combat by virtue of the emphasis placed on them today in Soviet hortatory literature and in the written observations of the Germans on the Eastern front in World War II. When used in conjunction with intelligence data, the information presented in this thesis should assist in the estimation of the strengths and weaknesses of Soviet naval personnel in future combat.



The writings of Soviet naval officers in Morskoy Sbornik very clearly support the observation that the VMF views the "experience of war," particularly the Great Patriotic War, as an invaluable teacher. In Soviet literature, repeated mention of the value of real combat experience, the need to be a knowledgeable historian, and the need to simulate combat as nearly as possible, are made. Morskoy Sbornik further emphasizes this point through a regular section in that publication entitled "Pages of History," The VMF leadership, through Morskoy Sbornik, has also quite clearly indicated their firm grasp of the principle that there has been a major change in the way future wars will be fought compared with World War II, and that although many basic combat principles proven in that war remain valid, they must be implemented with due concern for conditions today. [Ref. 139: p. 5]

Although it is never explicitly stated in Soviet literature, it is interesting to note the often close relationship between the observed strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet in combat during the second World War and the qualities the VMF presently states as being necessary for its officers to have in order to be victorious in combat. From their writings, the senior VMF officers appear to be fully aware of Soviet combat errors during the war and intent upon insuring that they are not repeated by their officers in the next conflict.

The VMF's adamant position on readiness certainly seems to have stemmed from the lessons the Soviets have learned from





the Great Patriotic War. It is dogmatically presented by the Soviet CinC Navy as being the singular most important goal of the VMF and that all assets should religiously be directed towards being ready for whatever may come. The responsibility of the C.O. in this area is repeatedly addressed with emphasis on how he must do everything in his power to insure his command is always prepared for all contingencies. The resolve with which this topic is written about in Morskoy Sbornik is such that it seems to show the Soviets as saying: "Never again will we be surprised as we were in the Great Patriotic War. We now see the tremendous cost in life due to our unpreparedness in that war, but it will be nothing to the losses we can expect if we are caught unaware by the West in a nuclear attack. We must therefore always be ready, no matter the cost," This thought seems to permeate the Soviet Navy's thinking fairly equally at both the tactical and strategic levels in Morskoy Sbornik. It is peacetime training, which replaces wartime experience, that is to make this readiness a reality at both levels. The World War II literature showed that the Russian did learn from, and improve with, experience, and the Soviet emphasis on training today undoubtedly seeks to provide them with as much experience as possible.

The remainder of this chapter will enumerate the qualities which could be expected to be exhibited by the VMF officer in future combat. This will be done by comparing the qualities observed of the Soviet in combat during the Second World War,



since they provide the most current information on his actual combat performance available in the West, with the ones recently presented in Morskoy Sbornik and the Officer's Library series as being necessary for the Soviet naval officer to be victorious in future combat.

The Soviet naval officer's ability to take initiative and independent action can have important consequences for the outcome of a future war. On this topic, Germans clearly point out a serious lack of initiative and independent action on the part of the Soviets, particularly during the first years of the war. The Germans saw this quality as being innate in the Soviet fighting man and indicative of the nation in general. While it is difficult to determine whether or not these qualities are in fact innate, it has been argued that the nature of the Communist System as instituted in the USSR, is one which discourages individual decision-making and encourages communal or collective decision-making and the reliance on seniors for guidance.\* It is extremely important to note, however, that the Germans emphatically differentiated between the ability of upper and lower echelon Soviet officers in this area, stating that the senior officers seemed more capable in this regard and that their abilities in fact improved as the war progressed.\*\* The present day VMF

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\* See Hedrick Smith, *The Russians*, (N.Y.: Quadrangle Publishing, 1976)

\*\* Admiral Gorskhov, who was a Rear Admiral during W.W.II, is leading the VMF today in its efforts to insure its officers are capable of sound, independent decision making.



leadership recognized, however, that due to the increased scope and pace of modern war: (1) all officers will need assistance in making combat decisions in the future, and (2) that inability or failure to act independently when necessary in future combat could have potentially grave results, i.e. damage to or destruction of the vessel. To overcome these problems the VMF has undertaken a program of equipping their ships with automated control systems (A.C.S.) to assist its officers in decision-making, and to provide scope and limits to their actions. While it is true that the A.C.S. will not function any better than its software, if it is assumed to function reasonably well it could accomplish the following with regard to the VMF officers' ability to take initiative and independent action: (1) provide with a better understanding of the common goals, the intentions; and the framework under which his seniors are functioning, (2) reduce the fear of the less experienced officer to act independently, (3) increase an officer's ability to solve more complex combat problems in less time, and finally (4) increase and improve the decision-making ability of the "average" naval officer, at the expense, however, of the potential "Nelsons" in the fleet. In general, then it can be said that the A.C.S. could improve the VMF officers' ability to take initiative and act independently, while providing the senior officers of the Soviet Navy with some sense of assurance that lower officers will not overstep



the bounds of initiative. This then would seem to indicate that the VMF officer could be able to meet the requirement for independent action which will be necessary in future combat, and at the same time be relatively assured of acting in consonance with the desires of his seniors.

The second quality is the VMF officer's technical proficiency: The German manuscripts provided numerous pointed accounts of the physical strengths of the Soviet fighting man in World War II. In Morskoy Sbornik, today the VMF exhibits a discernible deviation from the World War II lesson of the value of superior physical ability. The emphasis is on the more important need for VMF officers to have superior mental ability to be victorious in future combat. This seems to be based on the Soviet understanding of the change in the nature of war, and that one does not need to have any great amount of physical ability to fire a missile from a ship. He does, however, need to be technically highly skilled to be able to most effectively utilize all his weapons.

With respect to his technical knowledge and ability and his performance in future combat, the following may be concluded: If the VMF is successful in the accomplishment of their goal of its officers being technically expert in areas such as weapons, engineering, damage control, seamanship, computers, etc., than the ability of the VMF officer in these areas is not to be taken lightly. The educational and training programs of the VMF are certainly fully directed





toward this end. However, the fact that the VMF's equipment is becoming more sophisticated at a rate which exceeds the required adjustments in the VMF's educational programs, suggests that the goal of technical expertise may not be met at present in all areas. Unfortunately there is insufficient evidence to project whether this trend will continue into the future.

The third quality that could affect his performance in combat is that he is a Communist. The Germans mentioned love of country more than love of Communism as motivating Soviet performance. They also emphasized fear as a motivator and placed great importance on the role of the commissar as a critical asset to the Red Army, especially during the first year of the war. These men were described as political zealots without conscience, who were quite proficient in leading troops, and that because of their absolute dedication to Communism, they pursued their assigned missions with unequalled fanaticism. Through intimidation they forced others to follow their lead. While only about six percent of the general Soviet population today are members of the C.P.S.U., about ninety-five percent of the VMF officer corp is, and the current emphasis placed on the extensive integration of Marxism-Leninism philosophy into everyday VMF life is a firm indication of the Soviet Navy's professed dedication to the national ideology. It should be noted, indeed, that there is far greater stress today on the VMF officer being



motivated by belief in the system and his ability to motivate through reason rather than fear than there was during the Second World War.

While it is not possible to determine the depth of the Soviet naval officers belief in Communism and how it will affect his combat performance, the following points seem worthy of consideration. First the political leadership today, as it did in World War II, relies heavily on the individual's love of country and family, and hate for the enemy, and takes great advantage of these qualities by continually reinforcing the officer's responsibility in these areas. Second, regardless of the extent of the officer's personnel belief in the system and his conscious desire to conform the fact that he has probably spent his entire life in an environment that espouses Communism and Marxism-Leninism would surely seem to at least shape his way of thinking. Finally, the fact that he is an established member of Soviet society, presumably leading a relatively comfortable life, gives him a vested interest in the system, regardless of his personal political beliefs. From these points it can be seen that the VMF officer's combat performance may be affected in two ways by Soviet Communism: (1) that it will directly or indirectly provide him with motivation to be victorious in combat; and (2) it will provide him with a psychological, perhaps even subconscious, framework within which he will make his combat decisions. In light of these points, the need



to be familiar with the precept of Communism, in order to understand and predict the actions of the VMF officer in combat seems clear.

The fourth quality of the VMF officer which will affect his performance in combat is his discipline. While the German authors generally wrote with substantial criticism of the lack of initiative on the part of the Soviet fighting man during the War; they were also quite clear on the value of the iron discipline they observed from the Red Army. In their writings today, the senior VMF officers are absolutely emphatic about the necessity for strong discipline if the Soviet navy is to be victorious in future combat. However, it appears that they believe that more than just pedantic adherence to orders is required to meet the challenge of the speed and scope of modern war. This can be seen in the even greater emphasis they place on their officer's ability to act independently. When the two qualities of discipline and initiative are properly combined together in a VMF officer, particularly one who possesses a high degree of technical proficiency and is "assisted" by an A.C.S., the picture of a formidable naval officer begins to emerge.

Underlying all the qualities specified above is an emphasis in present Soviet literature on the VMF officers dedication to his mission and victory. This dedication was made most obvious in World War II by the Soviet's apparent disregard for the value of human life in the quest for victory. In



their writings, the Germans unmistakably pointed out how continually astounded they were at the Soviet's disregard for life, and especially the manner in which the Soviets employed their troops and the latitude of action this disregard afforded the Soviet High Command. While it is not possible to prove to what extent this attitude remains in the VMF officer corp today, the importance the Soviet navy places on dedication and victory is quite apparent in current writings. To the extent the wartime tradition of willingness to sacrifice life for combat victory remains in the senior Soviet naval officers, it could allow them options in future combat that a western naval officer might perhaps not view as reasonable because of unacceptable losses to the Soviets, thus rendering the western officer vulnerable to surprise from "unreasonable" VMF action.

When one combines all the previously enumerated qualities together two things become very clear: (1) the Voyenno Morskoy Flot learned a great deal from the errors of the Soviet fighting man in the Great Patriotic War. (2) The Voyenno Morskoy Flot learned a great deal from the errors of the Soviet fighting man in the Great Patriotic War. (2) The Voyenno Morskoy Flot through writing demonstrates its sincere interest in correcting these errors and their intention to avoid their repetition. It is the author's contention that the meaning of this is as follows: There is a large difference between intentions and results. VMF leaders have shown that





they understand what qualities they want from their officers and why. If most Soviet naval officers could attain these qualities, they would be formidable adversaries. The more they attain, the more formidable they become. Whether they can in fact do so is another question altogether. It appears that education and training are the ways the Soviet naval officer will be exposed to these qualities. In light of the extensive military training and educational system of the Soviet navy, it seems that the attainment of these qualities is certainly possible.

Reason, however dictates that we do not exaggerate the degree to which Soviet officers will attain the ideal desired in Soviet writings. The magnitude and scope of the goal may place it out of reach. Every Soviet naval officer cannot be a Gorshkov. Most will have shortcomings forever. In 1950, German Generaloberest Erhard Raus wrote of the Soviet military which had just defeated his nation:

The Red Army was successful in the last war, a good argument for the proposition that in a future war, fought under equal or similar circumstances, it would again emerge victorious. The high command was good and in its hands the troops, purely as human mass, were a useful instrument. The prime motive force behind both was communism; the final goal, World Revolution.



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D. INTERVIEWS

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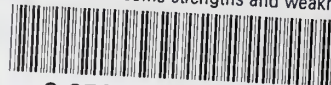
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