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The Soviet Army

The Retreat From Revolution

Marx drew certain lessons from the experience of the workers in the Paris Commune, the first historical example of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Among the most important was the need to abolish the standing army and to rely upon the political dedication of the working class, rather than upon bourgeois military discipline and training.

Paris could resist (the onslaught of German troops in the Franco-Prussian war, which had utterly routed the French army) only because, in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army, and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. **The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.**

(Marx, "The Civil War in France," emphasis added).

In **State and Revolution** (August 1917), Lenin repeated the need for a socialist state to dissolve the bourgeois army, **Selected Wks.**, Vol. III, p. 297. He attacked the Mensheviks and phony "socialists" of the Provisional Government for refusing to do this.¹

Both before and immediately after the October Revolution the Bolsheviks agitated and organized precisely for this position. They attached great importance to work in the



IN THE BEGINNING: The Bolsheviks called for replacing the standing army with an armed working class. At left, the storming of the Winter Palace by armed Petrograd workers. At right, a women's militia unit in Petrograd.

military, succeeded in neutralizing the standing army at the front and in Petrograd (and in winning some units) by fomenting disobedience between officers and soldiers. The Bolsheviks' main armed force in the October Revolution in the major cities was the Red Guard. These were armed workers, not rigorously trained but politically dedicated to the proletarian cause. It was the Red Guard irregulars who marched out of Petrograd and defeated Kornilov's attempt to crush the revolution in August, 1917. They did so again against the Cossack troops of General Krasnov outside Petrograd in November. In December, 1917, the old Tsarist army at the front, already hopeless as a fighting force due to the class warfare fostered by the Bolsheviks between officers and men, was then formally demobilized. When the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Germany was signed on March 3, 1918, the fledgling workers' state was formally at peace and

without an army.

When the Civil War began in earnest in May, 1918, the Bolsheviks had to improvise various tactics. Among them—and at first it was *only* a tactic, viewed by many or most of the Bolshevik leaders as a temporary expedient—was the formation of a formal, standing army, organized along bourgeois lines, commanded by experienced officers from the Tsarist army.

During the 7th Party Congress in March 1918 Lenin had argued for a regular military system as a temporary measure only. In the resolutions drafted for this Congress by Lenin and passed, the standing army is not viewed as a permanent institution. In the "Resolution on War and Peace," for example, the Congress promises "to train systematically and comprehensively in military matters and military operations the entire adult population of both sexes." (Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 600).

Many of the facts in this article are from Erickson, J., *The Soviet High Command*.

1. See also the P.L.P. essay, "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Reversal of Workers'

Power in China," esp. "The Question of a Standing Army," in the *Road to Revolution*, III Special Issue of *PL Magazine*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (November, 1971), pp. 29-31.

In his "Report on the Review of the Program..." to the 7th Congress Lenin repeats the Bolsheviks' determination that "Soviet power is a new type of state without a bureaucracy, without police, without a regular army" (II, p. 609). As recently as February armed workers from Petrograd had defeated German troops near Petrograd, and Ukrainian peasants were fighting a partisan war against the occupying German army.

Nonetheless, Trotsky was put in charge of forming a new Soviet army at the same Congress, as People's Commissar for war. Trotsky, as a long time Menshevik, held a relatively much more economic determinist concept of socialism than did the Bolsheviks. Whereas it was 1931 before Stalin based his political program on the notion that technique was neutral, "technique decides everything" (Works, Vol. 13, p. 43), Trotsky advocated this from the very beginning. Trotsky believed that an army organized along traditional bourgeois lines and run by an elite of highly trained officers was the only form of defense a socialist state could have. He thought that military 'science' was neutral, that there was no such thing as a specifically proletarian military art. Upon his appointment he put ex-Tsarist officers, including members of the Tsarist General Staff, in the command staff of the Red Army. He reintroduced the old distinctions between officers and men, the officers' privileges, the severe discipline of the Tsarist military.

Trotsky was opposed, as we shall see. But at no time did the left within the Bolshevik Party break totally with Trotsky's conceptions. All Bolsheviks agreed that some form of standing army was necessary in the present circumstances, even if only as an emergency measure. Trotsky's success in winning the Party to retaining thousands of Tsarist officers and the fundamentally bourgeois organization and discipline of the standing army shows that his erroneous ideas were shared, though in varying degrees, by all the leaders of the Bolshevik Party.

II. Commissars and "Dual Command"

The Provisional Government had sent "commissars" to the Tsarist Army at the front to enforce its writ upon the conservative commanding officers. The Bolsheviks took over this practice. Many ex-Tsarist officers proved politically unreliable, and desertions to the White armies (largely made up of ex-Tsarist

officers like themselves) were common. The Soviet government assigned politically reliable "commissars" to each commander. This was a precaution to ensure that the commander, whose political loyalty could not be relied upon, did not sabotage the military operations. Under the system of "dual command" all orders had to be signed by the commissar as well as by the commanding officer before they were valid. The "military specialist" or *spetsy* (as the ex-Imperial officers were euphemistically called) were to have control over operational and "strictly military" matters, while the commissar was to ensure the political correctness of the orders.

This system of "dual command" (DC) revealed the contradiction at the heart of the Soviet military policy. The Bolsheviks were making a compromise of principle. In effect they had neither a standing army organized strictly along bourgeois lines, nor a militia of the "armed people" as advocated by Marx and Lenin. They could not choose the first, because the workers and peasants would not stand for it—and because the Tsarist officers were not to be trusted—in a word, because only the bourgeoisie could "rely" upon such an oppressive, authoritarian structure. And, as the Bolshevik agitation within the Tsar's army had proven (and as similar communist agitation in the German, French, British, and American occupying forces showed as well), the standing army was none too reliable even for the bourgeoisie!

Yet the Bolsheviks basically did not trust the peasantry. In fact the history of the Civil War showed that peasant soldiers fought fiercely to prevent the Whites from winning out and taking back the land confiscated from the landowners. We should ask: if the peasant soldiers fought so well under the command of Tsarist officers and in a largely bourgeois military formation, why could they not have fought even better if they had been organized differently, led by political incentives rather than compulsion?

In fact guerrilla-type forces led in a basically non-elitist way by communist commanders from the working-class were prominent in the Civil War. This was the group, within both the army and the Party, which most vigorously op-

posed Trotsky's reliance upon the bourgeois *spetsy*.

This contradiction—between bourgeois organization and leadership, and working-class politics—was the fundamental cause of the class struggles within the U.S.S.R. around military policy, just as it was the cause of the struggles around governmental and economic policy. In the military it was not decisively resolved until World War II, when the Soviet Union finally opted once and for all for a bourgeois-type standing army.

Contradictions in the Army During the Civil War.

Different groups within the Soviet military immediately arose as a result of this contradiction. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Guerrilla-type leaders. The most famous of these was V.I. Chapaev, subject of a famous novel of the 1920's by Dmitry Furmanov, who served with him. Chapaev was a dashing working-class soldier who typified the extreme distrust of the Tsarist *spetsy* shared by many workers and peasants. Naturally such purely guerrilla forces and commanders did not fit in well with the system of a centralized army organized along bourgeois lines.

2. The political commanders, mainly men who were dedicated Bolshevik cadre first and military men secondly. There were commissars, such as Ordzhonikidze, Kuibyshev, Kirov, Gusev, Shvernik, and Mekhlis. Stalin, too, was a commissar of this type, probably the most outstanding one. These men too were in general fiercely opposed to Trotsky's reliance upon Tsarist *spetsy*, and became opponents of Trotsky during the inner-party debates of the 1920's. However they did not fight to have the concept of a standing army abolished altogether.

3. The worker-commanders or "red commanders," mainly men from working-class background who were communists first but who became military commanders and remained so after the Civil War. The best-known examples of these were Semyon Budyonny and Klim Voroshilov, who organized and headed

up the famous "Konarmiya" of Isaac Babel's stories, the First Cavalry Army. Politically these men were allied to the second group.²

4. The so-called "young professionals." These were largely men who had been junior officers in the Tsar's army and who rallied to the Soviet side early after the Revolution. Mikhail Tukhachevsky was the outstanding member of this group, and others included Yakir, Yegorov, Uborevich, and Vatsetis.

These men came to occupy most of the pre-eminent positions in the Soviet Army during the late 1920's and 1930's. They were closely associated with Tukhachevsky, and were the main group executed or eliminated along with him in the Military Purges.

5. The ex-Tsarist *spetsy*, who remained an important force within the Soviet Army until the late Twenties and,

Bourgeois organization and working-class politics was a central contradiction in the Soviet military.

in individual instances, even beyond.

Of these groups, the first had little influence in military thinking. *Partizanshchina* soon became the official description for the negative aspects of the Chapaev-type commanders and groups: lack of discipline and unwillingness to co-ordinate activities closely with a central command was the fundamental complaint (however, Trotsky considered anyone who opposed his views guilty of *partizanshchina*, or anarchy). Groups Two and Three became associated with Stalin and Frunze, later Voroshilov, who championed their views. This group constituted the Left wing of the struggles

2. Budyonny had been an NCO (Sgt.) in the Tsar's army, having been drafted in 1903. Timoshenko, Rokossovsky, and Zhukov, among the outstanding leaders of the Soviet Army in World War II, all rose first from Voroshilov's and Budyonny's

First Cavalry Army. Stalin too was closely associated with it. Mikhail Frunze, not associated with the *Konarmiya*, was in this group as well, a professional revolutionary-turned military man, also bitterly opposed to Trotsky's *spetsy*.



SOVIET OFFICERS—OLD AND NEW STYLES: Red Army commanders at the front in 1920, Marshal Zhukov in 1945. World War II saw the final triumph of bourgeois rank and privilege in the Soviet armed forces.

around military politics. Group Four became the Right Wing of these debates in general.

The Fifth group, the *spetsy*, had no direct influence on political discussions. However their influence became strongly felt because, once the young Soviet state had decided upon a standing army, some form of formal, bourgeois-style military leadership became necessary to manage that army. So that the *spetsy* had a great influence upon the thinking of the military communists and the Bolshevik Party in general, just as the technical specialists did in the economic realm. The *spetsy* in all fields were one of the main routes by which bourgeois ideology—acceptance of the distinction between mental and manual labor, the need for material rather than political incentives, etc.—infected the Party.

In the summer of 1918 Stalin, along with Voroshilov, Shchadenko, and other political commanders, saved the im-

portant Volga city of Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad in 1925 in commemoration of this feat) by ruthlessly overriding and ignoring Trotsky's *spetsy* who had been charged with defending the town. Stalin arrested the *spetsy* and anyone in the town suspected of anti-Soviet sympathies. Anyone captured supporting the Whites in any way was shot. Lenin appears to have attempted to compromise between Trotsky and Stalin, and kept them apart for the remainder of the Civil War.

During the Warsaw campaign of 1920 Tukhachevsky, commanding the advancing Soviet armies, again came into conflict with Stalin, military commissar for part of his forces. The dispute was over Tukhachevsky's reliance upon bourgeois military theory, which ended in his overreaching himself and getting a lot of soldiers killed while failing to capture Warsaw. Stalin and the First Cavalry leaders had opposed Tukhachevsky's Warsaw "adventure" from the beginning. Tukhachevsky, by the way, said that he

3. A French officer, Pierre Fervacque, who was imprisoned in a German camp for a time with Tukhachevsky (and who later became a well known French journalist under the pseudonym "Remy Roure"), published a book on him in 1928. Tukhachevsky is revealed therein as a fanatic Russian

imperialist, pan slavic nationalist, elitist aristocrat, and virulent anti-Semite. Tukhachevsky never repudiated this portrait and until his death remained close personal friends with its author (see Fervacque's article in *Le Temps*, July 24, 1937).

expected the Polish proletariat to rise up and greet the Soviet Army, unleashing a European revolution. In fact, given what we know about Tukhachevsky's sympathies for Tsarist imperialism,³ it seems evident that he wanted to recapture Poland for the Soviet government.

Trotsky and his supporters defended the authority of the *spetsy* and attacked all others as incompetent. Trotsky infuriated Party members by his practice of shooting commissars who disobeyed his *spetsy*. He and his supporter Ivar Smilga argued strongly from 1919 for abolishing commissars—for "Unitary Command" (UC).

At the 8th Party Congress in 1919 a "Military Opposition" led by Voroshilov and supported by Stalin, was formed to argue against Trotsky's policies. As we have seen in Lenin's resolutions, the idea of a militia was reemphasized at this Congress and upheld for the future. At the 9th Party Congress in 1920, Trotsky was forced to backtrack (though he never admitted it as such) and made the actual proposal for a Workers-Peasants Militia, which was to be the form of military organization after the Civil War had ended. That this apparent agreement just papered over fundamental differences is shown by succeeding events. First, by December of 1920 Trotsky's major military ally in the Party, Smilga, was arguing that a standing army should be the basic form of Soviet military organization. Smilga's economic determinist reasoning was (1) that the peasantry could not be counted on, and the workers were too few to spread around among so many peasant units; (2) that the Soviet Russia was too unindustrialized. Second, Trotsky soon revealed what he meant by "militia" by proposing the "militarization of labor"—the organizing of workers and peasants into labor armies, under strict discipline and hierarchical control. Tukhachevsky also came out firmly in support of the standing army concept, proposing an "International General Staff" which would plan aggressive foreign military intervention and impose socialism on capitalist states. Once again, Tukhachevsky's imperialist ambitions were only lightly covered by a veil of Socialist rhetoric.

The Tenth Party Congress.

The 10th Party Congress met during

the famous Kronshtadt naval rebellion of February and March, 1921 and the anti-Soviet peasant rebellion in Tambov of the same months. The peasantry were clearly protesting the policy of "War Communism," which in effect meant forced requisitioning of needed food-stuffs for the Soviet army and the cities. That there were few serious peasant uprisings before 1920 indicated to the Bolsheviks that the peasantry had supported the Soviets as long as they had felt the danger that the "Whites" and former landlords might be restored. The Antonov peasant rebellion later in the year, and the difficulty in stopping Nestor Makhno's anarchist, anti-Semitic peasant rebellion in the Ukraine showed Lenin that a new policy towards the peasantry was essential. The Kronshtadt sailors' rebellion was interpreted to mean essentially the same thing. The sailors and marines were not the same individuals that had been the backbone of the October Revolution, but newer recruits from the cities and villages. The fact that they were led by a Tsarist officer and a sailor who fled to the Mensheviks thereafter and that the rank-and-file of the sailors refused to execute Bolsheviks whom they imprisoned (thus showing they were not as anti-Communist as their leaders) did not blind the Bolsheviks to the seriousness of the situation.⁴

As a result of the Bolsheviks' sense of isolation from the countryside (and from some of the working class, too—strikes had broken out in Petrograd) the militia concept was again weakened at the Congress. The militia was planned for heavily working-class areas only, and a standing army would be retained elsewhere.

At the same time, Trotsky's military ideas were rebuffed. Frunze, Voroshilov, Ordzhonikidze, Molotov, and Petrovskii, all political commissars and commanders associated with opposition to *spetsy*, were elected to the Central Committee of the Party, and others like them, including Gusev, Kuibyshev, Kirov, and Chubar, were elected Candidate members. Secondly, a debate over the question of the proper military strategy for a workers' state was engaged. Trotsky defended against all comers the notion that "military technique is universal," an argument for the kind of

4. These facts are taken from Paul Averich, *Kronshtadt, 1921*. Averich is a violent anti-communist

and Anarchist sympathizer; his analysis must be separated from the facts he reveals.

organization he had championed during the Civil War. Frunze as spokesman for the political and worker-commanders led the attack for a special "proletarian military science."

Frunze's and Gusev's concept drew from the experience of the Civil War as seen by these men. The essential points of "proletarian military strategy" were: (1) concentration upon maneuverability, as opposed to positional warfare (remember the static fronts and trench warfare of World War I); (2) planning for "small wars" against potential opponents having a higher technical level than the Red Army; (3) planning for partisan warfare, but with this warfare definitely subordinated to a regular army.

We should view this position dialectically. In a positive sense, it was the left position. It stressed politics and reliance on the working class much more than did Trotsky's, and acknowledged that this implied a lesser development of technique. However, this lower level of technique was seen as a result of Russia's backwardness, not as a necessity of relying on the masses. In a negative sense, it envisaged a permanent standing army. Thus this conception broke with the ideal of a militia which would replace the standing army altogether at some future time, as had still been outlined at the 9th Party Congress.

From this point on, no more was to be heard of the Paris Commune ideal. This should be seen as part of a whole system of planned incorporation of bourgeois ideas, NEP. The dominant force in the Soviet army, the worker commanders, stood behind the Frunze reforms.

Frunze Reforms, 1924-5.

Under the Frunze reforms the Soviet army was to concentrate upon educating Communist military specialists to take the place of Tsarist military *spetsy* who still dominated the military hierarchy. The percentage of communists in the military administration was to be steadily increased. "Unitary command" (UC) was established. Commissars would no longer police the army commanders. The idea was that army commanders were to be communists, whose political reliability was therefore not in question.

A standing army was the center of military strategy. By December 1924

the "cadre army," as it was termed, comprised 47.6% of the entire infantry strength of the Red Army, and of course a much higher proportion of specialized units. 52.4% of the infantry was from the "territorial-militia" units. But even this militia plan was weakened by a relative neglect of the peasantry. Workers were to predominate in militia units. 16% of militia forces were to be from the "cadre" army. Peasants resented this policy, and demonstrations in which peasants protested discrimination against them in favor of workers, took place in 1924 in every military district.

Political training of the militia forces at the annual mobilization exercises was given special attention. This was good, but the militia plan, relying as it did on working-class predominance, was militarily as well as politically weak. Non-industrial areas had hardly any militia (since they had hardly any workers). For example, there were 13 territorial militia units in the Moscow Military District, but only one for the entire Siberian Military District. Only the infantry was really "militia-ized." Of the 11 cavalry divisions and 8 brigades, only one division was a territorial one.

The working class component of the army, both cadre and militia, was greatly strengthened over what it had been during the Civil War. Trotsky's Tsarist *spetsy* were largely pushed out of the Revolutionary Military Council (*Revvoensoviet*) and replaced by the worker-commanders, led by Voroshilov. By January 1925 Trotsky himself was removed from the *Revvoensoviet*. The Central Committee of the Party took over direct control of the Political Administration of the Army, which was now reduced in size and manned with Old Bolsheviks.

During the "Lenin Enrollment" of 1924 the Army admitted many officers to the Party. By 1924 as well a number of military academies had been set up. "Such institutions, although bearing Red Army names, were founded quite literally in the Imperial Russian Academies for the most part, and the staff showed the same discrepancies in social and political aspects." (Erickson) The future Red commanders were to be trained here.

The Frunze reforms therefore did not resolve the basic contradiction in the Red Army, but made it sharper. The militia system was retained, stress being laid on political loyalty of commanders

and men. The Tsarist **spetsy** were pushed out of the front ranks, though they continued to exercise great influence through the academies and military research and planning. The Party took over responsibility for political training in the army. All this was an improvement over Trotsky's administration.

But the principle of abandoning the standing army for the "armed people" was given up. Henceforth reliance upon military "expertise" and a standing army organized in a bourgeois fashion was not to be questioned. Although UC was established, this was done because the bourgeois ideas of military organization now had a foothold **within the Party itself**, quite apart from Trotsky and his supporters. As Erickson put it, "if anything, Frunze was being very gradually but finally militarized out of his Communism" (p. 199).

Voroshilov replaced Frunze in November, 1925 (upon the latter's death) as Commissar for War. But a week later Tukhachevsky was made head of the Red Army Staff. It was the "red commanders" who had given ground to the advocates of military expertise.

Nonetheless the contradiction still existed. UC was not full, since the Central Committee still directly supervised political work in the army. The idea of a Cadet Corps to train a military elite from a relatively early age (as done in Germany or Imperial Russia) was still rejected.

The 1924 Provisional Field Service Regulations set forth the military strategy of the army. According to Western writers who have examined this document (and who are sympathetic to it, thus likely to report it accurately), reliance upon military expertise and elitism, as advocated principally by Tukhachevsky, dominate over politics in it. Frunze and the red commanders in general had obviously been won over considerably to this approach. "There was a new emphasis upon the significance of the technical factor in modern war. Trotsky had not minced his words about the Soviet military predicament, and the problems which were raised up for the Soviet command by the technical backwardness of the Red Army and the instability among those who were its chief source of manpower—the peasants."

It was at once ironical and inevitable that Frunze's reforms

were themselves the complete justification of Trotsky's incapable arguments, and the surrender was made to orthodoxy and the expense of the "revolutionary phraseology" which Trotsky had so often derided.... The whole tenor of the re-organization of the Red Army was designed to place it in a position to compete with an orthodox bourgeois army, whatever the present technical deficiencies. It was a programme which was not as thoroughly understood as Frunze might have wished, and he spared few pains to hammer in, with repetitive phrase and recapitulation of argument, the need for training and technical advance. (Erickson, pp. 207-8)

Perhaps the most obvious sign (in hindsight at least), as well as a major

During the trial these men, along with Bukharin, admitted conspiratorial relations with the German staff.

cause, of this development towards reliance upon bourgeois politics and organization in military matters was the important but little known collaboration between the Red Army and the German General Staff. This body was the most elitist, hierarchically organized and technically perfectionist military caste in the world. It was headed in the early 1920's by General Hans von Seeckt. Seeckt advocated peaceful relations between Germany and Russia to secure Germany's "rear." He saw great affinities between his Staff and the "young professionals" among the Soviet military such as Tukhachevsky, Uborevich, and Yakir.

The Relations with Germany under the Treaty of Rapallo.

Relations with Weimar Germany and



In the late 20s, senior Soviet officers were trained by the German Army—in spying as well as fighting. Here, Field Marshal Hindenburg greets Generals Yakir (right) and Tukhachevsky (third left) who was executed for treason in 1938.

the German General Staff were initiated in 1920 and formalized in the Treaty of Rapallo of April 16, 1922. The rationale for this was that the U.S.S.R. was isolated by the Revolution. No industrialized nation was willing to trade with it. Germany was also isolated politically by the Treaty of Versailles, which limited German armed forces and forbade Germany to produce armaments. The Soviet state agreed to provide territory for Germany to build munitions and airplane factories and to hold secret troop exercises. In return the Soviets would get a percentage of the munitions and armaments, and Soviet workers and technicians would be trained to produce them. What proved to be the most significant aspect was at first not emphasized. A few Soviet and German officers observed and participated in military exercises. Eventually these Soviet officers received a good deal of training from the German General Staff facilities.

This collaboration began at Trotsky's initiative, aided by Soviet politicians who were closely associated with him such as Radek, Rosengol'ts, and Krestinsky. It is certainly possible that, in addition to the official relations established at this time, certain personal and clandestine

relations were also set up along the lines of the admissions made by these men at the 1938 trial of the "Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists." During the trial these men along with Bukharin (one of the Rights) admitted conspiratorial relations with the German General Staff, Trotsky in exile, and Tukhachevsky and his military group. Indeed, what Bukharin admitted there (as opposed to what prosecutor Vyshinsky charged, and what he was found guilty of) seems to guarantee that some such kind of understandings existed. There is very strong evidence that Tukhachevsky and the military group were in fact conspiring with the Germans. There is nothing implausible about the list of the accusations, however much most bourgeois historians reject the trial as a frame-up and the charges as fabrications.

There was also a clear distinction made by the Germans concerning the attitudes of the different groups within the Soviet military towards them. They were angered when Commissar of War Voroshilov published details about secret German military strength. Captured documents show that the Germans felt entirely differently about the "young professionals" around Tukhachevsky,

the later subjects of the Military Purge. In General von Blomberg's 1928 report about the Soviet Army Tukhachevsky was carefully noted as possible leader of a subversive movement within the U.S.S.R. Blomberg was interested in retaining Uborevich in Germany in order to further influence him in favor of German interests ("um ihn weiter in deutschen Sinne zu beeinflussen"). Uborevich spent almost 3 years (1926-9) in Germany being trained in the General Staff School. In 1927 he was accompanied by Eideman, another leader shot with Tukhachevsky and himself in 1937. After Uborevich, Kork (1928-9) and Putna (1929-30) were selected as Russian military attachés in Berlin, Uborevich was sent back in 1929-30 to obtain more expertise. In 1930 German General Hammerstein called Uborevich "very pro-German" ("sehr deutschfreundlich"). The Soviet officer had expressed to some German industrialists in Berlin the hope that the Soviet Union and Germany could "slaughter the Poles" and "partition Poland once again" within two years! All this indicates a close attachment between the Tukhachevsky group, and great interest in this group on the German part, with clear political motives in mind.

However we should recall that relations with the Reichswehr (German military)—although not the personal agreements—were official Soviet policy. Voroshilov was a proponent of these contacts, which were intended to raise the technical level of the Soviet army. The political intrigues and influence these contacts exercised upon the Soviet army leaders were simply a consequence of this policy, a sharper form of bourgeois influence.

As with NEP in general, the "compromise" with the bourgeoisie which the Bolshevik Party agreed to make they were unable to keep within the limits they wanted—as is inevitably the case. Allowing "a little bourgeois ideology" or "a little opportunism" is like being "a little pregnant."

Rapallo marks the beginning of the development of the Red Army officers into an elite military caste, the logical result of reliance upon technical expertise and a standing army rather than the workers and peasants—in other words, of capitalist relations in the military. However, this process was not completed

within the military until World War II. Much struggle between the left and the right would still occur.

But the struggle was within limits which guaranteed the eventual victory of the Right unless the limits were broken. The left—Stalin, Voroshilov, the "red commanders" of the Civil War—demanded some form of dual command and emphasized the importance (always within the above limits) of political training. They stressed the territorial militia-cum-cadre army or "mixed" system; the Frunze concepts of "proletarian warfare"; an important, though subordinate, role for partisans relying on rousing the masses.

As the first months of the Nazi invasion were to prove, however, this "mixed" system was not even militarily viable. The Nazi armies were technically superior, while the Soviets did not really have a concept of "people's war" which alone could have overcome the Nazis while preserving socialist politics.

As with NEP in general, bourgeois influences within the military were by the late 1920's too deeply entrenched to be uprooted by the great Left upsurge of the First Five-Year Plan, and finally overcame it.

Military Developments 1929-1937.

The developments within the Soviet armed forces are a reflection of those within Soviet society and the Bolshevik Party as a whole. At the same time, the contradictions within the military were sharper, stood out more clearly, and were resolved in a bourgeois way sooner and more completely, than in the rest of Soviet society. Due to the crucial nature of the question of armed force and defense, the logical conclusions of the Bolsheviks' incorrect attitude towards the peasantry, their determinist conception of socialism, and their reliance upon technique before politics, were reached earlier in military matters. By the mid-1930's revisionist developments which would take another 20 years to emerge full-blown in the rest of society were fully developed in the armed forces.

Even during the Soviet "great leap forward" of the First Five-Year Plan there was really no comparable leftward push within the military. Because the decision to place heavy reliance upon technical expertise had already been accepted even by the left forces, little attention was paid to the ideology of the military command. The "cultural revo-

lution" in education, history, literature, etc. was not really official Party policy, though it was tolerated for a number of years.⁵ With the military under Party control there was no parallel "cultural revolution" in it.

During 1929 to 1930, 1933-4, and again after the assassination of Kirov, from 1935 to 1936, there were serious purges in the Party. The purpose of these purges was, in the former cases, to check up on and expel non-proletarian elements, passive members, Right oppositionists and, in the latter case, to unmask hidden opposition circles as well. These purges were very light in the army. For example, in 1929 no more than 5% of Party members were purged (expelled, asked to resign, etc.) in the army, compared to 11% (later reduced to 8%) in the Party as a whole, and about 16% of rural party cells, where kulak influence was strong (Erickson, 315; Rigby, 178-81).

During the early 30s the shift to reliance on technique became more pronounced.

This is all the more significant since even before collectivization had been completed the military leaders were known to be in sympathy with the Right Opposition. In 1927, Yona Yakir and Vitovt Putna, "young professionals" associated with the Rapallo agreements and with Tukhachevsky, signed a pro-*Opposition* statement addressed to the Politburo. Reportedly it was very critical of Voroshilov's leadership. Thus the military command, a known center of right-wing opinion—the ex-Tsarist officers who were frankly non-Communist still dominated in military training, for example—was left relatively untouched. The Bolshevik leadership believed that the security of socialism lay primarily on technique—i.e. on weapons, and only

secondarily upon ideology—i.e. upon people.

The First Five-Year Plan did have its weaker counterpart within the military. Certain steps were taken which constituted a definite though feeble tendency to strengthen the armed forces politically. For example, Tukhachevsky was replaced as Chief of Staff in 1928 by Shaposhnikov. But Shaposhnikov was an advocate of developing military technique as well, and so not **decisively** different from Tukhachevsky. Although Tukhachevsky was certainly "demoted" by this move, especially since he was a Party member and Shaposhnikov was not, it did not amount to much. The army was still to be a mass army. In the context of the day, this was in contrast with "the small, mechanized armies of the type of the Fascist police" (as Tukhachevsky himself put it). The Central Committee did strengthen the Political Administration. The army was to be "the school of Socialism for millions of peasants and workers." The working-class component of the army was increased after 1929. In the same year Yan Gamarnik replaced Andrei Bubnov as head of the Political Administration. Gamarnik was staunchly anti-*Oppositionist* at the time; Bubnov had signed the "Declaration of the 46" in 1923, a pro-Trotsky statement.

Officers of the Red Army were encouraged to join the Communist Party *en masse*. They were led by Shaposhnikov who joined in 1930. By the end of 1932 over 25% of the armed forces were Communist Party members. However, the proportion was higher with higher rank, and was highest of all for the top officers. In 1929 (for which we have the breakdown of figures) almost 50% of all communists in the armed forces were officers and NCO's. A German officer expert in the Soviet army⁶ believed that this was actively pushed by the Party, and that most officers who joined the Party at this time were motivated by careerism, not by principle. This was certainly the case with many. For example, Andrei Vlasov, later the Nazi collaborator during World War II, joined the Party at this time in order to further his career.⁷

5. See the collection edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*.

6. Generalmajor B. Mudler-Hillebrand, in an unpublished report in the National Archives.

7. "Sven Steinberg" (a pseudonym), Valsov, p. 7, George Fischer, *Soviet Opposition During World War II*, p. 28.

In 1929 the official **Field Service Regulations** were issued. They reflected the fact that they had been written largely by the ex-Tsarist **spetsy** in the military academies. These bourgeois "experts" continued to dominate military theory in the U.S.S.R. They had only been removed from positions of command and political authority, never from positions of ideological influence over the Party and over other officers and officer students. While stressing the need for political training and reliability, Erickson states they argued strongly for UC and reflected the increasing reliance upon technical expertise now accepted by both left and right.

In retrospect we can see that the left had tried to push for a more political approach in the military as well. But this left advance was hamstrung because of the limits imposed upon it by reliance upon technique. The First Five-Year Plan concentrated heavily on building up defense industries and armaments. It was clear from the late 1920's to the Soviet leaders that a new imperialist war was in the making.

"Industrialization did not signify, however, a surrender to a technological view of war, which was paramount in bourgeois armies according to Soviet views. Both Shaposhnikov and Tukhachevsky had stressed not only the military-technical processes of war but also the fundamental place which the morale factor must take in the preparation of armed forces and population alike" (Erickson, 306). The Soviet Army was still the most politically motivated in the world. No bourgeois force stressed political training to anything like the same degree. Every imperialist army was far more of an elite, "cadre" army, relied far more on technical forces, than did the Soviet army. It is only with hindsight, and a revolutionary perspective that we can see that the roots of revisionism within the Soviet army were deeply seated even by the late 1920's.

The Military and the "Great Retreat."

Beginning even in 1931, before the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, the Soviet government began "inching (its) way out of Rapallo" by signing a non-aggression pact with France. Formal relations under the Rapallo Treaty ended in 1933, when Hitler took power. However the "Great

Retreat"⁸ from the leftward spring of the First Five-Year Plan was especially marked in the military. After 1934 the Frunze system established in 1924 was abolished. A technical revolution in the Soviet army made possible a more elite, "cadre" standing army force. Mechanized brigades, motorized troops, modern artillery, an expanding chemical warfare branch replaced the relatively much smaller cadre force backed up with the extensive territorial-militia system. The "**Oscaviakhim**," a mass para-military organization to promote military knowledge, skills, civil defense, and political training among the population, had been set up during the 1920's and consolidated in 1927; it was gradually de-emphasized. In 1934, at the same time as other sweeping changes were made in the government of the Soviet State, the **Revvoensoviet** (Revolutionary Military Council) was abolished and replaced by a People's Commissariat of Defense under Voroshilov. Since more and more high State officials were Party members, the 1934 changes reflected the belief that, with the industrialization of the country and the recruitment of masses of the intelligentsia to the Party, the contradictions between the Party and the State were becoming unimportant.

During the early 1930's the shift to reliance upon technique became more and more pronounced. At the 7th Congress of Soviets in January 1935 Tukhachevsky made a speech which dramatized the transformation of the Soviet army into a technically modern force organized along bourgeois lines. By 1935, according to Erickson, the 'revolution' in the Soviet army

involved both the position of the command staff and the further advance to a large standing army, resulting in the eclipse of the militia system. The real revolution was the progressive normalization of the Soviet military establishment, which resulted in the Red Army being brought into line with other European armies, conventionalized to a point where militarism seemed to be triumphant over Socialism.

Erickson continues, "this could not fail to have pronounced effects on the status and prestige of the command." In 1935 the quantitative developments towards

8. A term used by the bourgeois writer Nicholas Timashev to denote the relatively rapid develop-

ment of conservative tendencies within the USSR after the early 1930's.



Mass display of Soviet tanks in late 30s Red Square display symbolizes the Red Army's shift of emphasis from workers and politics to technique and machines.

reliance upon technique rather than politics led to a qualitative turn to the right. The most striking change was the formal introduction of officers' ranks as in any bourgeois army. This removed the last difference in principle between the hierarchy of the Soviet army and any bourgeois force. The first five Marshalls of the Soviet Union were created. They were: Voroshilov and Budyonny, red commanders of the Civil War noted for political devotion rather than technical expertise; Yegorov and Blyukher, of poor background (a peasant and a worker respectively), and Tukhachevsky, major representative of the "young professionals," most prominent among the military experts, and closely identified with the Rapallo relations with the German General Staff.

The roles of the Political Commissars were lessened in that they were now required to have the same formal military training as the commanders. In other

words they were "second-grade" commanders. It apparently became easier for commanders to have commissars removed whom they did not consider amicable enough—those who interfered too much with operational matters.

In the words of Mueller-Hillebrand the years 1934-6 witnessed a "gradual dismantling of the territorial system in favor of a reinforced standing army and a more tightly knit military leadership." In August 1936 the age limit of the draft was lowered from 21 to 19 years, which increased the size of the army. "It made possible the replacement of the territorial organization by the cadre army..." (p. 139).

These years which saw a qualitative shift towards bourgeois forms in the armed forces also saw the height of Tukhachevsky's power and status and

that of the "young professionals" associated with him. In January 1936 he was selected by the Soviet Government to represent it at the funeral of England's King George V. Tukhachevsky turned this assignment into a trip including stops in France and Germany. All reports of this trip make it clear that Tukhachevsky was acting almost as an independent political force himself.

The German General Staff meanwhile had by no means lost either interest or contact with Tukhachevsky and his ilk. In 1932 Tukhachevsky and Yegorov ("ex-Imperial colonel and vigorous partisan of the collaboration with the Reichswehr," according to Erickson, which we recall was now being de-emphasized by Stalin) attended maneuvers of the German Army at the German General Staff's invitation. Yegorov was now Chief of Staff replacing Shaposhnikov, and Uborevich—upon whom the Germans had lavished so much attention—replaced Yegorov as commander of the Belorussian Military District. This was the area adjacent to Poland, and so of special interest to the Germans as well, determined as both they and Uborevich were to eliminate the Poles. On September 18, 1932 Tukhachevsky himself had arrived in Berlin, apparently at the invitation of General Kurt von Schleicher. Schleicher was very influential in German politics, a close ally of von Papen's and therefore also of German industrial interests—the German ruling class, which also looked to Papen at this time. Tukhachevsky attended German army maneuvers in Frankfurt-am-Oder (in Eastern Germany close to Poland), visited German armaments firms and East Prussia as well. As Erickson—who does not believe in any Tukhachevsky conspiracy with the Germans—nonetheless admits, "What, if anything, in the nature of political discussions passed between Schleicher and Tukhachevsky remains quite impenetrably hidden." (342). Tukhachevsky and others were still very pro-German in 1935, as Erickson shows.

By 1936 the military commanders appear to have been asserting their independence by pushing for right-wing concessions all along the line. A number of academies were founded or re-organized to stress purely technical training, such

as the Stalin Motorization and Mechanization Academy, the Dzershinsky Artillery Academy, the Budyonnyy Electro-Technical Institute, etc. A General Staff Academy was founded in 1936 "for the express purpose of training very senior commanders" in traditional bourgeois strategy. The Civil War leaders of the red commander type were left behind. A strict military hierarchy was set up, in "an over-all system which stressed control of the mass by strict centralization and nothing less than automatism." The common soldier was reduced to a pawn; his initiative was to count for nothing.

Politics was de-emphasized in every way. Cossack formations were set up in April 1936. Under the Tsars, the elite Cossacks had been traditionally used against the workers when no other troops would have been reliable. Til now their own units had been forbidden by the

By 1936, the Civil War leaders of the Red Commander type like Budyonnyi were left behind

Soviets as politically suspect. Most of the famous Cossack leaders were in exile in Germany, where they were busy working with the Nazis; the émigré Cossacks set up an SS Brigade during World War II.⁹

Political developments were equally right-wing. Under Gamarnik the role of the commissars was being drastically reduced. As Erickson, who as anti-communist is favorable to this development, puts it;

Intensive training in the techniques of mobile war and concentration upon raising technical standards were seized upon (with no small degree of justification) as a pretext for crowding out

9. Two recent books—Nicholas Bethell's *The Last Secret* and Nikolai Tolstoy's *The Secret Betrayal* which attack the British and U.S. governments of 1945-46 for forcibly returning these Cossacks to

the USSR, document their atrocities. See "BBC Time, WNET and the 'Poor' Nazis," PL, Vol. 11., No. 1 (February-March, 1978), pp. 38 ff.

political indoctrination. (p. 423)
He sums up the results of the developments this way:

The very great significance of the 1935 decree on ranks implied that, socially, the Red Army was moving to a form not radically different from that of a 'capitalist' army.... Trotsky was indubitably correct in seeing 1935 as a revolution in the relation of the army to the state. From this initial consolidation of prestige and privilege, the officer corps was closing itself up, with its special immunities and benefits developing almost into a caste. Nor was the officer corps immune from the wider social effects, deriving basically from the increased technical requirements, in so far that influx to the officer corps was coming from the new intelligentsia. (Erickson, p. 446)

This independence of the "military caste" was taking more overt political forms, in addition to Tukhachevsky's trips abroad. According to rumors from a high officer in the NKVD who defected to the West in 1936, all the Red Army officers on the Central Committee except Voroshilov and Budyonny—that is, Yakir, Gamarnik, Yegorov, Uborevich, Blyukher, Tukhachevsky, and Bulin (Gamarnik's deputy) voted against bringing Bukharin, chief spokesman for the right, to trial. Bukharin had been restored to a relatively prominent position—he was editor of *Izvestia*—and was outspoken in his hatred of Stalin and the policies associated with him. From February to April 1936 Bukharin had gone to Western Europe, to negotiate with the exiled German Social-Democratic Party and others for the Marx-Engels papers. While there he met and talked with the major leaders of the Menshevik Party in exile, Fyodor Dan and Boris Nikolaevsky. These men were the senior, most vociferous and most knowledgeable anti-Communists in the bourgeois world; Nikolaevsky personally trained most "first-generation" American Sovietologists. To them, and to the revisionist

writer Andre Malraux (whose novel *Man's Fate* is a disgustingly elitist and defeatist view of the Chinese Communist revolt of 1927; the "hero" is an intellectual terrorist) that Stalin was "a small, malicious man, no, not a man, a devil." It is impossible to believe that Bukharin did not engage in some organizing against the Soviet government while abroad.¹⁰ When he returned, the Central Committee discussed prosecuting him; it was then that the Red Army men named above were said to have voted in his favor.

Tukhachevsky's last "contribution" to Soviet military thought was his commentary on the 1936 Field Service Regulations just adopted. These regulations embodied Tukhachevsky's and the specialists' ideas, stressing the importance of political training or morale. Voroshilov was criticized by name in

Stalin did not repudiate the primacy of technique over politics.

the latter context, a striking example of the unparalleled independence given Tukhachevsky and the military staff in general. For Voroshilov was Tukhachevsky's immediate superior, while his article was published in *Bolshevik* (now *Kommunist*), the theoretical organ of the C.P.S.U.

1937 to World War II—Soviet military developments.

At the February-March 1937 Plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., Stalin presented a lengthy report "On Shortcomings of Party Work and Methods of Liquidating Trotskyists and Other

10. Bukharin's conversations with these men are recorded in Nikolaevsky, "Letter of an Old Bolshevik," in *Power and The Soviet Elite*; and Lydia Dan, "Bukharin o Staline," *Novy Zhurnal*, 75 (March, 1964). Nikolaevsky was a famous liar (see Alexander Werth's comments on his book *Forced*

Labor in Russia in Russia Under Khrushchev; Russia: Hopes and Fears; and Russia; The Post-War Years) who once wrote that Hitler's own rise to power was part of Stalin's plot to rule the world! (in *Narodnaya Pravda*, No. 5, 1949). Dan led the exiled Mensheviks.

Double-dealers." This report is, within the limits of its time, very left.¹¹ It notes the fact that a preoccupation with economic work has left the C.P. cadre very weak politically, and recommends setting up new political training courses (this theme was reiterated by Zhdanov at the 18th Party Congress in 1939). It calls for relying upon the masses, especially those not in the Communist Party. It correctly recognizes that the right-wing forces are to be found mainly within the Party and reaffirms the sharpening of class struggle during the building of socialism. Unfortunately Stalin did not recognize to what extent the saboteurs and oppositionists had been a logical consequence of the policies followed by the C.P.S.U. He does not repudiate the notion of the primacy of technique over politics, though more stress is laid on the latter. Finally, Stalin criticizes the tendency to let mainly intellectuals and trained people into the C.P.S.U. But this practice did not stop, but rather accelerated after 1937.

During this speech Stalin said the following:

It is, of course, true that only individuals support the Trotskyite wreckers and tens of millions support the Bolsheviks. But it does not follow from this at all that wreckers can not cause serious harm to our undertakings. It does not require a large number of people in order to ruin and wreck To win a battle during wartime perhaps several corps of Red Army men are needed. But in order to throw away this victory at the front, for this a few spies are enough, somewhere in the Army Staff or even at the Divisional Staff who can steal the operational plan and give it up to the enemy. (ed. McNeal, I, 219).

On April 28 *Pravda*

had published an article on the necessity for the Red Army man to master politics as well as techniques, that the Red Army existed to fight the internal as well as the external enemy. The implications of that article were clearly directed to preparing the way for a drastic political drive in the army,

and suggested that Stalin had lost all confidence in the Political Administration. (Erickson, p. 459).

On May 10, 1937 UC was abolished in the Red Army. Military councils were set up which had to countersign all orders of commanders, and commissars were to take up their old functions in the units. Between May 10 and June 11, when the arrest for treason of Tukhachevsky and the others was announced on the front page of *Pravda*, a large number of the highest ranking military men were relieved of their posts and either arrested or reassigned. On June 1 the suicide of Yan Gamarnik, head of the Political Administration of the Army, was announced. According to Svetlanin, Gamarnik was the linchpin for the whole military conspiracy. Even Erickson, who denies in the face of his own evidence any conspiracy with the Germans, recognizes the political reasons behind the purge: . . . the Tukhachevsky-Gamarnik policy was taking such a course—dictated by the interests of military efficiency—that it would have led the army out from under strict political control. (Erickson, p. 465).

The evidence tends to show that those proven or suspected to have had connections with the Tukhachevsky and Co. plot with the Germans were removed first. Those command officers who were associated with Tukhachevsky's bourgeois reliance upon technique and with downgrading the importance of political training were purged later, in 1938 (Erickson, p. 470). By the end of 1938 the purge in the Army had reached very great proportions, all in the officer ranks. The higher the rank, the greater the proportion purged. According to Erickson 25% to 50% of the officers in the armed forces were involved, although many were later reinstated. They were replaced by men whose experience as officers dated in general from since the Civil War period. This meant that the new commanders were largely trained during the Frunze reform period (1924-34), when political training was relatively highly stressed, rather than during the Tsarist period. Those higher officers directly related to the First Cavalry

11. It should be studied by all those interested in the history of the U.S.S.R. and the Purges. It is not easily available in English, unfortunately. It is included in the later editions of *Problems of*

Leninism, and in a London edition, *The Moscow Trial*, ed. W.P. and Zelda Coates, 1937. The Russian edition, in Robert McNeal, ed. *J.V. Stalin: Sochineniya, I (XIV)*, (1933-40).

Soviet Army

Army (Voroshilov's and Budyonniv's force) of the Civil War were largely either retained or, in a few cases (such as the later Marshal Rokossovsky), rehabilitated.¹²

Much has been written on the "great harm" which the purge of so many high-ranking and technically expert officers supposedly caused the Soviet army. It should be noted therefore that the most scholarly bourgeois sources agree with the Nazis (who knew from experience) and with some military observers at the time that the opposite was the case, and that the Soviet Army was, if anything, strengthened by these purges. According to Erickson

For an army which had just undergone a drastic purging, the Soviet performance was surprisingly good (at Khalkin Gol).

To date the beginning of the decline in the efficiency of Soviet military aviation from the purge may be somewhat misleading. (pp. 498; 501)

Col. Robert Faymonville, American military attaché in Moscow, insisted that the Soviet army had not been harmed by the purges and would withstand Nazi attack,¹³ as did Joseph E. Davies, member of the U.S. ruling class, personal friend of Roosevelt and Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. Both Himmler and Goebbels in his diaries report that Stalin had been correct in purging politically unreliable men from the command. They seem to be echoing Hitler's own judgment made on May 7, 1943. According to Toland (Adolf Hitler, II, p. 847)

He praised Stalin for purging the Red Army of defeatists and installing political commissars with the fighting forces.

Even Erickson admits that

In the event of the Soviet Union being involved in war and suffering serious initial reverses, the purge ensured that no military command group existed which might be of a mind to seize upon this opportunity to undo Stalin's dictatorship... in general the previous high command had shown

a notable independence of outlook, a singular homogeneity and internal loyalties. The present command exhibited no such characteristics. (p. 509)

Interesting remarks from one who discounts any active opposition on the commanders' part!

The point here is that the damage done to the Soviet military had been done before the purge. Bourgeois practices were deeply rooted, not in the military reliance upon the standing army alone, but in the very basic conceptions held by the Bolsheviks like Stalin concerning how to construct socialism. As a result, the leftward turn in policy stemming from the discovery of treason and political unreliability of the command staff was very limited in extent, and was relatively swiftly reversed.

In May 1940 the rank of "general" (replacing that of Komandarm) was reintroduced. Although this appeared to involve only a change of name, in reality it was more significant. "General" was a Tsarist term. The soldiers and communists denounced it as a symbol of the brutal discipline and elitism of the Imperial Army. The officers, on the other hand, wanted it, since it emphasized the traditional privileges and rights of the elite command staff. When the rank of "general" was reintroduced it was accompanied with a number of regulations strengthening discipline and setting officers apart from men.

This was the Disciplinary Code of 1940. "In this further round between socialism and militarism, the former now lost a great deal of ground" (Erickson, p. 555):

In 1935 the tendency to transform the officer corps into a caste had been plainly discernible. Although the 1940 Code still shrank from the term "officer" ("commander" remaining in use), the differentiation of rank and demands for respect for rank were more sharply emphasized. The salute was re-introduced. Courts

from the service but not arrested *The Far Eastern Conspiracy*

12. Many of the real oppositionists were not killed, or even purged. Grigory Tokaev, a military oppositionist who claims to have been involved in a high-level conspiracy (which never acted) against Stalin, survived the period, as did many of the co-conspirators he discusses. See *Comrade X*. Svetlanin was cashiered

13. Faymonville's insistence on this point probably ruined his career. His superiors, viscerally anti-communist, did not "want to hear" that the Soviet Army remained strong. See the article on him by Herdon and Baylen in *Slavic Review*, March 1975.



PREPARATION FOR WAR: Teachers' college students learn to fire machine guns. Students and workers like these, trained in the period before Hitler's invasion, fought as partisans against the Nazis.

of Honor for officers (a device of the Imperial Russian Army) came back. Unconditional obedience was stipulated by Article 6; Article 8 required execution of orders "without reservation, precisely and promptly." Soviet military discipline was to be "higher, firmer and marked with severer and harsher requirements than discipline in other armies based upon class subjugation." "Fraternalization" between officers and men was over and done with; the "liberal commander" who courted popularity was a danger to military efficiency, he was "not a commander but a rag."

Thus upon the outbreak of the Nazi invasion the Soviet Army was back on the revisionist road advocated by Tukhachevsky.

The Nazi Invasion and Victory of Revisionism in the Military.

There has been a lot of nonsense written by Soviet "dissidents" such as Medvedev, Nekrich, and Pyotr Yakir (son of the Yakir executed with Tukhachevsky) about Stalin's supposedly "trusting" Hitler not to invade the

U.S.S.R. Many of the military memoirs published between the 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1961 and Khrushchev's fall in October, 1964, take this line, as did Khrushchev himself. This story is just part of the anti-Stalin crusade pushed by the right-wing forces within the U.S.S.R. to justify their abandonment of all the positive aspects of Soviet policy under Stalin.

In fact Stalin and the Soviet leadership were feverishly trying to prepare for the war with Nazi Germany they knew would come soon. Soviet military expenditures were hugely increased every year after 1935. The U.S.S.R. had sought in vain for mutual defense pacts with France and Britain, only signing the Pact with Hitler when the Allies had rebuffed the Soviet's final attempts and the Nazi invasion of Poland was two weeks away. On May 5, 1941 Stalin warned of an impending Nazi invasion in a secret speech in the Kremlin before young officer-graduates of the military academies. True, the U.S.S.R. was fulfilling its deliveries to Germany under the economic agreements concluded at the same time as the German-Soviet Pact until the very day of the invasion. But Stalin told Lord Beaverbrook (the

Canadian-British newspaper tycoon) in October, 1941, that he was doing this merely in order to try to get "another six months or so," to buy Hitler off for a time, in order better to prepare for the inevitable attack. Erickson who despises Stalin and worships bourgeois military technique (and therefore Tukhachevsky and Co.) believes that the U.S.S.R. would in fact have been ready for war by the summer of 1942 (p. 575). Alexander Werth agrees (Russia at War, pp. 142-3). This is exactly what Stalin had told the young graduates on May 5.

At any rate—insofar as it is an important point—the Nazi invasion was expected. Erickson agrees too that Stalin cannot be held personally responsible for the entire failure, as the "dissidents" falsely state. Erickson correctly describes the Khrushchev-type attacks on Stalin:

To attribute to Stalin's final, almost fatal blunders the full responsibility for the weakening at the Soviet frontiers is a distortion deliberate enough to serve present Soviet political purposes and touched with a melodramatic tint to conceal the basic crisis of the system. (p. 583; see also pp. 616-7; 625-7).

The real reason for Soviet defeats was that the U.S.S.R. was caught midway in transition between two very different schools or lines on the nature of defense and organization of the Army, as we have seen. After the leftward swing in policy resulting from rejection of the policies represented by Tukhachevsky, Soviet military doctrine had reverted to something closer to the Frunze position. This meant: less authority for the commanders, more for the commissars; reliance on the strategy of maneuver rather than upon positional defense; a greater role for partisans (in co-ordination with the standing army); greater stress on politics, less on expertise in general. This may be illustrated by a quotation from an article in *Pravda* of February 6, 1939:

Military thought in the capitalist world has got into a blind alley. The dashing "theories" about a lightning war (Blitzkrieg), or about small select armies of technicians, or about the air war which can replace all other military operation—all these theories arise from the bourgeoisie's deathly fear of the proletarian

revolution. In its mechanical way, the imperialist bourgeoisie overrates equipment and underrates man. (Werth, p. 35).

These principles were embodied in the 1939 Draft Field Regulations (replacing the Tukhachevskyite 1936 Field Regulations). They were in the process of being reversed after the Finnish War. But this process was not complete. Defenses were half-constructed; airfields uncamouflaged, half-built, many near the frontier; ammunition dumps for partisans not completed.

In this sense it is true that the Soviet aversion for Tukhachevsky's ideas about reliance upon technique rather than politics had left the U.S.S.R. more poorly prepared. Probably the thorough adoption of any definite military plan would have meant a better initial defense than that which did occur. And it became obvious, as the war proceeded, that the U.S.S.R. was capable of beating the Nazi forces with a fundamentally bourgeois form of military organization, buoyed up by the tremendous political dedication of the Communist forces' high morale and revolutionary heroism, which enabled Soviet commanders to perform miracles.

Immediately upon the invasion (June 22, 1941 the anniversary of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812), Stalin and the political leadership of the C.P.S.U. took close charge of military affairs. GOKO (State Defense Committee) was set up in June, and soon after that the *Stavka*, General Staff of the High Command (after July, of the Supreme Command), an even smaller group led by Stalin took charge of all military operations. On July 16, 1941, as it became increasingly clear that the Soviet Army was being defeated all along the front, UC was again abolished and the commissar system reintroduced. Stalin and the political leadership of the C.P.S.U. had never really trusted the military leaders politically, at least after 1937. Yet now, during the invasion, they were forced to rely upon these leaders.

The result was: (1) close supervision by the political leadership (*Stavka*) of all military decisions, with Commissars and special envoys being sent out from Moscow to check up on all field commanders; (2) very severe discipline for commanders who failed to carry out commands to the letter, or who survived their men in the event of a severe de-

feat. General Pavlov, commander of the Western Military District, was recalled to Moscow and shot in late 1941, as was his staff and that of the North-Western (Leningrad) front, after their armies had been largely taken prisoner. As the Nazi troops approached Leningrad, Moscow, and (in 1942) Stalingrad, this political leadership appeared to work and the tide of battle turned.

The privileges and ranks removed after the initial defeats were then returned to the officer corps. UC was re-established for good on October 9, 1942.

A little later, in 1943 (January 6), in addition to new uniforms, a whole code of manners was introduced for officers; above a certain rank, for instance, they could not travel by public transport, and were not allowed to carry paper parcels. Altogether a number of points from the etiquette of the old Tsarist Army were revived. (Werth, p. 401).

The decree of 24 July 1943 classified the members of the armed forces as enlisted men, sergeants, officers and generals. This was a decisive step on the road to creating the privileged class of the Soviet officers. (Mueller-Hillebrand, p. 149)

It was not until the height of the Stalingrad battle that epaulettes and a lot of gold braid were added to officers' uniforms—epaulettes like those which angry soldiers had torn off their officers' shoulders back in 1917. Out of the fire and smoke of Stalingrad the gold-braided officers emerged;... Their introduction was like a collective reward to the whole officer class of the Soviet Union. The gold braid also emphasized the professionalism of the Red Army. It was no longer a revolutionary army of *sans-culottes* (the word for proletarians in the French Revolution). (Werth, 389-90)

As the war was coming to an end the Party took steps to see that the military did not gain too much independence because of the popularity of its commanders, especially of Marshal Zhukov. In June 1945 Stalin assumed the title of "Generalissimo." A campaign of propaganda publicized the truth that the Communist Party and the political dedication

of its members bore the major responsibility for the fact that the Soviet Army had succeeded against the elite Nazi army where no bourgeois army did or could have. Indeed, the Soviet performance against the Nazis made the collapse of the French Army, the British Expeditionary Force (ending in Dunkirk evacuation), the Polish Army, and (in the Far East) the American and British Armies, look sick. This was certainly not due to the likes of Zhukov who, however "talented," was only a commander. It was due to the **people**. From 1946 to 1952 Zhukov, most popular of military leaders, was given relatively minor commands in Odessa and then the Urals in order to remove him from the limelight. Khrushchev brought him back as Minister of Defense in 1955 to ally with him against the remaining supporters of Stalin on the Presidium (Molotov, Bulganin, Kaganovich) in 1957, but had him

At the height of the Battle of Stalingrad officers' gold braid and epaulettes were introduced.

dismissed later in the same year for trying to alienate the army from its political leaders.

During the War developments towards the right within the U.S.S.R. generally, and within the military specifically, moved decisively ahead. This was not basically reversed by the leftward turn led by Stalin and his supporters after the war (often called "Zhdanovshchina" with respect to culture), a final attempt to restore Leninist ideas, set up a new type of Comintern (the Cominform), and attack bourgeois ideology.¹⁴ All this was done incompletely; without arousing much mass participation (though there was some); and within very narrow limits. It was dropped upon Stalin's death.

14. See, for example, R. Nordahl, in *Soviet Studies*, April 1974.